

A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC STUDY OF PRE-COLLEGIATE  
CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHING

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## ABSTRACT

### A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC STUDY OF PRE-COLLEGIATE CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHING

William Jeffrey Davis

Teacher educators generally agree that prior experiences with teachers and teaching are highly influential to understandings of teaching. Adopting a sociological model inherited by contemporary teacher education, they have frequently found this influence to be a hindrance to teacher learning; years spent observing schoolteachers' teaching are thought to result in limited, simplistic, and personal views of teaching, views that are highly resistant to change despite teacher educators' efforts to engage them. Thus, prospective teachers' views of teaching have been framed as deficits in teacher learning, and, while these deficit views are not universally held among teacher educators, they appear more common than views of prospective teachers' understandings of teaching as assets in learning to teach.

Through this study, I used the framework of conceptions of teaching to investigate the influence of prior experiences with teachers and teaching, and the assets and/or deficits prospective teachers might carry into teacher preparation. Employing a phenomenographic design, including interviews and participant created artifacts, I analyzed the descriptions of teachers and teaching of five high school students who were considering teaching as a career. Drawing on notions of consummatory experience related to learning to teach, I investigated individual descriptions of experiences with teaching—including links between these students' prior experiences with teaching and teaching they were observing and/or doing—as well as variations of experiences across the cohort of participants.

My study revealed complex views of teaching amongst participants, characterized by an array of commitments and uncertainties. For the cohort, teaching was, at its heart, a convergence of various actors and events; approaches, routines, and patterns of teaching; relations; priorities held by teachers and/or students; and/or dependencies brought on by community and/or contextual factors. The study helped to illustrate potentially powerful assets young people may carry to teacher preparation, including their experiences teaching others and an awareness and understanding of their own learning as teachers. This study proposes that teacher educators (re)conceptualize their work, at least in part, as the cultivation of these, and other, assets, and that the influences of prior experiences be examined during transitions between pre-collegiate, teacher preparation, and professional teaching experiences.

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## DEDICATION

For My Family: Danni, Nina, and David

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Over the course of my graduate studies and the development of this dissertation study, a period I have been known to describe as *n years*, I have benefitted from the assistance and support of a great number of individuals. Time and space prevent me from recalling and identifying all of these individuals, and displaying the level of gratitude I might otherwise be inclined to share, but the thanks and appreciation I express below are nonetheless heartfelt, and I hope this feeling will be evident.

Without the five high school students who volunteered to participate, this study surely would not have progressed to this point. I remain appreciative of the time they dedicated to the study, in interviews, the creation or completion of artifacts, and member checks. Their thoughtful contributions offered insights into teaching and schooling that at times were familiar, yet often challenged my own notions of teaching and schooling, as well as what a young person might observe and understand in teaching. I am deeply grateful for their participation and contributions to this study, and I believe our schools and children would be fortunate to encounter teachers with the beginning capacities these young people exhibited.

Throughout my graduate education, both at Eastern New Mexico University and at Teachers College, I have found that gentle offers and seemingly minor or largely unknown opportunities have yielded some of the defining moments and/or products of my studies. I want to express my gratitude for the individuals at the center of these offers or opportunities.

I remember an email from Dr. Daniel Friedrich, my sole advisor and dissertation sponsor at Teachers College, as a turning point in my studies, the beginning of an

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W.J.D.



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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the last five years, teacher shortages have reemerged as a major concern for some teacher educators, school leaders, and policymakers. Although teacher shortages have at times been described as the result of excessively high teacher turnover or imbalances between the supply and demand of teachers (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008), researchers have linked the most recent series of shortages to four major factors. Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016, September 15) identified high teacher attrition, increasing student enrollment, and districts' efforts to return to pre-recession student-teacher ratios as contributing factors to recent teacher shortages, along with a 35% reduction in teacher education enrollments between 2009 and 2014. Policymakers and teacher educators traditionally have borne the brunt of responsibility for combating teacher shortages, using initiatives that have sought to highlight the attractions of teaching or that have relaxed standards and/or certification requirements to become a teacher (Sutchter et al., 2016, September 15).

Schools and districts have recently responded to teacher shortages as well, with some school systems working to construct pipelines to teaching through *teacher academies*, programs offering high school students early exposure to the work of

teachers, including teaching experiences (Simmons, 2018, February 12). Though teacher academies have existed since at least 2000 (“Teacher Academies and Other Strategies,” 2000), Simmons (2018, February 12) recently reported on the growth of new academies across the United States, growth he claimed was a response to the sharp decline in teacher education enrollment between 2009 and 2014 and the yearly 8% attrition rate amongst the teacher workforce. Although recruitment initiatives targeting high school students continue to grow, the education field’s understanding of how young people learn to teach, or what they learn about and/or know of teaching prior to university study and/or teacher preparation, has remained relatively static. Much of the literature related to early experiences with teaching and their influence on conceptions of teaching or early teacher learning has focused on the powerful and negative influence of past experiences with teachers and teaching, and the ways such experiences hinder teacher learning and growth.

The framing of past experience and its influence on teacher learning occupies a complicated history in the preparation of teachers, characterized by some educators as central to teacher preparation, and in select instances even regarded as chancy and contradictory. Indeed, these framings have existed as long as state-supported teacher preparation has existed in the United States, with early teacher educators, reformers, and legislators quarreling over the extent to which experiences as a student prepared one to be a teacher (e.g., Dodge, 1840; Johnson, 1825). Through theorizing and research, discussions and debates around experience in teaching have since shifted from questions of qualification to teach courtesy of student experiences to what teachers learn from their experiences. Dewey (1904/1974) once characterized experience as an asset in learning as he discussed teacher preparation, one that could prove beneficial in examining ongoing



and unfolding experiences as a teacher, yet researchers in the last 40 years have focused more on examining prospective teachers' experiences with teachers and teaching as conceptions of teaching, a construct I use here to describe prospective teachers' experientially-derived understandings of what teaching is and/or can be. Specifically, researchers have sought to explain how these conceptions are formed during and shaped by prospective teachers' pre-collegiate, and thus past, experiences with teachers and in schools, with conceptions of teaching, in many cases, framed as harmful to prospective teachers and teacher learning.

Consider Lortie's (1975/2002) *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*, which according to Google Scholar has been cited more than 16,000 times since its publication, and features description and analysis across a wide array of topics in teaching and schools, including the finding that K-12 school experiences result in highly personalized and simplistic, yet resilient, conceptions of teaching. Lortie (1975/2002) interviewed practicing teachers in several metropolitan areas in the United States, asking some of these respondents about their own teachers. From respondents' answers, he found that the 13,000 hours of experiences these teachers had in school, a period he referred to as the *apprenticeship of observation*, offered only a partial view of teaching. This partial view of teaching prevented K-12 students and later prospective teachers from understanding the complexity of teaching, inhibiting their capacities to analyze teaching as something distinct from their own experiences with it. Characterizations of prospective teachers as indelibly and negatively affected by the apprenticeship of observation, Mewborn and Tyminski wrote in 2006, have often been repeated by researchers and teacher educators, leading to additional research and characterizations of pre-collegiate conceptions

of teaching as problematic, something to be disrupted (Boyd, Gorham, Justice, & Anderson, 2013), confronted (Westrick & Morris, 2016), or overcome (Grossman, 1990, 1991). In the framing of conceptions of teaching typically following studies examining and/or involving the apprenticeship of observation, experiences, especially those from/in schools, irrevocably shape or deform students' conceptions of teaching. Consequently, part of teacher educators' work with prospective teachers has been described as *disrupting, confronting, and/or overcoming* prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching.

Having framed prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching as potentially problematic, teacher educators have used at least some of their time, resources, and efforts to develop and to employ pedagogical interventions to surface, and sometimes to alter, conceptions of teaching. Grossman (1991), targeting prospective teachers' apprenticeships of observation in particular, examined a teacher educator's use of what she called *overcorrection*, an approach in which the teacher educator "went to the extremes" by focusing on, and limiting debate concerning, exaggerated examples of teaching strategies to help prospective teachers to "overcome models of typical practice" assimilated during their pre-collegiate school years (p. 351). Westrick and Morris (2016) also presented a pedagogical move by teacher educators, evaluating the effectiveness of a physics presentation in a teacher education class and how it disrupted prospective teachers' apprenticeships of observation. Another category of approaches used by teacher educators could be described as autobiographical writing, such as Boyd et al.'s (2013) study of prospective teachers' blog responses as they wrote on their prior experiences in schools and in teacher preparation, employing blogs as a means of examining and

disrupting prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching formed during their apprenticeships of observation. Though these approaches take different forms—sometimes carried out by teacher educators, other times tasks assigned by them for prospective teachers to complete—a familiar pattern in teacher educators' work can be discerned: first identify a deficit or problem in prospective teachers, often one stemming from their prior experiences, then devise a pedagogy or task to address it.

The growth of teacher academies, and thus the rise of frontier teacher education efforts with high school students considering teaching as a career, has, in part, prompted me to examine these young people's understandings of teaching. Despite being described as problematic deficits that must be dealt with by preservice teacher education, conceptions of teaching forged during the pre-collegiate years, specifically their contents, how they are formed, and how they may change over time, have received limited empirical attention from researchers. Most research on conceptions of teaching seems to take a snapshot of prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, captured at a single point in time when students are preparing to become teachers in alternative and/or university-based preparation programs (e.g., Grossman, 1990; Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006; Westrick & Morris, 2016). This exploratory phenomenographic study will focus on the conceptions of teaching of 5 high school students interested in elementary and/or secondary teaching careers. In this study, I seek to understand what these students effectively learn about teaching from their pre-collegiate experiences, including experiences they see as influential in the formation of their conceptions of teaching, the desires for and imaginings of teaching they hold, and the extent to which they may reconcile different images of teacher and teaching.

### **Personal, Professional, and Scholarly Paths to the Problem**

Over the course of the past 20 years, my personal, professional, and scholarly trajectories have slowly—and, sometimes, even *painfully*—converged, leading me to take up this serious study of what people learn about teaching before they enter teacher preparation. By presenting a sort of pedagogical autobiography, one that engages pre-collegiate experiences doing what I considered to be teaching, my early career as a middle and high school teacher, as well as the ideas and perspectives from my graduate studies that have inspired and/or intrigued me, I can describe not just the seeming wanderings that led me here, but I am also able to outline the ways in which *experience* has served as a crucial asset and has fundamentally contributed to my theoretical grounding as a teacher and researcher. Perhaps most importantly, I hope this recounting of my pedagogical autobiography begins to surface the contours of a rather serious problem I see in teacher education, a problem that motivates this study.

### **Falling Back on Models of Teacher**

Given the focus and objectives of this study, it would be a particularly egregious lie for me to suggest that the pull of my own 12-year journey in schooling did not impact my own teaching. Although I started my teaching career in New Mexico rather than on the east coast of the United States where I grew up and attended school, much of schooling felt familiar to me as a teacher in ways similar to how Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) described their participant Karen's feelings about the elementary school classroom in which she was placed for an early field experience with teaching. The spelling lists, recess periods, and bulletin boards so familiar to Karen would have appeared foreign to me as a high school teacher, yet there were other elements of the

school that were every bit as familiar. Textbooks were issued to each student, along with a tacit agreement that they would be frequently utilized and often needed at home and in class. The chairs of the classroom were organized in rows facing one whiteboard, but in view of two others to the right of my students' seats, which I considered an optimal arrangement for whole-group instruction. Students changed classes every 50 minutes, limiting face time and making each instructional minute feel precious. As with Karen, my familiarity with the schedules, processes, and rhythms of teaching and schooling left me with what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) described as “[a] sense of power” as well as “some sense of competence” (p. 55). An *inquiring disposition* for teaching seemed unnecessary. After all, I reasoned, a public school in New Mexico was more or less the same as a public school in Pennsylvania.

In my own teaching, I was left with considerable leeway in making pedagogical decisions, and I often looked backwards to the past to what I felt were successful approaches to teaching. As an alternative teacher certification candidate, I spent very little time studying and developing capacities related to curriculum development, instructional planning, pedagogy, and assessment. Unlike Grossman's (1990) alternative pathway participants, who were found to draw heavily on university level subject-specific coursework and professors' pedagogies, I seldom drew from my own university studies for ideas on how to teach. Instead, I recalled parts of my own journey as a secondary student, following a path I would later find to be well-trodden and oft-documented in the learning to teach literature (e.g., Buchmann & Schwille, 1983; Hargreaves, 2009; Lortie, 1975/2002). In particular, I *fell back*, as Hargreaves (2009) described it, on the experiences I had with social studies teachers, as I was initially hired to teach history.

By falling back on my own experiences with secondary social studies teaching, I drew from a well Lortie's (1975/2002) Five Towns teacher-respondents had apparently tapped. The apprenticeship of observation construct was construed from an interview question asking practicing teachers in the Five Towns sample to recall and to describe *outstanding teachers* from their past, models whom many teachers had as readily available as would I when I started my first year of teaching. As a beginning teacher, *history teacher* meant a teacher who behaved in very specific ways, which were consistent with the history teachers I had come to regard as effective teachers based on my observations of their teaching. I made an effort, one more conscious than Lortie (1975/2002) seemed to describe teachers making, to emulate one of my middle school social studies teachers, developing a class that featured textbooks, outline note-taking, and the infusion of what I considered to be humorous anecdotes or presentations of historical actors and events. My actions in this first year of teaching were decidedly imitative, resulting in the conservation and spread of teaching strategies I had experienced, much in the manner Lortie described. Moreover, I had not developed any semblance of what Lortie (1975/2002) called a *pedagogically oriented framework*, a set of principles developed by teachers that were separate from the use of emotion and/or preference for certain practices, or even an analytical lens with which to explore whether such pedagogical imitation constituted teaching that was beneficial to my students.

### **Using Lay Theories of Teaching to Move Beyond Imitation**

The summer after this first year of teaching, I accepted a middle school social studies teaching position across the state, a decision that led me to carefully consider the teacher I was at that point in time, particularly with respect to what I had come to feel

was an overreliance on past models of teaching. I had succeeded in teaching how I was taught, reproducing the teacher-centered instruction of virtually all of my own social studies teachers, meaning I controlled “what is taught, when, and under what conditions within a classroom” (Cuban, 1993, p. 6). Yet, for all my success imitating instruction, I came to realize that my teaching this first year was also, in important respects, much different from some of the teaching I had seen in the past, as I had witnessed teaching not just in school, but also outside of school in the larger community, influences sometimes cited in the academic literature (e.g., Holt-Reynolds, 1992). The *larger community*, in my case including the coaching of soccer, significantly influenced my early images of teaching. As a coach, I had spent countless hours planning practice sessions and devising drills, typically starting with familiar activities I had previously experienced as a player, but then modifying these activities for the abilities, interests, and personalities of the student-athletes with whom I worked. Throughout the summer, a nagging question frequently bubbled up from the recesses of my memories of and thinking on teaching: why had so little of this spirit of creativity and modification, forged primarily in parks and fields of my hometown, manifested itself in my work during my first year of professional teaching?

Beginning in my second year of teaching and continuing in different teaching assignments and schools with different students, I sought to incorporate some of my own *lay theories* of teaching developed during my own pre-collegiate experiences (Holt-Reynolds, 1992), namely the necessity of a spirit of creativity and modification in teaching. The result was a decided shift away from Cuban’s (1993) notion of teacher-centered instruction toward what he referred to as a hybrid form of teaching, in which my

teaching repeatedly employed “familiar and new practices” (p. 8), sometimes side-by-side within particular episodes of teaching. For example, instead of mindlessly defaulting to the models of past teachers, I tried to use teacher-centered instructional approaches like lecture and student note-taking in strategic ways, meaning these approaches or moves became means towards larger class objectives, rather than ends in themselves, as I often felt they had been in my own K-12 classes. Increasingly, I turned to students to formulate objectives, co-developing independent studies and units based on their academic and personal interests.

What resulted from these efforts was certainly not a complete change from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction, but rather a more serious consideration of the transactional relationships Hawkins (1967/1974) described between teacher, those being taught, and the common interest or focus between the teacher and the taught. That is, I tried to explicitly consider my abilities, background knowledge, interests, and personality together with my students’ abilities, background knowledge, interests, and personalities, as well as the particular challenges or questions arising from what I was expected to teach, or from which we had decided as a class to learn. The changes I made to my teaching practice inspired additional wonderings about teaching and learning, in time starting to coalesce into questions concerning how other teachers learn to teach. Recalling my own teacher preparation experiences while in the midst of my second year of teaching, I wondered why my alternative teacher certification program did not incorporate activities engaging prospective teachers’ lay theories of teaching, whether they were derived from classroom experiences or from experiences outside of schools. These questions led me to return to graduate school to study how teachers learn to teach.



## **Teacher Education and the Framing of Prior Experiences**

What I found in my graduate studies was an emphasis in the academic literature on the importance of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, with two constructs particularly resonating with my experiences as a first-year teacher. Lortie's (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation, the consequences of which seemed assumed by scholars like Labaree (2008) and McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright (2008), was frequently cast as the genesis of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching. A significant percentage of Lortie's (1975/2002) respondents identified, as I surely would have done during my first year of teaching, successful models of teaching from their own school experiences as highly influential to their professional teaching. The many hours of observations of and interactions with teachers created strong feelings of comfort and competence, leading to another source of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching consistent with my own experiences, the "familiarity pitfall" of school experience (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, p. 56). The results of frequent contact with and familiar conceptions of teaching led to a high degree of "unreflective imitation" (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, p. 64). There seemed little debate that such imitation was a frequent and ongoing problem in the preparation of teachers.

Problematic, though, were the depictions of beginning teachers present within these characterizations of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching and the experiences from which they developed. Whether they were products of Lortie's (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation or victims of Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1985) familiarity pitfall, the pre-collegiate student experiences of prospective teachers seemed to be eerily similar. The (often) young, prospective teacher was actually the unwittingly

flawed product of a pedagogically conservative school system, staffed by teachers who simply taught the way they themselves were taught, with the reasons behind or consequences of their, or their predecessors', actions inaccessible due to the limited vantage point allegedly afforded to prospective teachers by their pre-collegiate student experiences. Imitation was surely the result, yet the significance of this imitation could not be understood exclusively at the individual classroom level, as the cyclical effect of the repetition of teaching strategies produced systemic consequences, resulting in an insidious, reflexive pedagogical conservatism (Lortie, 1975/2002) from which no teacher seemed to escape.

Particularly troubling to me were the ways some characterizations of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching effectively stripped teachers of agency in changing the ways they taught, or even contemplating or devising alternatives. While I was at least somewhat aware of the power of my pre-collegiate experiences on my conceptions of teaching, and was willing to accept certain elements of Lortie's (1975/2002) and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1985) characterizations of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, I did not see my future teaching as something determined by my past experiences with teaching; in fact, I found dissonance between my teaching as a first year teacher, and the teaching I had witnessed, and even done, as a coach while still a high schooler. Having never considered my own pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching as consisting of "high ideals and aspirations about teaching," the dissonance I referred to above did not lead me to "trade in [my] idealized images for more 'realistic' representations of teaching" (p. 469), which Cole and Knowles (1993) found preservice teachers often doing when they entered the field through practicum or professional

teaching experiences. The literature, in effect, offered a flat rather than a textured view of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, at times generalizing findings across prospective teachers and ignoring the different ways prospective teachers may have learned about teaching across their lives, while at other times dichotomizing novice teachers' images of teaching and so-called realistic representations of teaching and schooling, with prospective teachers most often choosing the latter after failing to reconcile the former, based on their own K-12 school experiences, with their more recent experiences in schools. In either case, the prospective teacher's future was seen as cast in stone, something that defied innovation or attempts by the individual to change.

Several significant studies of, or studies related to, prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching were produced a generation ago, in a period when schools—and perhaps teachers—were, in some ways, quite different. Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) asserted that constructs like the apprenticeship of observation, rather than an accurate description of prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, are a product of repetition amongst scholars. Thus, in the case of Lortie's (1975/2002) work in particular, research done in the 1960s in an overwhelmingly white Boston metropolitan area (Drinan, Segal, Burgess, Byse, Murphy, Schuck, & Teger, 1963; Lortie, 1975/2002) has been drawn forward via additional, closely-related studies into the present, a period in which teachers of diverse and very different backgrounds and experiences, not to mention teachers of more recent time periods, have been sought (Grant & Gibson, 2011; Sleeter & Milner, 2011). The repetition of research constructs and findings related to conceptions of teaching have continued to circulate characterizations of teacher learning casting doubt upon prospective teachers' own potential for agency, even suggesting at times that

teacher learning was in some respects predetermined without intervention, closely tied to personal experience or contextual realities where teaching was observed or conducted.

These research findings not only seemed to belie differences in school experiences, but they also seemed to ignore extracurricular contributors to early teacher learning. Lortie (1975/2002) asserted, in the event that what was learned through the apprenticeship of observation could not be offset by “a shared technical culture” of teaching (p. 67), that “the diverse histories of teachers will play a cardinal role in their day-to-day activity” (p. 67), the diverse histories he referred to suggesting that teachers would ultimately teach how they were taught since K-12 experiences in schools would play a prominent role in the development of their conceptions of teaching. Other scholars, like Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), Holt-Reynolds (1992), and Greenwalt (2014) have since engaged in scholarship expanding beyond school experiences. Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) explored *personal histories*, which included “experiences of family, of learning, and of being in school” (p. 87), possibly including “incidents occurring in schools, homes, or the larger community” (Holt-Reynolds, 1991, p. 326). Looking closely at families, Greenwalt (2014) studied how interactions with parents contributed to what he, linking to the work of Lortie (1975/2002), called the apprenticeship of observation. Conceptualizing influences on teaching in broader terms than the school-bound apprenticeship of observation and/or the familiarity pitfall offered possibilities suggesting a more multifaceted view of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, not to mention a characterization more faithful to my own learning to teach experiences.

## The Paradigm of Beliefs

Whether they occur within or outside schools, pre-collegiate experiences involving teachers and teaching have been described by teacher educators as leading to firmly held beliefs about and images of teaching (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, 2001; Knapp, 2012; Westrick & Morris, 2016). As a doctoral student and novice teacher educator, I came to view prospective teachers' beliefs on teaching as a derivative of pre-collegiate experiences, which teacher educators sought to change, since prospective teachers' K-12 school and other childhood experiences were in the past and therefore not directly accessible to teacher educators. My own experiences as a doctoral student and beginning teacher, particularly the beliefs I had developed stemming from my extracurricular experiences as an athletic coach, led me to view prospective teachers' beliefs on teaching as important elements in preservice teacher education. Pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching have been identified as a major source of beliefs or images of teaching (Richardson, 2003), and this relationship could contribute to similar framings of prior experiences with and beliefs on teaching. In other words, the limited vantage point K-12 students have of teaching (Lortie, 1975/2002) and the feelings of comfort and competence this perspective may produce (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) may affect beliefs or images derived from these experiences.

Beliefs derived from pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching have been characterized as “deeply rooted and insidious” (Wilson, 1990, p. 206) and resistant to “direct confrontation” (Knapp, 2012, p. 324). *Teaching as telling*, or its reduced forms like “tell[ing]...students something clearly and concisely” (p. 206), was the most deeply

rooted and insidious belief Wilson (1990) found among her preservice teacher education students. Brookhart and Freeman (1992) noted a greater emphasis on the “nurturing and interpersonal aspects of a teacher’s role...than the academic aspects” (p. 51; see also Mahlios, 2002). The beliefs described by scholars like Wilson, Brookhart and Freeman, and Mahlios, like the singular focus on school experiences described by Lortie’s (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation construct, seemed unfamiliar to me, if not unbelievable when I considered teachers who might have drawn from extracurricular experiences as I had. Some scholars, like Florio-Ruane and Lensmire (1990), acknowledged the value of preservice teachers’ beliefs in passing, in their case in the context of beliefs on the teaching of writing. A greater focus on the power or potential of pre-collegiate experience-based beliefs, such as Calderhead and Robson’s (1991) study of preservice teachers’ images of teaching, some of which were “quite dominant and detailed” and “could readily be translated into action” (p. 7), were exceedingly rare.

Likewise, it was less common to read or to hear of teacher education curricula or pedagogies that encouraged and fostered agency when it came to changes in teacher beliefs. I reconsidered how I taught during the summer between my first and second years of teaching, not because of negative evaluations, difficulties in obtaining employment, or other external factors forcing me to reinvent myself as teacher, but because *I held imaginings of the kind of teacher I desired to become*, which I felt were crucial in meeting the needs of the students I taught, yet absent during my first year of teaching. Unfortunately, no individual or pedagogy in my teacher preparation program encouraged me to reconsider, or perhaps to reconcile, these imaginings, student needs, and experiences, and only one or two of my colleagues encouraged me to re-evaluate

how I was teaching; however, no one was standing in the way of reflective contemplation and pedagogical experimentation, and I tried to use my time as a teacher to teach in a manner that would fulfill my image of self as teacher, which I felt would ultimately yield *good teaching*. Although literature examining how student teachers and teachers negotiated their teaching with their desired selves exists (e.g., Britzman, 2003), this literature seemed even more rare than studies detailing the value of teachers' pre-collegiate experiences and how they influenced the formation of conceptions of teaching.

I say rare because certain programs and pockets of research within teacher education have characterized past experiences as useful, if not crucial, for some groups of prospective and practicing teachers. For example, Stanford (1998) studied memorable teachers and their influences on the teaching philosophies and practices of award-winning African American practitioners, influences that drew from "the 'wisdom of practice'...exemplified by their former teachers" (p. 240). More recently, in addition to observing mentoring roles and increased expectations for students among teachers of color, Sleeter and Milner (2011) described the unique assets teachers of color bring to classrooms, specifically classrooms with high numbers of students of color. The understanding and respect these teachers of color had for minority students' cultural knowledge served as "a foundation for their teaching practices" (p. 83), which Siddle Walker (2000) found many African American students deeply valued and appreciated. Encountering scholarship expressing the value of the prior experiences of African American teachers made me more curious about the particulars of these studies, and also led me to wonder why there seemed to be fewer studies exploring the experiential capital of other groups of teachers.

Instead, what I read and encountered seemed to center on the inherent challenges presented by prospective teachers' prior experiences and the conceptions of teaching they held from them, and, at times, teacher education's struggles, or failures, to mitigate the negative influences allegedly created by these experiences (Lortie, 1975/2002; Tatto, 1996). Carter and Doyle (1995) observed that some teacher educators greeted prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, or their experienced-based beliefs about teaching, with "irritation as naïve misconceptions that...interfere with the correct way to teach" (p. 186), thus framing conceptions of teaching or beliefs on teaching as something for teacher educators to sidestep, or perhaps to stamp out, and not necessarily a target of careful contemplation and reflective thought, both of which might lead teacher educators and prospective teachers on a sloppy and winding journey. Structural features of preservice teacher education were indicted in some accusations of failure as well. While teacher educators, typically university professors, articulated what Cherland (1989) called *theories* of teaching that required "a new form of classroom practice" (p. 411), student teachers worked with cooperating teachers in public schools, whose classroom practice may have developed from an entirely different theory of teaching, one in which "the way life really is in the classroom" has been said to trump "theory-bound" university teacher education (Slick, 1998).

Prospective teachers seemed to find themselves somewhere in the middle of several complicated relationships. As student teachers, they were university students who were overseen by faculty and staff, yet during their practicum experiences they worked intimately with cooperating teachers and other K-12 school-based educators; though all of these stakeholders may have held certain commitments in common, they also may



have disagreed on others, in theory, principle, or teaching practice, or perhaps a combination of the three. At the same time, prospective teachers were always at the intersection of their own pasts and futures as they observed and engaged in teaching. They were expected to learn from their experiences, the ones ongoing in schools and sometimes those that occurred many years ago when prospective teachers were K-12 students. Conflict, between what they had seen before and what they were seeing as student teachers, or between what they wanted to do as teachers and what they were asked or told to do as student teachers, was inevitable, in some form or another, and it may have even been healthy to a degree. Yet I wondered if prospective teachers were prepared to negotiate such conflicts, and to come out on the other side of them with views on or practices of teaching that were products of a reconciling of the diverse demands and conflicts they had encountered. Lortie's (1975/2002) work cast doubt on teacher education's effectiveness to intervene against prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, leading me to contemplate what role this ineffectiveness had in broader critiques of teacher education as weak or ineffective (e.g., Tatto, 1996).

### **A Theoretical Framework Drawing from *Consummatory Experience***

The influence of prior experiences with teachers and teaching has been part of debates on the complexity of teaching, and the need for teacher preparation, for at least 180 years. As legislators and reformers debated the development of European-style normal schools in Massachusetts, some opponents of formal teacher preparation suggested teachers' own experiences as students sufficiently qualified them to teach (Dodge, 1840), and therefore teachers' experiences *with* teaching had a direct bearing on future experiences *engaged in the act of teaching*. On the other hand, supporters of

formal teacher preparation lamented the standard of teaching in early common schools, where teachers “taught few branches...imperfectly” and “did not understand well, either the nature of children or the subjects they professed to teach” (Peirce, 1851/1969, p. 279). The low quality of teaching reformers believed was characteristic of common schools, coupled with reformers’ belief that change required teaching to draw on special training and theories, created a need for preparation that supplemented prospective teachers’ experiences, or perhaps broke the continuity between experiences as a student in school and subsequent ones as a teacher, so the former was less frequently drawn on than the latter. While the debates recounted by Dodge (1840) and Peirce (1851/1969) may have centered more on disagreements about teaching’s complexity, and whether a person required special training or education to carry out the work, experience was presented—and disputed—as a factor in qualifying a person as a teacher.

By essentially developing and employing teacher preparation to break the continuity of prospective teachers’ experiences with teachers and teaching, reformers, and later teacher educators, shifted the emphasis in learning to teach. Initially, normal school faculty members like Peirce may have been dismissive of prior experiences, given the critiques levied against common schools and those who taught in them. In place of experience, the era’s teacher educators substituted what Oral (2013) referred to as *spatialized* forms of knowledge—those that could be transferred *a priori*—in the form of subject-matter and pedagogical theories (e.g., Dearborn, 1925; Mann, 1839/1969), knowledge forming a current that may have helped to shape the *gap* between theory and practice in teaching (e.g., Carr, 1980; Dewey, 1904/1974; Nuthall, 2004). The increase, in volume and methodologies in teacher education research during the twentieth and

twenty-first centuries (Labaraee, 2004), as well as the divided structure of teacher preparation as work typically shared by universities and K-12 schools (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), have grown from separate currents into a powerful river, further widening the gap some reformers, teacher educators, and/or teachers see between theory and practice in teaching. In the midst of the challenges teaching presents in terms of linking theory and practice, some researchers have attempted to theorize and to study experience and its influence on learning to teach, not through efforts to dismiss theory or practice but rather, in part, to better understand how the former impacts the latter two.

However, as researchers and teacher educators have found, and continued to frame, the influence of experiences with teachers and teaching as problematic, I contend they have, in effect, dispatched other currents in learning to teach, forming an *experience gap* as well. I use the expression *experience gap* to describe the challenges prospective teachers may face, up to and sometimes including failure, to reconcile their prior experiences with teachers and teaching, their experiences *as* teachers, as well as what they and teacher educators desire for them to be or to become as teachers. Prospective teachers' failure to reconcile their experiences may, to an extent, be natural; in other words, they may not always, or often or even ever, be inclined to consider teaching they are seeing or doing in light of what they have already seen and/or done, and what they hope to see and/or to do in the future. Teacher educators may be partially responsible for this failure as well. By using research to frame prospective teachers' experiences as problematic and, through pedagogies of teacher education, to marginalize them or to replace them with more desired understandings of teaching, university-based teacher educators potentially fracture the continuity of their prospective teachers' experiences

with teaching, leading to situations in which prospective teachers may struggle to see teacher educators' desired conceptions or forms of teaching—as well as other theories and practices—in *their own* experiences, both those lived and carried as well as the experiences of teaching they anticipate. In doing so, a gap forms between experiences, one that may form an additional barrier towards linking theory and practice in teaching.

*Consummation* in experience, which has been further developed as the *consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher in a classroom* (Dewey, 1934/2005; Oral, 2013), may help to illuminate the problem motivating this study, that of teacher education effectively fracturing prospective teachers' experiences with teachers and teaching. As I considered my own teaching between my first and second years of teaching, I reached a point in my thinking where I was able to see both backwards and forwards, able in that significant moment in my life to see how the way I understood the teaching I had observed and done as a coach while in high school, rather than fond memories of an increasingly distant past, could be a powerful asset in reconceptualizing the teaching I was doing, and even realizing the teaching I desired to do. The moment I realized that my learning about teaching could be conceptualized as part of a continuous and unfolding experience, I was able to draw on my experiences while also integrating what I was learning about teaching from books, colleagues, children, and many other sources. Such points of consummation—not finality, but heightened understanding—should be a primary aim in learning to teach, one necessary for growth in teacher learning. The importance of consummatory experience in learning to teach, like the role of experience in teaching, is by no means self-evident, though. In order to better convey

the central role I see for these constructs in learning to teach, it seems prudent to turn to the works of Dewey and Oral to explicate the theoretical framework of this study.

### **Deweyan Experience and Learning to Teach**

Experience is a product of humans' "events, doings, and sufferings" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 1), each day consisting of "free interaction[s] of individual human beings with surrounding conditions, especially the human surroundings" (Dewey, 1939/1988, p. 229) during which needs and desires are developed and satisfied by "increasing knowledge of things as they are" (Dewey, 1939/1988, p. 229). Yet most experiences fail to separate from the stream of *all* experiences without awareness of "an enveloping undefined whole," the world outside us, and the ways in which we achieve greater unity with it (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 203), meaning much of the day's events, doings, and sufferings escape the recesses of the memory, perhaps relegated to a subconscious influence on subsequent experiences. What remains with us often appears to us as "fractured, fragmented, unfulfilling, and meaningless" (Oral, 2013, p. 136). Experiences infused with "emotions and ideas"—thus allowing them to be vividly recalled and built upon with "conscious intent" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 36)—are infrequently encountered.

Despite the seeming lack of connection between experiences, Dewey asserted that experience consisted of two principles. First, experience is *continuous*. Though our experiences are interspersed with beginnings and endings, they do not consist of a singular and uninterrupted narrative (Dewey, 1938/1997). Endings and pauses are more byproducts of experience's narrative quality than objective facts, as the continuous nature of experience means that one never escapes the effects of previous experience, with Dewey (1938/1997) asserting that "*every* experience influences in some degree the

objective conditions under which further experiences are had” (p. 37, emphasis added). Second, experience is *interactive*. Interaction with both internal conditions and the outside world play a crucial role in shaping life (Dewey, 1938/1997). The outside world, Dewey (1938/1997) contended, was never repelled nor fully assimilated in experience, instead commingling with the individual’s ideas, feelings, memories, and/or understandings—the substance of the individual’s prior experiences—in ways that inevitably shape subsequent experiences. In this way, continuity and interaction are intimately bound together. As people live, they engage in countless interactions with the environment, specifically social interactions with other people, but the effects of prior experiences line each subsequent interaction, resulting in new experiences, some of which may seem similar or recognizable, yet all of which are substantively different due to the influence of the past.

*Growth* for a person depends on both the direction and quality of experience. For Dewey (1938/1997), experience played a crucial role in education, which, he contended, should be based on the fostering of specific experiences leading to growth, which Dewey (1916/2004) defined as a “cumulative movement of action toward a later result” (p. 40). Couched in terms of experience, an educative experience, one resulting in growth, allows an individual to derive a richer quality from subsequent experience, meaning these later experiences are both agreeable in the moment, but also useful in the understanding of future experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997). Experiences that are not beneficial in this way, or miseducative experiences, are those “arresting or distorting the growth of future experiences” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 25). As a result, education based on experience rests

heavily on the selection of “present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” of the learner (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 28).

What most experiences lack was what Dewey (1934/2005) called *fulfillment*, the point at which an experience “is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency” (p. 37). Fulfillment did not connote an ending point, but one of consummation, where the experience became “integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience” (p. 37). When experiences coalesce into a singular whole, a unifying process demarcated by some distinctive quality (Oral, 2013), Dewey (1934/2005) claimed we have *an* experience. The power of the integration and demarcation of *an* experience is in the way its integrated experiences “gain distinctness in [themselves],” creating an experience “diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colors” (p. 38). The integration of different experiences within the stream of all experience allows people to draw from a deeper and more meaningful understanding of their own experiences, allowing for more refined interactions, and leaving them open to the possibility of more powerful and meaningful future experiences.

I have come to better understand learning to teach, as well as my own experiences being and becoming a teacher, using Dewey’s theory of experience as a theoretical lens. Teaching, or experiences with teachers and teaching, are part of the enveloping undefined whole of experience, with the continuous and interactive qualities of experiences with teaching leading to a number of *events*, *doings*, and *sufferings* related to teachers and teaching. For high school students interested in teaching as a career, these experiences with teachers and teaching may not easily reduce into familiar spatialized knowledge intended to categorize, classify, store, and manipulate the processes of learning to teach

(Oral, 2013), like *theories* and *practices*, or *philosophies* and *methods*, as such knowledge may be bound up in the various events, doings, and sufferings found within high school students' temporally unfolding life experiences. Although high school students interested in teaching careers may not always readily be able to identify theories, practices, philosophies, and/or methods observed during their pre-collegiate experiences, they have begun to develop conceptions of teaching, or ways of understanding and describing their pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching.

These pre-collegiate experiences help to form a latent culture of teaching, one in which the culture's component meanings are "only activated in so far as...new situations...make them relevant" (Lacey, 1977/2012, p. 75). Contained within this culture lies students' learning across their lives from their "own direct and personal experience," which, I believe, may constitute "the greatest asset in the student's possession" when it comes to learning to teach (Dewey, 1904/1974, pp. 322-323), as their accrual of subsequent experiences with teachers and teaching students comprise a powerful experiential base for subsequent and perhaps repeated examination and learning. For all this potential for more refined and potentially powerful understandings of teaching, the core challenge for high school students interested in teaching careers is one of unifying experiences, and thus transforming them into a form that helps to provide a richer understanding of their experiences teaching and/or interacting with the teaching of others.

Unifying, in this sense, takes place within no less than two realms of experience. One is purely internal, in which students recognize the influence and utility of their previous experiences teaching or interacting with teachers and their teaching, and how pre-collegiate experiences with teaching might be used to better understand present



engagements with teaching. As this recognition takes place, and students can explicitly draw on episodes of teaching led and/or witnessed, these experiences are linked with the second realm, teaching situations beyond students' experiences, thus allowing for growth through the interrogation of present social situations using understandings of past experiences, and a heightened understanding of subsequently encountered teaching situations (Dewey, 1934/2005). This experience with teaching has been referred to as *the consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher in a classroom* (Oral, 2012).

### **Consummatory Experience and the Integration of Experience**

To situate consummatory experience as an important function in learning to teach is to privilege lived experience with teachers and teaching, as opposed to the “de-lived,” the different forms of knowledge that have been positioned as spatial objects that can be transferred from person to person (Oral, 2013, p. 155). To understand teaching—or, rather, to understand one's experiences with teachers and teaching—one cannot achieve growth solely through the substitution of de-lived knowledge like learning theories or teaching methods for one's own experiences. As Oral (2012) argued, students of teaching find distortion, rather than “clarity and a firm grip on the situation” (p. 170), when they try to insert distance between their lived experiences with teaching and the pursuit of greater understanding through spatialized, transferable knowledge.

Consummatory experience is, fundamentally, a greater awareness and understanding of one's experiences. Rather than the result of the accumulation or assimilation of certain, or a certain amount of, procedural and/or technical knowledge, consummatory experience represents an evolving understanding of one's own experiences, which demands an awareness of what Britzman (2003) called “potential and

given meanings” (p. 51). By developing increased awareness of these meanings, we develop the ability “to extend experience through interpretation and risk” (p. 51). Following Dewey’s (1938/1997) principle of continuity, a consummatory experience cannot yield a final or certain understanding of experience. Consummatory experience can be described as an unfinished and always unfolding understanding, unique from other experiences in that it leads to continuous growth, better situating one for what is to come.

Growth derived from the unfinished and always unfolding understanding consummatory experience provides is always fueled by one’s past experiences. Britzman (2003), perhaps drawing on Dewey’s (1938/1997) characterization of experience as continuous, observed that “students [of teaching] are persons who bring their own deep investments to education” (p. 212). The students Britzman (2003) described have accrued many experiences with teachers and teaching, yet awareness of *the potential and given meanings* of these various past encounters with teachers and teaching may be difficult to exercise and to develop without some unifying quality or force. In what Dewey (1934/2005) identified as *an* experience, such a quality or force, like the desire to become a teacher, is present, leading to a situation in which an individual unites different experiences related to the quality or force, thus allowing for the derivation of new and more refined meanings from them. High school students interested in teaching careers may understand experiences with a particular teacher or a class as *an* experience, in which episodes of teaching form “a whole,” carrying with them their “own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 37). The unification of these experiences into *an* experience creates a structure for the experiences that

separates them from the stream of all experiences, an essential requirement of consummatory experience.

However, consummatory experience, and the growth it produces as one learns to teach, must also be nourished by *future* influences as well. In looking forward to the future as a teacher, prospective teachers engage in what Field and Macintyre Latta (2001) described as “active engagement with circumstance,” engagement they claimed was “critical toward a knowing in and through experience” (p. 17). A longing *to become a teacher*, and perhaps even a desire to enact certain characteristics of teachers or forms of teaching, or even hopes for teaching, help to shape prospective teachers’ understandings of the teaching they experience in the moment. A consummatory experience offers “a sense of direction,” what Oral (2013) articulated as an “ordered and organized movement” toward some end or state of being (p. 137), though not a movement conducted along a linear, uninterrupted path.

Consummatory experience, then, can be described as a point of intersection between past experiences and future desires, hopes, or imaginings, whereby the transaction across these temporalities results in a richer and more expansive understanding of subsequent, unfolding experiences. Oral (2013) described the transaction between these phases as an extension “backwards and forwards in time,” in which one is engaged “with the *meaning* of the events of the recent and remote past as well as the imminent and far-off future” (p. 144). People who have developed consummatory experience have achieved what Gadamer (1975/2004) described as a certain openness to new experience, whereby experiences, and the understanding derived from them, make these people “particularly well equipped to have new experiences and

to learn from them” (p. 350). For students of teaching, each pre-collegiate student and student teaching experience with teaching presents a point of intersection between the past and the future, lived in the present and “pregnant with novel meanings” deriving from one’s past experiences with, and future hopes for, teaching (Oral, 2012, p. 169). Thus, the consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher is not weighed down or predetermined by the past, but rather fueled and powered by the integration of prospective teachers’ past experiences with their desires to become or to enact some form of teacher and/or teaching, both essential in shaping and understanding each subsequent experience with teachers and teaching.

### **Experiences with Teaching and *Conceptions***

Despite the potential I see for learning to teach in the integration of experiences I described above, I recognize that teacher educators at times frame the influence of prior experiences in different ways, using constructs like *conceptions* to help them to do so. For example, Lortie (1975/2002) asserted that the many hours prospective teachers spent as K-12 students led to the accrual of “individualistic and traditional experiences” with teaching, leading them to hold “prior conceptions of good teaching” by the time they arrived in teacher preparation, conceptions they sought to “[live] out” as teachers (pp. 66-67). While Lortie articulated a relationship between experience and conception, he did not dwell on the nature or particulars of this relationship, his meaning falling somewhere within the broad definition of conception offered by Gorodetsky, Keiny, and Hoz (1993), who claimed it was often used to describe “abstract aspects of thinking (cognition) originating from experience and information acquired during study and work” (p. 424). Conceptions are typically used to convey knowledge of “an object, idea, or phenomenon”

that is “*comprehensive, organized, and united*” (Fischl & Hoz, 1993, p. 58, emphasis original). Given the potential amorphousness of the construct, both in this example and at large (Gorodetsky et al., 1993), as well as the confusion sometimes presented by its use in the literature (Fischl & Hoz, 1993), I should say more about my use of the construct.

In using the term conceptions, I draw from the work of Marton (1981) and Marton and Pong (2005), who described conceptions as the “different ways of understanding” people develop concerning particular phenomena (p. 335), or aspects of reality they experience. Conceptions, in this view, are constituted from an “individual’s understanding of something in terms of the meaning that something has to the individual,” effectively rejecting a positivist view of phenomena (Svensson, 1994, p. 12). A categorical description, as Marton (1981) referred to them, conceptions are *non-dualistic*, meaning they are not individual qualities of a person nor of the phenomenon. In other words, this study of the conceptions of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers will treat the phenomenon of teaching as inseparable from the student experiencing different forms of teaching, in effect shifting the perspective of research from “the sources of variation which give rise to variation in conceptions (such as individual differences, development, learning etc)” to “conceptions of various aspects of reality” (p. 189).

Marton and Pong (2005) identified two related aspects of conceptions. The first was a *structural* aspect, which refers to the particular features individuals “discerned and focused upon” as they experienced the phenomenon (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 336). Marton and Booth (1997) have further divided the structural aspect into the *external* and *internal* horizons. While the external horizon might be the background conditions or

setting in which a phenomenon is experienced, the internal horizon consists of the specific features of the phenomenon as the individual experiences them (Marton & Booth, 1997). The second aspect was what they called a *referential* aspect, which includes the particular meaning a phenomenon has for the individual (Marton & Pong, 2005). According to Yates, Partridge, and Bruce (2012), the referential and structural aspects of a phenomenon “are experienced simultaneously and...are closely related” (p. 101).

For the high school students interested in teaching careers that I have worked with in this study, conceptions of teaching, whether constituted from the classroom or beyond, are the products of their experiences, consisting of both structural and referential aspects that collectively influence the meaning these students ascribe to teaching as a phenomenon (Pang, 2003). As a researcher, I cannot focus on the referential *or* the structural aspects of conceptions, asking for meaning without understanding what has been seen and heard, or compiling descriptions of actors, settings, and events without pursuing how the student understands the totality of these structural aspects with regard to teaching. Marton and Pong’s (2005) referential and structural aspects of conceptions and Marton and Booth’s (1997) external and internal horizons offer analytic tools for investigating student’s conceptions of teaching.

### **Conceptions as Collectively Experienced and Understood**

Since phenomena are never experienced in an exclusively individualistic manner, conceptions should not be construed as individual qualities or individually-oriented. Dewey’s theory of experience helps to illustrate these factors. Situating individuals as agents making meaning from their own experiences, Dewey (1938/1997) saw this

meaning-making as embedded within, and therefore irrevocably influenced by, social interactions. Two examples may illustrate these social interactions. An experience, according to Dewey (1938/1997), was one that changed “the objective conditions under which subsequent experiences take place” (p. 39). Dewey (1938/1997) offered examples like roads and tools as illustrations, elements of an experience that “have been done and transmitted from previous activities” (p. 39). Another example could be found in social control, the structures humans create to order interactions, such as “the direct intervention of the teacher” to keep order in the classroom (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 55). The very nature of a phenomenon like teaching, experienced through countless social interactions between individuals teaching and being taught, helps to demonstrate how an individual’s experience of a phenomenon is situated at the nexus of various social interactions, which influence or shape an experience, and thus conceptions held from these experiences.

Therefore, conceptions of teaching are more than the product of a solitary individual making sense of a phenomenon like teaching, as they are products of necessarily social experiences *between* teachers and learners within episodes of teaching. These conceptions represent a type of learning that “fundamentally is a question of meaning in a social and cultural context” (Svensson, 1994, p. 12; see also Prosser, Trigwell, & Taylor, 1994). Teaching, of any form, exists as a series of relations between an individual seen as teacher, individual(s) who the teacher endeavors to teach, and some thing to be taught, relations all occurring within, and inevitably influenced by, a particular social context or milieu (Hawkins, 1967/1974). Part of this context or milieu is shaped by the reality of teaching, an activity that typically involves multiple people, as church pews, athletic fields, art classes, and other settings where teaching occurs involve

a number of learners, who are also experiencing as learners someone else's teaching. Interactions between these learners may well serve as contributors to the internal and/or external horizons of the structural aspect of conceptions, influencing the context where teaching occurs, and consequently impacting the structural and referential aspects of individuals' conceptions. Like Yates, Partridge, and Bruce (2012), I see conceptions—in terms of this study of conceptions of teaching—as products of “collectively experience[d] and [understood] phenomena,” which can be described “in a number of qualitatively different but interrelated ways” (p. 97).

The framework of conceptions of teaching, as products of individual meaning making within a necessary social and given cultural milieu, thus aid me in better understanding what high school students interested in teaching careers have learned about teaching. The phenomenographic methodology utilized in this study situates the individual and collective natures of the experiences with teachers and teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers as important sources of a form of early teacher learning, helping me to better understand, though by no means deterministically define or explain, what these students learn about teaching from their pre-collegiate experiences. By developing categories of description and exploring variations in experiences with teaching, I seek to represent “what is common and what is complementary” when different people become aware of the same phenomenon (Bowden & Marton, 1998, p. 199), which could be considered a sort of *collective consciousness*.

### **Problem Statement**

Through this study spurred by my own pedagogical autobiography, as well as theoretical groundings in Deweyan experience and conceptions, I explore descriptions of



pre-collegiate experiences, which I contend are at the center of an important problem in teacher education. Teacher education frames pre-collegiate student experiences interacting with teachers and teaching as playing a dominant role in the process of learning to teach. Because these experiences are often regarded as a hindrance to learning to teach, teacher educators have positioned aspects of their work as interventions against their students' understandings of teaching, in the process focusing upon their students' memories of the teachers and teaching they observed. The emphasis has been on instigating changes in the beliefs of teacher education students, with less time and effort dedicated to *understanding* prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, including the ways in which prospective teachers' pre-collegiate experiences influence the ways in which they learn to teach, and therefore impact their understandings of teaching, despite teacher educators' efforts to mediate against beliefs deemed to be problematic.

The fundamental problem motivating this study is as follows: teacher education overemphasizes the allegedly harmful, constraining influences deriving from pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, its curriculum conceptualized and utilized as an intervention against the lasting influences of these experiences, while often ignoring the imaginings of teaching of individuals interested in teaching careers, and the ways in which prior experiences and future hopes for teaching can combine to enhance growth as a teacher and not just impair or prevent it. The *deficit view* of prospective teachers' pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching situates teacher education as inherently adversarial (Knapp, 2012), where one's personal experiences are immediately, and sometimes intensively, problematized, while teacher educators' experiences are

privileged. Conversely, experiential capital present in prospective teachers' pre-collegiate experiences that may be assets in learning to teach are overlooked, if not ignored.

### **Rationale**

Prospective teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, and the experiences from which they were formed, continue to be described in narrow and negative terms. Since Lortie (1975/2002) presented the apprenticeship of observation more than forty years ago, other scholars have offered alternative conceptualizations of past experiences, some of which have extended beyond Lortie's (1975/2002) focus on classrooms and schools (e.g., Britzman, 2003; Greenwalt, 2014; Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Yet, despite more expansive theories of the influence of pre-collegiate experiences on conceptions of teaching, Lortie's (1975/2002) work continues to appear as the foundation of studies, in which it has been examined (Boyd et al., 2013), extended (Rinke, Mawhinney, & Park, 2014), and revised (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). In fact, one might be more likely to see the apprenticeship of observation described as *seminal* (e.g., Rinke et al., 2014) than altogether challenged. More research should follow the lead of Mewborn and Tyminski (2006), who concluded that "Lortie's apprenticeship of observation is not a sufficient 'one size fits all' explanation for the views that [prospective teachers] bring to teacher education programs" (p. 32).

Moreover, scholars like Lortie (1975/2002) and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985), who have endeavored to explain the socialization and learning that K-12 students undergo with their own teachers, have drawn conclusions based on work with in-service and preservice teachers, respectively; the closest teacher educators have come to the pre-collegiate experiences of their own students has been through various forms of

autobiographical writing (e.g., Boyd et al., 2013; Maxson & Sindelar, 1998; Yinger & Clark, 1981) and interviews (e.g., Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014) of preservice teachers. Lortie (1975/2002) claimed that “being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching” after a percentage of respondents volunteered information about the influence of their own teachers on their current teaching (p. 61). From these responses, Lortie (1975/2002) drew a number of conclusions concerning the nature of K-12 socialization and teacher learning, as well as the limitations on this socialization and teacher learning due to the vantage points of students in schools. The apprenticeship of observation, having been formulated more than forty years ago from voluntary responses from the memories of predominately, if not overwhelmingly, white and female practitioner-respondents in one metropolitan area, has been extrapolated to the conceptions of teaching of pre-collegiate students and student teachers in a number of subsequent studies in temporal and geographic contexts much different from its origins.

A consequence of this extrapolation is a deficit view of pre-collegiate experiences and their influence on conceptions of teaching (Knapp, 2012). In this deficit view, prospective teachers are viewed as incapable learners, who develop incomplete or limited conceptions of teaching from their experiences. Socialization processes occurring primarily in pre-collegiate classrooms and schools help prospective teachers to construct walls that constrain or limit their beliefs and images of the practical and the possible in teaching. Prospective teachers’ agency in their own becoming as teacher, through the examination of and reaction to their beliefs and images of teaching and/or through the tapping of divergent beliefs or images of teaching encountered in the past, is largely viewed as insufficient in spurring changes to beliefs formed during the pre-collegiate

years. From this view, the fulfillment of certain desired images and models of teaching, whether these images and models are desired by prospective teachers or the teacher preparation program, requires additional experience or knowledge—typically accessed in or provided by preservice teacher education programs—beyond prospective teachers’ abilities to understand their own experiences.

Teacher education frequently has been cast as an intervention, designed in part to help students of teaching to overcome these allegedly narrow, problematic student experiences they have had interacting with teachers and teaching. Using pedagogies like modeling and overcorrection (e.g., Grossman, 1991) and autobiographical writing (e.g., Westrick & Morris, 2016) as specific practices, teacher educators have resisted pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, endeavoring to replace them with university-derived theory and strategies that may diverge from, if not directly oppose, students’ memories of, and hopes for, teaching. The deficit view of pre-collegiate experiences and their influence on conceptions of teaching framed by constructs like the apprenticeship of observation reflect a certain form of socialization, a form that “cannot account for this dialogic process or the complexity of negotiation and dependency that characterize” learning to teach (Britzman, 2003, p. 70). In other words, learning to teach is a complex process shaped by conditions external to the learner—the prospective teacher—while simultaneously affected by internal factors as well, like the learner’s memories, desires, hopes, and fears of/for teaching. To depend on constructs that privilege a subset of prospective teachers’ total experiences, whether this subset is restricted by the limitations of memories or conceptions of teaching constituted within a single location (e.g., schools

and classrooms), is to ignore other potential influences on learning to teach, effectively stripping prospective teachers of a potentially powerful pool of experiences.

Exploring pre-collegiate experiences and their influences on conceptions of teaching through phenomenographic inquiry offers the potential for students considering teaching as a career to share *their* understandings of teaching, as well as the experiences that have shaped *their* understandings. Perspectives on conceptions of teaching influenced by the apprenticeship of observation, the familiarity pitfall, or other processes that might frame pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching as deficits in learning to teach, characterize prospective teachers as individuals largely shaped, with predominately predictable results, by social institutions. The use of a phenomenographic research methodology may offer opportunities to examine conceptions of teaching through the surfacing of individuals' experiences with teachers and teaching, and the delineation of core elements of these experiences, such as context, and how these elements develop and interact to shape the meanings pre-collegiate students hold from their experiences with teachers and teaching.

A focus on high school students interested in teaching careers—that is, students across grades 9-12 contemplating teaching careers but who have not yet received formal training or preparation in teaching—is necessary for several reasons. First, for those students considering teaching as a career, pre-collegiate experiences and their influence on conceptions of teaching, which include not just observations of different forms of teaching but also the timing of decisions to pursue teaching (e.g., Schempp, 1987) as well as possible career alternatives to teaching (e.g., Galman, 2009), occur prior to collegiate study and formal teacher preparation. Observing teaching, listening to clerics speak,

seeing teachers represented in media, along with countless other contributors, possibly serve as influences on or prompts to negotiate meanings of teacher and teaching. Second, little is known of this negotiation of teaching prior to formal teacher preparation. The overwhelming majority of studies of pre-collegiate experiences and how they influence conceptions of teaching have been with preservice teachers, relying on preservice teachers' memories of teaching as opposed to explorations of pre-collegiate experiences as they are unfolding. One could argue that preservice teachers negotiate between what they have experienced and what they desire in teaching as much, if not more, than high school students interested in teaching careers, yet the nature of this negotiation, and how it is enhanced or limited by previous iterations of the negotiation, remains an unexplored question. Third, an exploration of pre-collegiate experiences situates learning to teach on a longer timeline, with different events and demands in teachers' lives possibly affecting the influence of prior experiences on conceptions of teaching, as Lortie (1998/2005) would later suggest. Such a focus on high school students would better inform teacher educators of their own students' understandings of, and desires for, teaching.

### **Stance**

Rather than simply accepting findings that preservice teachers are “fixated upon individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles” (Lortie, 1975/2002, p. 62), believing teachers' decisions are based on mood or whimsical caprice, I will investigate the substance of the conceptions of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers, potentially forged from an array of pre-collegiate experiences. Aspects of these conceptions of teaching may be based on individual personalities or based on perceptions of teacher moods, yet they also may yield the potential for more nuanced understandings

of teaching and the role of teacher. Moreover, conceptions of teaching, developed from processes like the apprenticeship of observation, draw from classroom experiences, but they are not necessarily limited to the classroom. Extracurricular experiences like observing parents teaching certain behaviors or skills, organized athletics, scouting, church and youth group experiences, and the many representations of teachers and teaching in popular culture may powerfully contribute to the ways in which high school students interested in teaching careers see their various teachers, their teaching, and themselves as teacher.

Adopting a stance heavily drawn from consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher has led me to challenge prevailing socialization models that have attempted to explain early teacher learning. This stance has led me to conceptualize learning *to* teach as, in part, the process of reconciling the products of learning *about* teaching—the pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching developed throughout one’s life history—with a broader view of teaching and schooling than a high school student’s school experiences likely offer. It is work I see teacher educators and researchers engaging in *with* students interested in teaching careers, not work they do *to* these students as they endeavor to strip away or to obscure all learning about teaching they find harmful or inadequate. Explicating and valuing students’ conceptions of teaching offers opportunities for these conceptions to be a catalyst or a prompt in these students’ learning about teaching, rather than a substance to be destroyed or discarded. This study has been intended as a sincere effort to enact such a stance towards conceptions of teaching and their important place in early forms of teacher learning for high school students interested in teaching careers.

### Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore and explain the conceptions of teaching of 5 high school students interested in teaching careers and to identify experiences that were significant to the development of these conceptions. Using a phenomenographic design, including data derived from interviews and participant-created audio, textual, and/or visual artifacts to develop individual profiles, I will explore students' conceptions of teaching through the use of categories of description derived from the combined descriptions of the cohort of participants. My research questions are as follows:

1. What are the conceptions of teaching of 5 high school students interested in teaching careers?
  - a. What experiences involving different types of teachers and forms of teaching do these students describe as being influential in the formation of their conceptions of teaching?
  - b. What desires and/or imaginings of teaching are bound up in these students' descriptions of different types of teachers and forms of teaching?
  - c. To what extent do these students' descriptions of different types of teachers and forms of teaching reflect the reconciling of teaching they have observed, teaching they desire and/or imagine doing, and teaching they view as appropriate or permissible in a given context?
2. What structures and/or relationships, if any, exist within and between these students' conceptions of teaching?

Through this study, I hope to engage with various stakeholders working in, or concerned with, teacher recruitment and development. First and foremost, I intend to



provide for teacher educators in formal teacher preparation programs a detailed account of the conceptions of teaching of high school students, an account I hope will be useful to teacher educators as they conceptualize their work with prospective teachers, including the capacities and assets prospective teachers bring to their preparation as teachers. Through participants' descriptions of influential experiences related to teaching, including accounts of their experiences teaching and/or being taught, I believe the study's results will be useful to educators affiliated with high school and university-based teacher pipeline programs like teacher academies and mentorship programs, who can see how young people in very different settings discuss their experiences with, and expectations for, teaching; these accounts might have a dual purpose for high school teachers in particular, providing a framework for early teacher learning for these teachers' induction work in teacher academies, but also fodder for teachers to consider their own work as teachers and how their students may think about their teaching. Finally, I hope the findings of the study will inform policymakers' deliberations and decisions concerning teacher shortages, specifically how policy and programmatic changes like pipeline programs can nourish recruitment and growth in teaching in ways that traditional reforms like alternative pathways and reduced certification programs seldom seem to yield.

### **Significance**

The significance of this study is in the attempt to add to the learning to teach literature in the United States by examining learning to teach prior to university study and preservice teacher education. Instead of relying on the long-term memories of students preparing to become teachers, the study is meant to offer a glimpse into the pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers. Prior to

this point, the influence of prior school experiences on learning to teach has been theorized through the memories of practicing teachers, as done by Lortie (1975/2002), and more recently through the memories of student teachers (e.g., Boyd et al., 2013). With this study, I aim to provide additional insight into how teachers learn to teach, potentially from a broader range of prior experiences with teachers and teaching, which could include episodes of teaching outside of traditional classroom contexts.

Additional significance of this study lies in the potential to provide empirical and conceptual support for teacher educators' work with and respect for the agency of students with career interests in teaching as they learn to teach. Due in large part to the alleged generational transmission of teaching practices in K-12 schools, teaching has been considered work particularly resistant to change (Cuban, 1993; Lortie, 1975/2002). Teaching, in this view, is not something an individual sets out to learn, but instead an intense process of socialization done *to* individuals, which they cannot avoid. This study positions students with career interests in teaching as co-authors of their own stories of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003), working within broader images of teachers and teaching that are no doubt significant to individuals' own conceptions of teaching, but images that do not control their respective destinies as teachers.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The influence ascribed to experience today in teacher learning may at times appear a largely settled matter, yet such a characterization would belie not just its contentious role in the origins of formal teacher preparation in the United States, but also the critiques some scholars have levied against these typical characterizations of experience's influence. The *experience gap* I described in the previous chapter—that is, prospective teachers' difficulties linking their pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching with their own experiences teaching and learning to teach, as well as the teaching advocated by at least a percentage of teacher educators—exists, at least in part, due to the way prospective teachers' pre-collegiate experiences and their influence have been portrayed. Though these pre-collegiate experiences have been represented in education scholarship for more than 40 years in the form of studies analyzing and critiquing prospective teachers' conceptions, beliefs, or other related constructs, these constructs remain poorly understood, as does their influence on teacher preparation (Sexton, 2007). Repetition has replaced understanding through empirical research (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006), which has, over time, led to the flattening of prospective

teachers' experiences and the overemphasis of several accounts of pre-collegiate experiences. These accounts of experience, frequently focused on the past and decidedly negative, effectively provide teacher educators with a mandate for developing pedagogical approaches meant to overcome these deficits (e.g., Boyd et al., 2013; Grossman, 1990; Westrick & Morris, 2016).

The deficit and asset views of pre-collegiate experiences identified below, along with pedagogies engaging prior experiences, were developed over the course of an iterative three-year review of literature. Supplementing course readings with articles discovered through Teachers College's library, I reviewed 36 texts after employing keyword searches in journal databases for terms like *apprenticeship of observation*, *anticipatory socialization*, *teacher socialization*, and *secondary students*. Through additional course readings and ancestral searches, I expanded the review to 70 texts, including articles, chapters, and books. As I read and developed an annotated bibliography, I noted in my annotations framings or descriptions of prospective teachers' prior experiences, some of which were evident in titles, as was the case with Grossman's 1991 article "Overcoming the apprenticeship of observation in teacher education coursework." Having read Dewey's (1904/1974) essay on theory and practice in teacher education, I was also aware of how he framed experience as an asset, and I noted more positive views of experience as I read them, like Jackson's (1986) assertion that "prior experience is there as a potential resource to be drawn upon by all who face the demands of teaching" (p. 13). From these notes and annotations, I developed written descriptions of deficit and asset views among teacher educators, as well as combinations of the two within individual studies, and the pedagogies they had developed and described.

This chapter, following from the discussion of Dewey's theory of experience and conceptions of teaching featured in Chapter I, features my review of literature on the influence of prospective teachers' prior experiences. After sharing a historical overview of how the prior experiences of prospective teachers have been framed, I first share the *deficit view* of prospective teachers' pre-collegiate experiences, stemming primarily from the work of Lortie (1975/2002) and continuing with scholarship taking up Lortie's work, or other characterizations of the influence or challenges of prior experiences with teachers and teaching. In the second half of the chapter, I present an *asset view*, descending primarily from the work of Dewey and Jackson (1986). Using Dewey's (1934/2005) and Oral's (2012, 2013) notions of consummatory experience, this literature review will document limitations in the literature, particularly its emphasis on deficits in learning to teach created by pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching. Finally, I outline the utility of phenomenography in discovering prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, briefly discussing phenomenography's potential to explore teacher learning assets and deficits bound up within these conceptions of teaching.

### **Experience in the Early History of Formal Teacher Preparation**

By the time Dewey (1904/1974) had described novice teachers' own experiences as their "greatest asset" in learning as he discussed teacher preparation (p. 323), the role of prior school experiences in teacher qualification and learning had long been the subject of debate. In an essay advocating for the development in the United States of European style normal schools, Walter Johnson (1825) suspected "[m]en [sic] have been apparently presumed to be qualified to *teach*, from the moment that they passed the period of ordinary pupilage" (p. 14), a period found lacking by Johnson and other teacher

preparation advocates of the era like James G. Carter (1825/1858) and Thomas Gallaudet (1825/1852). The very nature of teaching appeared to be an active fault line in the debate. Whereas opponents of formal teacher preparation may have framed teaching as a relatively simplistic task, the basic contours of which were assimilated during one's student years, Johnson, Carter, and Gallaudet argued that teaching required complex knowledge and capacities, namely a command of both subject-matter knowledge and the ability to communicate such knowledge to children, capacities they did not feel were automatically cultivated during a person's time as an elementary school student. Student experiences, lacking the cultivation of such capacities, effectively created a series of gaps in learning for the novice teacher, which a formal teacher preparation curriculum, if enacted, could fill.

As arguments in favor of teacher preparation were circulated and re-circulated through essay and journal publications, they were met with resistance, particularly from politicians, who oversaw the purse strings for state funding and whose support normal school advocates considered essential to their cause (Fraser, 2007). Johnson's (1825) suspicion concerning the period of ordinary pupilage may have been confirmed by Dodge's 1840 report of the Committee of Education to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, which included the suggestion that members of the committee of education appeared to believe "every person, who has himself undergone a process of instruction, *must* acquire, by that very process, the art of instructing others" (p. 228, emphasis added). The very survival of state-supported teacher preparation may have involved, if not hinged upon, these competing views of prior experience, which may have led proponents of teacher preparation to adopt a more critical view of early normalites'

experiential resources to bolster their argument for teacher preparation. Normal schools ultimately survived these early political battles, and in the ninety years that followed Johnson's (1825), Carter's (1825/1858), and Gallaudet's (1825/1852) essays, the era's teacher educators developed a curriculum emphasizing subject-matter knowledge, pedagogy, and practice teaching over students' school experiences.

The intentional shift from students' experiences as sufficient qualification or preparation to the newly enacted teacher education curriculum is evident in the deficit views some early teacher educators appeared to hold of normal school students. Cyrus Peirce, principal of Framingham State Normal School, the United States' first normal school (Fraser, 2007), may have exemplified this deficit view as he critiqued the teaching his own students had received in the era's common schools. In an 1851 letter to Henry Barnard, Peirce lamented his own students' lack of knowledge in the common branches of reading, writing, and arithmetic, which he blamed on his students' time with common school era elementary teachers, who taught "few branches...imperfectly" (p. 279). This *lack of knowledge* may have helped Peirce (1841) to shape his instruction in pedagogy, which he conveyed "by my own *example*, as well as by *precepts*, the *best way of teaching the same things* effectually to others" (p. 165, emphasis original). Even when asking his students to build from his examples and precepts, Peirce (1841) prompted his students to "imagine themselves for the time, acting in the *capacity of teachers*" and then "adopt[ing] a style suitable for [young pupils]" (p. 165), rather than directly engaging prior experiences deemed important by some critics of formal teacher preparation (e.g., Dodge, 1840). In effect, Peirce's account of his work serves as an early precedent of a deficit orientation in teacher education; often prioritizing subject-matter knowledge he

felt obliged to remediate, sometimes at the expense of instruction on pedagogy, school management, or other concerns, Peirce engaged these deficits out of an apparent belief that his students encountered *imperfect* teaching during their studies in common schools.

Not all teacher educators and theorists conceptualized students' experiences as Peirce did, though. Dewey (1904/1974), a strong proponent of both the potential power of one's experiences as well as formal teacher preparation, recognized the tension between the two and sought to elucidate their relationship. He described learning and teaching as intimately bound within and from students' own experiences, which he believed should be examined before formal study since they potentially offered "plenty of practical material by which to illustrate and vitalize theoretical principles and laws of mental growth in the process of learning" (p. 323), perhaps including academic and cultural learning (Charters & Waples, 1929), and helping novice teachers to develop an understanding of how certain desired ends are met through their own actions. Despite the potential for growth he saw in prior experiences, Dewey (1904/1974) observed a stark divide between students' experiences as learners outside of school and the beliefs they acquired about classroom teaching, with teaching practices "somehow especially appropriate to the school" favored over other experiences the student might have accrued (p. 323). Despite this unconscious assimilation and privileging of school-centered methods of learning and teaching, Dewey (1904/1974) stressed the *continuous* nature of experience in teacher learning: the "greatest asset" the student possesses is "his [sic] own direct and personal experience" (p. 323), an asset that contains learning and teaching experiences, which, in Dewey's (1904/1974) view, must be taken into account when one learns to teach.



A teacher's prior experiences with teaching never may have served as the foundation of teacher preparation in the United States, yet these experiences are certainly more than a premise for the development of formal teacher preparation. Cultivated throughout the history of formal teacher preparation, views of prior experience as *assets* or *deficits*, sometimes competing and pronounced while other times co-existing within programs, have become deeply entrenched within the specific components of modern, college and university based teacher preparation programs, reflecting not just the assessment of prospective teachers' prior experiences, their value in learning to teach, and even of prospective teachers themselves, but also forming the basis for part of the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education. Although teacher educators and researchers have conceptualized, studied, and engaged prior experiences and their influence on learning to teach in different ways, particularly in the previous 70 years, they have, in many cases, conducted this work from a noticeable, if not obvious, deficit orientation.

### **The Splintering of Experience in Research on Teaching**

Before the 1970s, little was known of the influence of teachers' prior experiences on their teaching. Clark and Yinger (1977) observed that research on teaching before this point had emphasized *teacher behavior*, a series of approaches targeting "what teachers and students do in classrooms and how this behavior relates to student learning and attitudes" (p. 279). While these research approaches produced considerable knowledge, according to Yinger and Clark, the usefulness of the findings was limited by the "unique combination of personalities, constraints and opportunities" of each classroom (p. 279), meaning teacher behavior in one setting might not be appropriate, or even possible, in

another setting. The “logical outgrowth” of research on teacher behavior, as Yinger and Clark saw it, was the then “relatively new” approach to studying teaching by focusing on the “thinking processes of teachers,” including how they “gather, organize, interpret, and evaluate information” (p. 279). One assumption of research on teacher thinking was that teachers, using their judgment and decision making, developed *conceptual bases* to define important elements in classrooms and the relationships between them. Yinger and Clark adopted the expression *teachers’ implicit theories* to describe researchers’ developing understandings of what and/or how teachers were thinking about their work.

The personal nature of teachers’ thinking about their work likely contributed to the characterization of this thinking as *theories*, rather than a singular theory or even set of guiding principles informing teacher thinking. At the center of teachers’ implicit theories is “how teachers make sense of their world” in schools and classrooms (Clark & Yinger, 1977, p. 295), a sense-making that was felt only to be able to result in *implicit theories* because such sense-making was “not clearly articulated or codified” (p. 6), as Clark (1988) would later describe it, potentially affecting a wide range of teaching elements and situations, like students, the subject(s) teachers taught, and teacher role formation. This sense-making was thought to have led to certain beliefs or conceptual structures related to teaching. For example, Brophy and Good (1974), studying relationships between teachers and students, identified *belief systems* as a significant element of teacher thinking, finding “the teacher’s belief system or conceptual level” to be highly influential for effective teachers (p. 262). Focusing more on a conceptual structure, Janesick (1979), drawing from Shibutani’s (1955) view of a perspective as an “ordered view” or “organized conception of what is plausible and what is possible” (p.

564), studied *classroom perspective* as a participant-observer, focusing on classroom teachers' "consistent way of thinking and acting" and how teachers interpreted and constructed their actions in classrooms. Regardless of how teacher thinking was classified or labeled, its often-implicit nature meant that it only came to light through researcher inference and reconstruction (Clark, 1988).

Among its many findings about the role and work of schoolteachers, Lortie's 1975 study offered an explanation of experience's role in the formation of teachers' conceptual bases with regard to teaching, conceptual bases developed before preservice or professional work that were, in Lortie's view, nonetheless influential to teachers' learning and practice. Through his own inferences and reconstruction from interviews with Five Towns teachers, Lortie (1975/2002) found that teachers spoke of their K-12 school experiences "within a *continuous* rather than a discontinuous framework" (p. 65, emphasis original), demonstrating to Lortie that these teachers, and nearly all students in education, did not possess "blank [minds] awaiting inscription" when they arrived at teacher training (p. 66). Their thinking about teaching, children, and schools helped to create a clash Clark (1988) would later hint at, as they interacted with professors and research traditions presenting alternative, and even contradictory, conceptions of teaching. In making his argument, Lortie (1975/2002) adopted a framing of experience with teaching that may have been familiar to teacher educators, one echoing the critiques of early normal school proponents and teacher educators. An education student's time as a K-12 student, and therefore in K-12 schools, as Lortie saw it, had led to flawed and intractable conceptions of teaching—a deficit—with which teacher education had to contend by "offset[ing [education students'] individualistic and traditional experiences"

(p. 67). Lortie's suggestion, albeit a generic sounding one, was to move these students' towards understandings of teaching desired, or at least approved, by teacher educators.

### **Pre-Collegiate Experiences as Deficits in Learning to Teach**

Deficit views of prospective teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, rather than exclusively an analytical product of my own review of teacher education literature, have been explicitly identified and described by some researchers and teacher educators, particularly by scholars investigating white preservice teachers' conceptions of multicultural teaching (e.g., Conklin, 2008; Lowenstein, 2009). Linking deficit views to flawed and/or limited learning from prior K-12 experiences, Knapp (2012) described the deficit view of prior experiences as one in which teacher candidates are regarded as incompetent learners. Although Knapp (2012) indicted the apprenticeship of observation as a primary contributor to deficit conceptions of prior experience, other scholars have cast these experiences in a similar light, leading deficit views of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching to at least appear more common in teacher preparation literature than asset views of these conceptions. Deficit views have continued to appear in the literature, sometimes through studies of preservice teachers' memories and biographies, with these teachers' prior experiences described as leading to simplistic conceptions of teaching and learning, lacking any degree of pedagogical thinking or analysis, and including limited visions of self as teacher. The following sub-sections will examine each of these recurring themes.

### **Simplistic Conceptions of Teaching and Learning**

Arguably the most common deficit characterization of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, and one certainly present in the work of Lortie (1975/2002) and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985), has been the view that pre-collegiate students come to view teaching and learning as simple work. Based on interviews with practicing teachers, Lortie (1975/2002) asserted that K-12 students' interactions with teachers, which he termed the apprenticeship of observation, led to the cultivation of a series of resistant emotional and personal beliefs about teaching. The K-12 student came to understand teaching as something "fixated upon individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles" (Lortie, 1975/2002, p. 62), with teacher moods and preferences, rather than planning and goal-setting, dictating instruction. Not only did students see their teachers' behavior as motivated by personality rather than principle, but Lortie (1975/2002) viewed students as motivated by self-interest as well. He claimed some students sought "good grades and the value of teacher favor" (p. 62), leading them to develop an intensely personal and selfish empathy with teachers, the use of which was to "imagine how [the teacher] feels about various student actions" in order to predict teacher responses so as to serve students' own interests (p. 62). Lortie (1975/2002) believed students could relate their preferences about teaching—likes and dislikes—but their selfish motivations and limited perspectives made them incapable of analyzing teaching and understanding the reasons underlying their teachers' instructional decisions.

Noting the same individualistic tendencies Lortie (1975/2002) observed from his interviews, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985), and later Sexton (2007), highlighted the problems that may occur when prospective teachers rely too heavily on their pre-

collegiate experience in student teaching and teacher learning. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) used vignettes of three elementary preservice student teachers, with participant Karen's vignette illustrating a particular pitfall of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching. They found Karen's development as a teacher was dominated by her "personal and affectively charged" preconceptions about teaching and classroom life (p. 56). Because Karen, as a younger student, had seen spelling lists, recess, and some of the other activities and events of the elementary school classroom to which she was assigned, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) found that Karen's "familiarity with these classroom practices gives her a feeling of competence" in teaching (p. 55). This initial vignette demonstrates what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) referred to as the *familiarity pitfall*, "the tendency to trust what is more memorable in personal experience" (p. 56). Sexton, in a 2007 study of female preservice secondary teachers, also found participants recalled and drew upon memories of their own teachers, in this case tapping experiences with their secondary teachers rather than more recent experiences with college or university instructors, a preference or tendency documented in other studies (e.g., Grossman, 1990; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). "For these pre-service teachers," Sexton (2007) wrote, "how they were taught was how they wished to teach" (p. 71), a finding that has also been attributed to Lortie's study (e.g., Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006).

Through his study of high school students as a participant-observer, which could be described as a cross between ethnography and sociology, Everhart (1983) made similar claims about high school students' limited or superficial understanding of teaching. Some of the students Everhart (1983) spoke with identified everyday teacher behaviors as teaching, like "pile [work] on," "write," "sit at their desk," "correct papers"

and “grade us” (p. 74). When problems arose in class, teachers responded by “scream[ing],” “watch[ing] people,” and “be[ing] strict” (p. 74). Everhart (1983) asserted that students had appeared to lack any “conception of teachers planning lessons, debating alternatives of what to teach, agonizing over grading, the treatment of a student, wondering if their teaching had an effect, or anything like that” (p. 74). Students’ views on teachers and their teaching confirmed, according to Everhart (1983), that a student culture existed, consisting of a series of priorities or beliefs that were at odds with the school’s adult culture. Everhart’s (1983) claims regarding student culture sound similar to Lortie’s (1975/2002), who wrote that his respondents did not “contrast their ‘student’ perceptions with a later, more sophisticated viewpoint” (p. 65), though Everhart did not suggest that the student culture and viewpoint persisted into adulthood.

### **The Absence of Pedagogical Thought**

Another core tenet of deficit views of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching has been the belief that student teachers, and by extension secondary students, lack the ability to analyze teaching that they observe during their pre-collegiate experiences. Instead of analytical abilities, pre-collegiate experiences result in “intuitive and imitative” understandings of teaching (Lortie, 1975/2002, p. 62); teaching, as described by Lortie, is something one assimilates by watching, a process done automatically, which does not require deep consideration or knowledge of pedagogical principles. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) seemed to highlight a similar deficiency when they asserted that Karen lacked “an inquiring disposition” in her preparation as a teacher (p. 56). It was not that Lortie and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann believed that prospective teachers did not see reasons for their teachers’ decisions in the classroom. Rather, they found these reasons to

be grounded in emotion and personal preference, with students seeing teaching governed by mood or feeling more than anything else.

While Lortie (1975/2002) and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) attributed prospective teachers' inabilities to develop pedagogical thinking to their K-12 school experiences, scholars have also described how other facets of students' biographies inhibited pedagogical thought. In his brief overview of teacher thinking literature, Clark (1988) identified teachers' implicit theories, which he described as "eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources" (p. 6), including personal experience. According to Clark (1988), the biographical basis of implicit theories made them highly personal, centered on teachers' own notion of teaching, which played "an important part in the judgments and interpretations that teachers make every day" (p. 6). Four years later, Holt-Reynolds (1992), through an interview study of 11 preservice teachers' personal history-based beliefs about reading, framed the power of biography similarly to Clark (1988), describing how these beliefs contributed to what Holt-Reynolds (1992) called lay theories of teaching, which constitute students' "beliefs about what actions, states of mind, attitudes, and intentions combine to personify a 'good' teacher" (p. 343). Despite the more expansive range of possibilities for models of teaching provided by Holt-Reynolds (1992), found across "schools, homes, or the larger community" (p. 326), preservice teachers' lay theories were centered on themselves, and how "all learners are essentially like themselves" (p. 343), leading to a lack of awareness of learning differences between students. These experience-derived beliefs were powerful yet often tacit, with students themselves generally found to lack the ability to examine and to name them as they develop (Clark, 1988; Holt-Reynolds, 1992).



### **Limited Visions of Self as Teacher**

In addition to limiting the growth of pedagogical thinking, some deficit views cast pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching as inhibitors on visions or imaginings of self as teacher. When novice teachers begin to construct themselves as teacher, all they have are “affective responses of liking and disliking” and “identifying with or rejecting” teaching they have already seen as K-12 students (Lortie, 1975/2002, p. 63). Buchmann and Schwille (1983) called the apprenticeship of observation a survival tool for beginning teachers, one often tapped at the avoidance or ignoring of “ideas about what is possible and desirable” (p. 37), should students have even developed these ideas from their prior experiences. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) seemed to doubt that students could independently transcend their own experiences, arguing students’ pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching developed “in a way that makes it difficult to see alternatives” (p. 63). Therefore, one way to express how pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching have been found to constitute a deficit is to say that these conceptions have been understood to result in, or themselves constitute, an inability of pre-collegiate students to see or to formulate alternative conceptions of, or beliefs on, teaching due to the wealth of models and experiences they have already assimilated, models that can be readily drawn upon once these students enter the classroom as preservice, and later practicing, teachers.

An empirical study by Maxson and Sindelar (1998) found many preservice teachers’ conceptions of themselves as future teachers to be unclear or altogether lacking, a deficiency they felt teacher preparation should address. Maxson and Sindelar (1998) hypothesized that their participants would bring “strong, clear images of themselves as future teachers,” which had been developed “during their long ‘apprenticeship of

observation” (p. 23). Based on two written exercises, one of which included participant created images of themselves as teachers, they found their twelve participants did not possess such images of self as teacher, with only five demonstrating clear images, which they conceptualized as “images that contained aims for their future pupils” with “teaching methodologies that could achieve those aims” (Maxson & Sindelar, 1998, p. 23). These findings led Maxson and Sindelar (1998) to conclude that preservice teachers can be roughly divided into two groups: one with clear images of themselves as teacher, and another without an image they can convey to others, the latter, in the authors’ study at least, more typical of preservice teachers, in effect marking a shift in deficit from the substance of conceptions or images to their absence in preservice teachers. Through assignments and pedagogies, teacher educators, in Maxson and Sindelar’s (1998) view, could play important roles in helping preservice teachers to clarify their teaching beliefs, and to recognize the ways these beliefs might yield and/or inhibit changes in teaching practices, processes they found were not often occurring during these preservice teachers’ pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching.

### **Living in “Different Existential Worlds” than Students**

As Maxson and Sindelar’s (1998) study helped to demonstrate, conceptions or images of teaching are, at times, defined by what prospective teachers’ experiences lack in terms of qualities and practices (cf., Conklin, 2008), and perhaps no portion of these experiences are as sharply critiqued as students’ life experiences with regard to ethnic and cultural backgrounds, privilege, and resistance to acknowledging and opposing oppression and inequality. Since at least 1933, scholars have questioned whether members of one race could teach children of another race. Wondering about this himself,

Woodson (1933/2005) concluded that “there is no particular body of facts that Negro teachers can impart to children of their own race that may not be just as easily presented by persons of another race,” though he presented an important qualifier: “if [teachers of other races] have the same attitude as Negro teachers” (p. 28). Woodson’s references to tradition and race hate, among others, seem to indict experience as a contributor to such an attitude, or perhaps to its absence. More recently, Knapp (2012) explicitly linked deficit views concerning prospective teachers’ beliefs around diversity and multicultural education to Lortie, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann, and others, asserting that prospective teachers are expected to *overcome* their experiences through teacher education “in order to learn to teach well and justly” (p. 324). Prospective teachers’ experiences must be overcome since they are accrued by “liv[ing] in different existential worlds” than students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Gay, 1993, p. 96), therefore consisting of “deficient knowledge or experience from which to build when it comes to learning about [diversity]” (Lowenstein, 2009, p. 163).

As a group, white preservice teachers in particular have been said to bring “very little cross-cultural background, knowledge, and experience” to teaching (Sleeter, 2001, p. 95), and their often dominant positions in society as white, middle-class, English speakers may even lead them to attempt to divorce themselves from the notion of being cultural beings (Ladson-Billings, 2006), and to resist challenging their beliefs and their often stereotypical views concerning culture and difference (Klug, Luckey, Wilkins, & Whitfield, 2006; Knapp, 2012). As a result of these significant experiential deficits, prospective teachers—particularly white preservice teachers—lack the “frames of reference and points of view” necessary to work successfully with students of color (Gay,

1993, p. 96). Such a lack of frames of reference and points of view may even lead to a lack of intersubjectivity, awareness of privilege, and commitment to social activism among prospective teachers, and, in some cases, may result in the outright rejection of the very existence of oppression (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2005).

Teacher education research on identifying and helping prospective teachers to overcome alleged experiential deficits forms part of a knowledge base that has been described as piecemeal and repetitive (Sleeter, 2001). For example, Gomez's (1994) single participant study described how a teacher attempted to apply 20-year-old experiences in a predominately white suburban setting to a diverse, urban classroom. Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, and Middleton (1999), on the other hand, focused more on the substance of participants' experiences, finding 19 of 24 predominately white participants in a sample held limited experiences with diverse populations, which were "focused primarily on immediate community and family life" with few opportunities to engage "other ways of being" (p. 355). Studying teacher education in Canada, which the authors identified as a *racist society*, Finney and Orr (1995) found their students were largely ignorant of the area's Aboriginal culture, as well as the social forces that shaped individuals' and groups' circumstances in life. Described here is not an exhaustive list of studies examining prospective teachers' experiences with diversity and multiculturalism, but a small sample intended to demonstrate the deficits white prospective teachers have been found to hold, as well as how they hinder competence teaching and working with, and the success of, students of color in schools.

### **Possible Consequences of Pre-Collegiate Conceptions of Teaching**

Perhaps the most pervasive consequence stemming from some entrenched pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching is the “unreflective imitation” of teaching practices and models observed as a K-12 student (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, p. 64). Having developed deep-seated and influential beliefs concerning teaching, or even comfort with teaching practices recalled from K-12 experiences (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985), teachers have been said to naturally fall back on the teaching they have seen in the past as models for what they can and should do in the future in their own classrooms (Lortie, 1975/2002). Lacking a critical lens (Lortie, 1975/2002) or inquiring disposition (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) with which to analyze these beliefs, prospective teachers fall prey to insidious forces, which often “arrest thought or mislead prospective teachers” (Feiman-Nemser, & Buchmann, 1985, p. 63), and possibly lead them to “take on the ways of others without realizing [they are] doing so” (Lortie, 1975/2002, p. 64). As characterized by Lortie (1975/2002) and Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985), pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching can produce great deficits in prospective teachers, deficits they carry to teacher preparation, which have the potential to blossom into familiar, change-resistant teaching beliefs and practices (Grossman, 1991).

Empirical studies by Raffo and Hall (2006) and Rinke, Mawhinney, and Park (2014) have attempted to explain how prior experiences shape teaching practices. For example, Raffo and Hall (2006) used semi-structured interviews focusing on the skills and attributes of good teachers with nine students enrolled in a one-year UK-based certification program, prompting these students to assess their own conceptions of

teaching and learning, their abilities as teachers, and their relationships with their students; they observed connections between prior experiences and the quality of teacher learning taking place in field experiences. Rinke et al. (2014) also examined how the life experiences of student teachers—in their case, 40 students at three different universities—impacted career decisions and views of the teaching profession. Their analysis identified three types of modeling their participants had encountered: 1) disciplinary, a desire to focus on subject-matter; 2) mentoring, the strong influence of a former teacher, and, most similar to Raffo and Hall's (2006) work, 3) empowering practices, making changes based on what one observed as a student. Rinke et al. (2014) found exposure to a particular form of modeling powerfully contributed to the kind of teacher into which preservice teachers would develop.

Imitation, specifically its role in learning to teach, has not only been described at the individual teacher level, as in Raffo and Hall's (2006) and Rinke et al.'s (2014) studies, but it has also been linked to greater social reproduction of teaching practices. Lortie (1975/2002) contended that the imitation of teaching practices observed as a K-12 student forms a tradition that “is a potentially powerful influence which transcends generations” (p. 63), making pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching “an ally of continuity rather than of change” (p. 66). Hargreaves (2009), discussing the legacy of Lortie's (1975/2002) *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*, identified conservatism, along with presentism and individualism, as one of three orientations negatively affecting educational change. Of the quotes Hargreaves (2009) shared from Lortie's study to describe conservatism, none may have been more appropriate than Lortie's (1975/2002) assertion that teachers had “a preference for doing things as they have been done in the

past” (p. 209), leading to a generational transmission of teaching practices that helped to shape teachers’ roles in classrooms. Lortie (1975/2002) attached a certain air of inevitability to imitation in teaching, as though this outcome could hardly be avoided.

### **Pre-Collegiate Experiences as Assets in Learning to Teach**

While the third edition of the *Handbook of research on teacher education* (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008) does not include an explicit definition of an asset view of pre-collegiate experiences or conceptions of teaching, its contributors offer an indicator of the prominence of the deficit view. While Lortie’s (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation is referred to in passing by McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright (2008) and Labaree (2008), references to potential assets like images (e.g., Calderhead & Robson, 1991) or personal histories (e.g., Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991) are absent from the volume’s author and subject indexes. Nevertheless, asset views of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, in which past experiences are considered prospective teachers’ “greatest asset” (Dewey, 1904/1974, p. 322-323) in, or at the very least one of great significance to, learning to teach have been developed in parallel by some preservice teacher educators. However, in comparison to characterizations of the deficits prospective teachers develop throughout their own experiences with teaching, the nature of the experiential resources students might bring with them to teacher preparation is undertheorized, perhaps due in part to idiosyncratic views of personal experiences. The literature presented in the following section examines some of the ways researchers have explored prospective teachers’ experiences and conceptions of teaching as potential assets in learning to teach.

### **Latent Student Culture in Learning to Teach**

Two years after Lortie's (1975/2002) *Schoolteacher* was published, Lacey (1977/2012) presented findings from his own sociological study of teaching. Drawing on Becker, Geer, and Hughes' 1961 study of the socialization of medical doctors, Lacey (1977/2012) introduced Becker et al.'s definition of *latent culture* to teacher socialization. In the context of teacher preparation, prospective teachers bring a latent *student culture*, consisting of "a set of understandings shared by students and a set of actions congruent with those understandings" to their preparation as teachers (Lacey, 1977/2012, p. 69), yet their preparation experiences also provide prospective teachers with greater exposure to a new teacher culture. The latent student culture, while insufficient as a one-to-one substitute for the new demands students encounter within the teacher culture, should they seek to become teachers, could be activated by subsequent experiences learning to teach and teaching, and transformed into new experiences as a teacher.

Lacey (1977/2012) would no doubt concur with Dewey's (1904/1974) valuation of personal experience as an *asset* in learning to teach. He described the substance of latent culture as *potential*, "a reservoir of skills and values on which the probationary teacher can draw" (p. 136), presenting a view of previous experiences similar to Dewey's (1904/1974), who asserted that the student has been "learning all the days of his [sic] life" and has accrued "plenty of practical material by which to illustrate and vitalize theoretical principles and laws of mental growth" (Dewey, 1904/1974, p. 323), material from which a prospective teacher could draw. Lacey's (1977/2012) conceptualization of teacher socialization rested upon more than just the prior experiences that helped to



produce student culture; his case study analysis of Sussex graduate education certificate program graduates presented teacher socialization as the reconciling of novice teachers' latent student culture and "the desire to make the school more like the place in which the teacher would like to teach" with highly contextualized conceptions of effective and accepted practices within individual schools (p. 136). Socialization as a teacher, though influenced by pre-collegiate student experiences, occurred through choice and decision-making, rather than the largely deterministic and conservative forces Lortie (1975/2002) described.

### **Knowledge of Teaching as *Common Sense***

In a 1986 essay, Jackson examined the development of teachers' epistemic knowledge, or what they know about teaching. In the first half of his essay, Jackson addressed the criticisms and critiques of teacher educators and teaching education writ large, notably why some teachers were able to succeed in their work without the formal pedagogical training offered in preparation programs. Jackson (1986) claimed that one interpretation of this outcome was that these teachers possessed "compensatory qualities" to overcome their "deficiency" in pedagogical knowledge (p. 8), an interpretation or view he asserted Dewey (1904/1974) would favor, highlighting Dewey's notion of the *spirit of inquiry* as responsible for these teachers' successes. This spirit, which allowed teachers possessing it to "instinctively behave correctly," was part of certain teachers' "natural endowment" for teaching (p. 9), which Jackson (1986) attributed to *common sense*, or "knowledge picked up in the course of living" (p. 10).

Although he claimed that critics of teacher preparation assumed prospective teachers' knowledge of teaching came from such common sense, which made learning to

teach sound quite similar to the accounts present in Dodge's (1840) report during the normal school debate, Jackson (1986) asserted that teachers' experiences were "a potential resource to be drawn upon" (p. 13). The fact that schooling was nearly universal for young people, coupled with a lifetime of access to *nonprofessional teachers* "at home, on the street, in churches and synagogues, in doctors' offices, and on the playground" (p. 2), had made teaching ubiquitous. Experiences with teaching in various contexts potentially formed a type of knowledge, much as common sense developed from other experiences. An important task for teachers was to develop a *good* sense from one's common sense, though Jackson (1986) confessed that it was often difficult to distinguish between the two. Despite this difficulty, experiences with teaching "[equip] our would-be teacher with a lot of what he or she needs to know in order to do what the job demands" (p.15), meaning the common-sensical often exists alongside the professional or the specialized. Although Jackson (1986) believed "[c]ritics who claim that [teaching knowledge] is simply a matter of common sense are surely wrong" (p. 30), the influence of knowledge accrued by living could not be dismissed, as it is part of what makes learning to teach a complex endeavor.

### **Traces of the Asset View in Personal Biographies and Images**

In the years following Lacey's (1977/2012) study of teaching and Jackson's (1986) essay, few scholars have situated pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching as resources, with traces of this view couched alongside warnings of deficits. Echoes of Dewey's asset characterization of prior experience can be seen in parts of Holt-Reynolds's (1992) study, particularly her claim that knowledge of student engagement and interest among preservice teachers is "knowledge [that] is valuable" (p. 346). The

value of this knowledge necessitated the “[a]cknowledging [of] the power of personal history-based beliefs and conceptualizations about teaching” preservice teachers brought to teacher preparation (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 344). However, by advocating the use of prior experiences as a platform for “positive decisions about the value of *our* ideas” (p. 344, emphasis added), Holt-Reynolds (1992) may have marginalized preservice teachers’ pre-collegiate experiences as a means to teacher educators’ ends. While Dewey (1904/1974) believed a more refined understanding of one’s personal experiences potentially contributed to the growth of “independent judges and critics” of principles and teaching methods, Holt-Reynolds (1992) sought ways to understand how preservice teachers “use beliefs to defend the decisions they make” in order to spur changes in those beliefs consistent with teacher educators’ ideas (p. 344).

Calderhead and Robson’s (1991) study of preservice teachers’ images of teaching reveals a similar phenomenon, with claims of assets interspersed with emphases on the deficits formed from personal experiences and the understandings preservice teachers develop from them. Similar to Holt-Reynolds’s (1992) claim that lay theories could “act as helpful schemata” for the expansion of preservice teachers’ learning, Calderhead and Robson (1991) asserted that images could provide detailed depictions of knowledge preservice teachers had developed. The images Calderhead and Robson (1991) explicated in their study—“representations or reconstructions...[that] provide us with an indicator of teachers’ knowledge, and enable us to examine the knowledge growth attributable to different training experiences” (p. 3)—often revealed restrictive or limited images of teaching, just as the lay theories of teaching Holt-Reynolds (1992) discerned among preservice teachers tended to prevent, or at least to inhibit, new learning. Images, as a

construct, helped Calderhead and Robson (1991) to reveal limitations in preservice teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, succeeding in illuminating only a small degree of the potential and assets Lacey (1977/2012) and Dewey (1904/1974) saw in prior experiences.

### **Teachers of Color and the Value of Experience**

Since at least the early 1990s, proponents of various efforts to recruit teachers of color into the teaching workforce have been premised, at least in part, on the unique experiences these teachers carry with them into the classroom. For instance, Gay (1993) asserted “[t]he experiences, values, orientations, and perspectives of middle-class, highly educated, middle-aged Anglo teachers...are very different from those of students who are poor, undereducated, [and of] racial and ethnic minorities” (p. 288). Different variations of these positive valuations of prior experiences have appeared over the course of the last 20 years. Arguing for the tapping of pools of paraprofessionals for the teacher ranks, Villegas and Clewell (1998) saw “pedagogical benefits that students of color could potentially derive from teachers who are familiar with their cultural backgrounds and whose life experiences more closely match their own” (p. 122). Similarly, Nieto (2000) observed that American teachers were predominately white, female, and monolingual, living lives with markedly different experiences than teachers of color live. A more recent review of literature by Sleeter and Milner (2011) claimed that the cultural knowledge teachers of color bring to classrooms serves as “a foundation for their teaching practices” (p. 83). Although these scholars were unanimous in their characterizations of the uniqueness and value of minority teachers' experiential capital, Grant and Gibson's (2011) description of diversity studies in teacher education as lacking

a strong empirical base rings true across these authors' works, with each one either a theoretical essay or literature review.

A study by Stanford (1998), though not advocacy for or analysis of minority teacher recruitment programs, also situated the experiences of teachers of color as a resource in teaching. Stanford (1998) examined the beliefs and practices of eleven award-winning African American teachers. Employing a narrative methodology, Stanford (1998), just as Lortie (1975/2002) did, explored her participants' memories of their own teachers. Stanford's (1998) participants described their remembered teachers as "[e]nabling their students to achieve despite myriad obstacles that threatened their success," offering "more than a series of well-structured...lessons" but also support, affirmation, and patience (p. 231). These memories, along with what Stanford (1998) described as a *common cultural heritage* with students, influenced teachers' current practice, including the development of "a capacity to see unrecognized potential and communicate that to students" (p. 241), thus allowing them to surface their students' assets rather than dwell upon their deficits. Among Stanford's (1998) conclusions were nods to Jackson's (1986) list of learning from watching teachers as well as Lortie's (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation, though she ultimately found these scholars ignored the "essential characteristic" of "establish[ing] meaningful interpersonal relationships with students" (p. 240), which, for Stanford's participants, was heavily influenced by the relationships *their* teachers developed with them, as well as common cultural capital or backgrounds Lortie (1975/2002) wholly ignored in his study.

## **Reframing Multicultural Teacher Education**

More recently, a line of research on the preparation of teachers for multicultural classroom contexts has also explored the assets white prospective teachers bring to teacher preparation. Lowenstein's 2009 review of literature described a "narrative that depicts white teacher candidates as deficient learners who lack resources" (p. 178). At times, this narrative may have included the blaming of prospective teachers for their "unexamined whiteness," as well as other "qualities they lack and the practices they are not implementing" (Conklin, 2008, p. 672). Citing Dewey, Lowenstein (2009) advocated for a reconceptualization of prospective teachers as "competent learners who bring rich resources to their learning," an idea that comes "with a rich history," which she traced back to Dewey (p. 187). These resources, Lowenstein (2009) argued, could be of great use to teacher educators, possibly "crafting the future of teacher education" (p. 188).

Citing Lowenstein's (2009) work, Knapp (2012) drew attention to how teacher educators' intentions with the use of preservice teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching helped to frame not only teacher education pedagogy, but also preservice teachers' resistance to certain activities and assignments. Resistance to certain instructors and/or pedagogies, in Knapp's (2012) view, was sometimes "appropriate and appropriately" applied, particularly when preservice teachers found themselves cast as incompetent learners in teacher education, as was often the case for white students in courses emphasizing multicultural or culturally relevant pedagogies. Knapp (2012) believed pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching offered opportunities to develop respect for competing conceptions of good teaching, as well as the groundwork for agency, through which preservice teachers could construct their own understandings *using* pre-

collegiate conceptions of teaching (Knapp, 2012), as opposed to *adopting*, or pretending to adopt, them from teacher educator pedagogies intended to discredit or severely problematize students' prior experiences. The difference between prior experiences as an asset for teacher educators' purposes and preservice teachers' purposes could be a vitally important factor to consider, particularly for teacher education programs seeking to cultivate agency and empowerment (Knapp, 2012).

### **Studying 'Urban Kids' and School Reform**

Although Lacey (1977), Calderhead and Robson (1991), Stanford (1998), Knapp (2012), and other scholars have characterized, or at least explored the possibility of, prior experience as an asset in teacher learning, their studies focused on either prospective or practicing teachers. If the "content and scope of influence from [teachers' own] teachers" changes over time (p. 139), as Lortie's (1998/2005) calls for research at the "pre-training," "during training," and other career stages hinted at, teacher educators might benefit from research exploring pre-collegiate students' experiences with teachers and teaching, and how they might understand teaching at this stage of their lives, or their careers, should they subsequently become teachers. While they were not targeting students' conceptions of teaching, Wilson and Corbett (2007) reported they spoke with "thousands of students in mostly low-income schools in a vast range of settings" about teaching and schools (p. 283), including interviews with nearly 250 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders over a three-year period as they studied a series of reforms taking place at five middle schools in Philadelphia.

Students, as a direct result of their time in school where they had the opportunity to "see more teachers teach than anyone," developed an expertise around teaching,

leading to descriptions of teaching that were “remarkably consistent and elegantly simple” (Wilson & Corbett, 2007, p. 283). For example, good teachers, according to students, employed various instructional strategies (Wilson & Corbett, 2007), which was not always the case in students’ experiences, where some teachers “opted to rely on instructional strategies that were primarily suited to one style or intelligence rather than to several” (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, pp. 41-42). Through these strategies and styles, teachers could explain content to students clearly, both through teacher talk as well as *hands-on* activities. They made sure students completed their work in class, and they were willing and able to assist students “whenever and however the student wishes” (Wilson & Corbett, 2007, p. 283). Teachers’ refusals to let students skip assignments and their efforts to help students were indicators of caring, which Wilson and Corbett (2007) found students “equated with teaching” (p. 310). Though they commented on “how likeable a teacher was,” or the teacher’s *personal style*, Wilson and Corbett (2001) found students were able to distinguish between personal style and *instructional style*, or “how effective a teacher was” (p. 61). “One must keep in mind that were it not for the age difference and the lack of professional certification,” Wilson and Corbett (2007) wrote, “students’ extensive experience in school would make them *unquestioned experts* on any topic related to instruction” (p. 283, emphasis added).

### **Engaging Pre-Collegiate Experiences through Dissonance and ‘Reflection’**

Preservice teacher education, rather than a rite of passage or a collection of requirements to complete until a teaching certificate or license is granted, is meant to be a learning experience for prospective teachers, one resulting in some change in the prospective teacher. Pedagogies, field experiences, and other activities undertaken as part



of preservice teacher education could result in any number of changes to a prospective teacher's knowledge base or skill set, many of which occur in concert, or at least simultaneously: to better understand how the child learns; to develop new teaching approaches; to consider social, emotional, and political influences and/or effects of schooling; among many others. The assumption most likely made in many preparation programs is that prospective teachers are not already experts on child learning, pedagogy, and schooling, and that, minimally, a change will occur in the knowledge and skills prospective teachers *leave* the program with, compared to what they possessed upon entry. Desired changes in prospective teachers can be qualitatively different between teacher educators and programs, as the specific intentions of teacher educators toward change—including their orientations towards prospective teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, and their significance in teacher learning—can vary, possibly leading to the use of certain pedagogies, or even a different tone in terms of the experiential capital prospective teachers bring to their teacher preparation.

One orientation towards prospective teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching is working to overcome the power of what has already been seen and done. Asserting that, without intervention, "the diverse histories of teachers will play a cardinal role" in learning to teach, Lortie (1975/2002) called for "training experiences which offset prospective teachers' individualistic and traditional experiences" (p. 67). Unlike Dewey (1904/1974), who considered it a "serious mistake...to fail to take account of this body of practical experience" (p. 323), Lortie (1975/2002) called for actions that might avoid or obviate pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching. In the years following Lortie's

(1975/2002) study, many teacher educators and researchers have taken up his calls for action.

The characterizations of pre-collegiate experiences presented by Lortie (1975/2002), as well as the pitfall of familiarity stemming from these experiences presented by Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985), sometimes seemed to be ascribed to *all* prospective teachers, as though the experiences of this group were substantively similar, and should be treated as such. Having accepted characterizations of their students' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, and perhaps concerned by what they perceived as the generational transmission of traditional, teacher-centered teaching practices, a number of teacher educators have focused their efforts on developing pedagogical interventions on their students' prior experiences without necessarily exploring the variability and individual meaning-making associated with these experiences. By 1992, scholars were noting the lack of attention paid to the nature of experiences accrued prior to formal teacher preparation, with Pajares accusing teacher educators of being "aware of the power of this early enculturation" into teaching prior to formal preparation yet largely "fail[ing] to explore it" (p. 324).

The interventions developed and/or reported upon by teacher educators have varied, yet they typically draw on, or are at least mindful of, one of two modes of thinking. One mode could be called *cognitive dissonance*, the differences arising from prospective teachers' new experiences when they are different or inconsistent with prior experiences, and the ways individuals integrate these new beliefs or stimuli into their preexisting understandings (Festinger, 1957). McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001) claimed dissonance is typically an unpleasant experience for teachers, and its unpleasantness leads

individuals encountering these conflicts to work to resolve them. Another mode of thinking referenced in literature on prior conceptions of teaching is *reflective thinking*, which has been traced to the work of Dewey (Conway, 1998, 2001; Goodman, 1992; Ward & McCotter, 2004), who described it as “putting the consequences of different ways and lines of action before the mind” in order to “[enable] us to *know what we are about* when we act” (Dewey, 1933/1974, p. 212, original emphasis). Galman (2009) warned that reflective thinking and dissonance are not synonymous: a preservice teacher could reflect on prior experiences without necessarily encountering dissonance, and some reflective thinking may be used in teacher education to strengthen prior beliefs without examining, and possibly challenging and changing, them.

How teacher educators have engaged with the experiences of K-12 students, or prospective teachers’ pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, has not been a mere matter of invoking a particular word or pedagogy. In other words, although reflective thinking has at least a few Deweyan roots, the ways in which this mode of thinking are taken up by different scholars and teacher educators vary greatly. Teacher educators who describe their pedagogy as encouraging reflective thought, yet who desire for their students to adopt a new belief, theory, or practice regardless of what may have been learned from prior experiences, have something quite different in mind than teacher educators who use these beliefs, theories, and practices as prompts for consideration in prospective teachers’ becoming as teacher, the latter perhaps more indicative of Dewey’s (1933/1974) descriptions of reflective thinking. As Knapp’s (2012) study helped to demonstrate, the intent of teacher educators is an important element of teacher preparation and its

pedagogies, as it plays a crucial role in framing, and perhaps utilizing, the prior experiences of prospective teachers.

In the following section, I will describe several pedagogies related to prospective teachers' pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching. These studies explore the experiences of university-based preservice and professional teachers, rather than high school students. Despite this, the studies offer examples of how some instructors and teacher education scholars situate prior experiences of prospective teachers, what they believe these students learn from their prior experiences, and how they work to instigate changes in prospective teachers' thinking and behavior.

### **Autobiographical Writing**

Perhaps the most common pedagogical engagement with pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching is the use of various forms of autobiographical writing, which have treated preservice teachers' experiences as assets or deficits, depending on specific usage. Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) identified several specific assignments used with preservice teachers, such as chronological life history accounts focusing on memorable experiences, interactive journals in which Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) selected certain themes and offered feedback, and other reflective writing assignments that could include the analysis of documents from the course, major educational theories, and/or self-assessments of prospective teachers' strengths and weaknesses as teachers. Despite the benefits they linked to autobiographical writing, which also included the learning of subject-matter and improved writing abilities, Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) singled out impression management as a potential issue in these assignments, highlighting the challenge of attempting to compel preservice student teachers to reflect

on experiences as part of graded course assignments. Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) feared preservice student teachers “often reflect salient features of the intersection of our personal histories and pedagogies” as means to complete assignments (p. 110), rather than what the authors regarded as authentic forms of reflection. Claiming that such impression management was always possible, Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) described their efforts to combat this phenomenon by “reveal[ing]...the influences, including our recent and distant personal histories, that have shaped our pedagogies” (p. 110).

A number of more recent studies have drawn additional attention to autobiographical writing as a resource for teacher learning through reflection on prior experiences. Like Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) utilized autobiographies with preservice elementary teachers in a mathematics teaching methods course, offering these students suggestions on possible topics but leaving the actual choices of written responses up to students. More recent interventions have incorporated autobiographical writing as a regular part of education coursework, rather than one-off assignments completed at the beginning of the semester, as was the case with Mewborn and Tyminski. For example, Knapp (2012) required preservice teachers in an educational psychology course to maintain a journal throughout the semester. This journal assignment was similar to Knowles and Holt-Reynolds’s (1991) interactive journal, as Knapp (2012) also provided prompts for preservice teachers to write about, as well as written feedback in response to preservice teachers. The sharing of responses was also an important resource in Knapp’s (2012) course; she incorporated sharing through

handouts with compilations of student responses, in-class sharing by students of their own writing, as well as teacher read-alouds, the latter read anonymously.

Autobiographical writing has also been employed as a means to overcome what some teacher educators have characterized as deficits carried forward in time by past experiences. Boyd et al. (2013), using reflective blogs instead of handwritten journals, prompted 31 preservice elementary teachers to write on topics they found interesting or timely. Unlike Knowles and Holt-Reynolds's (1991) interactive journals and Knapp's (2012) reflective journals, Boyd et al. (2013) refrained from commenting on their participants' writing, though participants could comment on each other's blog entries. After reviewing 1,120 blog entries and 2,240 comments, the authors found that students "reflect[ed] upon their autobiographical experiences," with some seeing the supremacy of their coursework and field learning over what they had learned from their prior experiences, and a few even "beginning to challenge the apprenticeship of observation" (p. 27), which Boyd et al. (2013) situated as a necessary step for students "to consider the position of a teacher, pedagogical practice, and student needs" (p. 27). Instead of a tool to surface one's own experiences and to build upon them, blogging offered Boyd et al.'s (2013) preservice teachers a method to lay bare their prior experiences and the flaws contained within them. Blogging also revealed what Boyd et al. (2013) described as an acute deficit in analytical thinking, as just 10% of their data engaged in what Boyd et al. (2013) called "critical reflection on the PST's apprenticeship of observation," enabling them "to consider a new perspective on how schooling can occur" (p. 27).

## Critical Reflection

Building on the teacher education and/or learning research of scholars like Gore, Zeichner, Schön, and Sparkes, as well as Dewey's notion of reflection, Howard (2003) described what he called *critical reflection*. By the time of Howard's (2003) study, reflection had already been employed by teacher educators, as its use with teacher education students had been advocated for in 1993 by Gay, while two years later Ladson-Billings (1995) shared what she called reflections of eight teachers who had taught primarily with African American students and participated in ethnographic interviews. Critical reflection, as Howard (2003) employed the term, positioned the teacher as a problem solver, one who could employ "an active and deliberate cognitive process" to their experiences in order to examine the "moral, political, and ethical contexts of teaching" (p. 197). This active and deliberate process posed significant challenges for prospective teachers, as they would be forced "to ask challenging questions that pertain to [their] construction of individuals from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds" (p. 198), a construction that is a product of the lived experiences prospective teachers bring to their work and lives as teachers. Critical reflection was not meant to be used to "indict teachers for what they believe and why it does not work for students," but instead part of an ongoing process to "[become] effective teachers for today's ever-changing student population" (p. 201).

Howard (2003) shared a brief case study of a course he taught within a teacher education program that was intended to prepare prospective teachers for teaching in urban schools. Prior to the course, all instructors took part in a workshop that asked instructors "to come to grips with their own identities around race, ethnicity, social class,

and gender” (p. 200), just as they would do with prospective teachers as part of the class. The course itself included exploration of various aspects of identity, with Howard (2003) finding “race has been the most challenging [type of identity] for the preservice teachers” (p. 199). Howard (2003) viewed critical reflection as a prerequisite for any effort to employ culturally relevant pedagogy, and he offered five suggestions to help teachers move from critical reflection to culturally relevant teaching: 1) ensure faculty can sufficiently address the complex nature of identities, 2) position reflection as part of a never-ending process, 3) be explicit about what to reflect about, 4) recognize that teaching is not a neutral act, and 5) avoid reductive notions of culture (pp. 200-201).

### **Life History Interviews**

Prior experiences have also been surfaced through life history interviews between preservice student teachers in the United Kingdom (Sikes & Troyna, 1991). Sikes and Troyna’s (1991) stated intent was to help preservice teachers to avoid “being caught up in” their own practical experiences, which were trapped within a system of educational transmission (para. 16). Through the use of a Deweyan notion of critically reflective teaching, exhibited by one who is constantly interrogating beliefs for the knowledge they provide, Sikes and Troyna (1991) hoped to spur the development of what they called sociological imagination, which would require that “students ‘make’ rather than ‘take’ problems” (para. 16). Within a three-hour per week course for first year university students, the authors assigned topics for interviews to be conducted by and with students in the class. From these interviews, Sikes and Troyna (1991) described students’ prior experiences as flawed and problematic, since “there was a deliberate and conscious attempt [by students]...to develop styles of teaching which bore no relation to



those...experienced as a pupil” (para. 55). Sikes and Troyna’s (1991) results, like some of the blog entries later reported on by Boyd et al. (2013), indicated that preservice student teachers, rather than preservice teacher educators, were identifying their prior experiences as problematic.

### **Modeling and Overcorrection**

Stipulating to the difficulty of changing any sort of core belief derived from experience, Grossman (1991) tied the work of teacher educators to cognitive and social psychology, in which “resistance encountered in any attempt to change beliefs” was assumed and examined, and that “students will choose to listen only to the evidence which supports their prior beliefs” (p. 350). To sidestep student resistance and rejection of new teaching ideas and methods, Grossman presented two strategies: *modeling* and *overcorrection*. She observed both strategies in an English teaching methods course her three traditionally prepared participants had taken (see Grossman, 1990).

In sharing these strategies, Grossman’s (1991) expressed intent was to “overcome [prospective teachers’] apprenticeships of observation” without considering the nature of what students had gleaned from prior experiences (p. 346). Modeling entailed “overcoming models of typical practice,” focusing on the demonstration of novel teaching strategies, and followed by a deep analysis of what students had just observed (Grossman, 1991, p. 351). Overcorrection also involved a form of modeling, but emphasized “extreme examples of innovative practices,” with only the innovative practice presented, and subsequent discussion and analysis restricted to arguments and discussion in favor of the strategy (p. 350). Grossman (1991) linked the limiting of student critique of innovative strategies to cognitive psychology, again asserting students

would follow strategies consistent with their prior beliefs if given options (p. 350). The innovative practices Grossman (1991) shared represent pedagogical principles or strategies teacher educators can use to engage their students, with the intention of bypassing their pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching.

### **Targeted Presentations**

More recently, Westrick and Morris (2016), like Grossman (1991), offered findings from specific approaches in a university-based teacher education class, assuming deficits in understandings of assessment, and seeking to help preservice teachers disrupt or “move beyond their apprenticeships of observation” (Westrick & Morris, 2016, p. 162). The presentation shared the Force Concept Inventory with preservice teachers in a required course on curriculum, assessment, and planning. Unlike the pedagogies described by Grossman (1991), those used in Westrick and Morris’ (2016) study were limited to a three-week segment of the course focusing on the use of assessments. From a series of blog posts of 74 preservice teachers over three semesters of the course, Westrick and Morris (2016) found that 85% of responses were developed “from the perspective of an assessor” (p. 166), which indicated to the authors that these students had moved beyond their “naive understandings and their apprenticeship of understanding [sic]” (p. 166). The authors lauded their results, not only because they indicated the disruption of the apprenticeship of observation Westrick and Morris (2016) sought, but also because their participants were “provided a new set of concepts and tools” that they found “logical and useful” (p. 168). From their study, it appeared Westrick and Morris (2016), like Grossman (1991), did not set out to bridge gaps created by dissonance as much as they did test ways to circumvent or to avoid it.

### **Framing Pre-Collegiate Experiences, and the Challenges of Teacher Preparation**

The pedagogies described above essentially serve as interventions for pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, which are thought to be shaped through processes of socialization, particularly those occurring during preservice teachers' K-12 school experiences as students. Contemporary preservice teacher education has inherited, and subsequently developed, a socialization model meant to demonstrate *how* prospective teachers develop their beliefs, images, or opinions of teaching, as well as *why* these beliefs, images, or opinions are problematic and resistant to change. Despite repeated calls for research on pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching (Lortie, 1998/2005; Pajares, 1992), the *what* in these experiences—that is, the nature and potential variation in the ways K-12 students experience and make sense of teaching—is largely absent (Sexton, 2007), as is the influence contextual and cultural factors may have on teacher learning. Beliefs, images, or opinions of teaching are more often framed as acultural and homogenized axes of change, often characterized as something to be replaced by the beliefs, images, and opinions of teaching espoused by teacher educators and preparation programs, and less frequently situated as a foundation to be valued, in whole or part.

Reflecting on the influence of *Schoolteacher*, Lortie (1998/2005) later acknowledged teacher educators' "deliberate efforts to overcome" the prior experiences of K-12 students (p. 139), as well as the challenges they faced, concluding that "much remains to be learned about the carry-over of student experience into the work lives of classroom teachers" (p. 139). Although he had used the apprenticeship of observation to describe teachers' reluctance or inability to change the way they taught, Lortie

(1998/2005) did not advocate change for the sake of change. Emulation, he argued, either of one's own teachers or the activities of one's own schooling, was only harmful "when it has not been examined carefully and subjected to reconsideration" (p. 139). Lortie's more recent commentary on the prior experiences of teachers strongly suggests that *teachers teaching how they were taught* is not an inherently problematic proposition. The fault line between problematic and not problematic rests on whether a teacher has examined previously assimilated experience-based beliefs and/or practices.

Unfortunately, the delicate nuance in this examination is sometimes lost in preservice teacher education pedagogy, at the cost of prospective teachers' agency in their own learning. By adopting the sociological model of pre-collegiate teacher learning, many preservice teacher educators have implicitly accepted Lortie's (1975/2002) characterization of the pre-collegiate student immersed in teacher socialization: selfishly motivated, unaware of the planning and decision making processes of teachers, largely incapable of analyzing the many hours of teaching observed by the student on a day-to-day basis, and virtually identical to other students—even those with diverse backgrounds and/or from vastly different contexts—in terms of prior experiences and conceptions of teaching. The pre-collegiate student, who dreams of, or at least considers the prospect of, teaching one day despite the variation potentially present in the student's in-school, extracurricular, and non-school experiences, is an unwitting victim of a school system that conditions students to think and to act in manners consistent with the teaching already observed. Breaking this cycle of reproduction is not only impossible for individuals considering teaching careers to do on their own, it is completely outside of the purview of being a pre-collegiate student. In this regard, preservice teacher education

potentially becomes self-fulfilling: by perpetuating a view of pre-collegiate experience with teaching as deficits formed through socialization, preservice teacher educators have cast themselves and their work as a solution for these deficits.

To suggest that some preservice teacher educators perpetuate a deficit view of their students' prior experiences is not to dismiss claims that the school system may be a conservative influence on teachers and teaching practices (e.g., Cuban, 1993; Lortie, 1975/2002; Waller, 1932/2014). Sociological research like that of Waller (1932/2014) and Lortie (1975/2002) seeks to describe social groups and systems; while Lortie's (1975/2002) study at times put forth quotes from interviews to illustrate findings, the emphasis was clearly on teachers as a group rather than the respondent as an individual. Learning to teach, seen from the sociological perspective present in Lortie's (1975/2002) study, could be described as irrevocably and inevitably defined by one's journey through the school system. Viewing teacher learning from this perspective, the fact that an individual has spent a significant amount of time in schools matters far more than the substance, individually or cumulatively, of one's day-to-day encounters with teachers and teaching. Paradoxically, the sociological perspective of learning to teach is focused on what Conway (2001) has called a *past-in-the-present* temporality (p. 104), in which the past is drawn forward into the present, ostensibly for the purposes of reflection on one's prior experiences, while dismissing what is most valued in a Deweyan perspective on learning to teach, one's own personal experiences with teachers and teaching.

Recent empirical work based on the apprenticeship of observation and conceptions of teaching has hinted at possible cracks in the theoretical underpinnings of the deficit view of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching. Mewborn and Tyminski (2004,

2006) and Knapp (2012) examined the apprenticeships of observation of elementary mathematics preservice teachers and students of an educational psychology course, respectively. The findings of these studies challenged Lortie's (1975/2002) assertion that pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching failed to provide an analytical frame with which to view teaching. Mewborn and Tyminski (2004) found just two of 14 participants failed to refer to specific teachers or teaching practices inhibiting or promoting learning, with written responses to an open-ended prompt revealing various accounts of outstanding, and lacking, teachers and teaching. Through reflective journals, Knapp (2012) found similar evidence, her retelling of participant Roseanne's memories of a Home Economics teacher who "deliberately and skillfully used [student diversity] well and caringly" a prime example of analysis of prior experiences with teachers and teaching (p. 328).

While acknowledging students came to teacher preparation with different resources and analytical abilities (Knapp, 2012), Mewborn and Tyminski (2004) and Knapp (2012) had no doubt that pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching allowed preservice teachers to be "capable of being analytical about their experiences during their apprenticeship of observation" (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2004, p. 4). Instead of acknowledging these experiences as "continuous and dynamic" components of learning to teach (p. 32), Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) argued that teacher educators had reduced the power of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching to what could be considered a strict interpretation of Lortie's (1975/2002) work, effectively creating "a convenient buzz phrase to prop up our argument about the ineffectiveness of teacher education" (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2004, p. 7).

The studies reviewed above illustrate not just deficit views of teacher learning through pre-collegiate experiences, as well as the pedagogies used to combat such deficits, but they also illustrate the suppression of prospective teachers' own hopes and desires for themselves as teachers—their pursuit or construction of a certain form of teaching. Learning to teach has, over time, been described as a becoming or formation (Greene, 1978), though the direction of one's own teacher learning is, at times, lost when some preservice teacher educators expend so much effort convincing prospective teachers to reject teaching they have already seen. A pedagogy like autobiographical writing to reflect on one's experiences might allot for “deliberate thoughtfulness about teaching beliefs and practices” (Conway, 2001, p. 90), but too often these pedagogies lack a *forward* direction, a sense of what this deliberate thoughtfulness is going to lead to in one's own practice as a teacher. These studies of pedagogies can often be contrasted with studies like Stanford's (1998), in which practicing teachers clearly articulated how previously observed models of teaching and caring played a vital, foundational role in their own ongoing and future teaching.

Dewey, according to Conway (2001), never tied this thoughtfulness exclusively to prior experiences. In fact, Dewey (1938/1997) argued the past and the future were crucial to one's understanding of the present. “The future,” he asserted, “has to be taken into account at every stage of the educational process” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 47). Conway (2001) attributed the past-centric focus of teacher preparation to “the mistaken assumption that a retrospectively focused reflective stance is the only road to examining prior knowledge” (p. 90), indicting assignments like autobiographical writing in

preservice teacher education as fixated on retrospective reflection, and thus less effective than they could be in helping one learn to teach.

Thus, my analysis of the literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that, through the promotion of teacher educator-approved images or models of teaching and the rejection of images or models of teaching prospective teachers have witnessed in the past, the agency of prospective teachers has been marginalized in teacher preparation. When this scenario takes place in preparation programs, prospective teachers have limited opportunities, if they have any at all, to pursue and to enact images or models of teaching *they* find successful or engaging. In the case of the award winning African American teachers in Stanford's (1998) study, pre-collegiate images or models of teaching may have played important roles in their decisions to become teachers, and the ethic of care present in the examples Stanford (1998) shared may have had much to do with the cultural and/or contextual influences of her participants' prior experiences. Unfortunately, the agentic aspect of learning to teach is potentially compromised when prospective teachers' prior experiences are assumed to be molded into very similar shapes by the school system and the alleged mindless assimilation of classroom teaching the school system has been said to promote.

### **Supplementing Teacher Learning Research Using Phenomenography**

Phenomenography has assisted me in investigating conceptions of teaching, as well as descriptions of some of the experiences that have influenced such conceptions. Recent studies have utilized phenomenographic designs to explore practicing and preservice teachers' understandings of particular aspects of their work. For example, Tamone's 2018 dissertation study employed a phenomenographic approach to investigate



the different ways 21 Australian teachers of 4.5 to 6.5 year old students approached student behavior in their practice. A separate study in the United Kingdom by Durden (2019) examined 23 Post Graduate Certificate of Education students' conceptions of a successful lesson in a secondary context, particularly how these students understood the purposes and structures of lessons. In addition to their narrower focus, these studies, through interviews and/or questionnaires, emphasized ongoing or recent teaching experiences the participants themselves were undertaking in their classrooms and programs.

Wood (2000) investigated 27 participants' ongoing teaching experiences within a one-year Post Graduate Certificate of Education Program in the UK, yet he sought to examine participants' understandings of teaching broadly construed, rather than specific elements of teaching. In particular, Wood (2000) examined how conceptions of teaching changed as students encountered different programmatic elements. Conducting interviews and analyses at several stages of the program, he identified three conceptions of teaching: 1) focusing on the agent of teaching, or teachers themselves; 2) focusing on the act of teaching, or how teachers prepared their students to use knowledge; and 3) focusing on the object of teaching, which participants understood as changing their students' understanding of certain phenomena. Wood (2000) observed a shift in understandings, with a reduction in the first conception and an increase in the third conception throughout the program.

Though these studies have certain methodological elements in common with this study, they are substantively different. I am conducting this phenomenographic study to supplement teacher socialization research and to add to preservice teacher education's

conceptions and uses of preservice teachers' prior experiences. My aim has been to surface and to describe the variations in experiences high school students interested in teaching careers have accrued in order to offer a more developed view of what these students may bring with them to formal teacher preparation should they pursue it. Unlike the reviewed studies, I seek to enter the life-world of pre-collegiate students, investigating students' descriptions of their pre-collegiate experiences, both recent and old, with teachers and teaching, rather than accessing them as more distant memories at a subsequent point during teacher preparation. In the following chapter, I will describe this study's phenomenographic methodology in greater detail.

### Chapter III

#### METHODOLOGY

When learning to teach is framed as a becoming influenced at least in part by *continuous* and *interactive* experiences with teachers and teaching, prospective teachers' pre-collegiate and possibly shifting subsequent understandings of teaching are important considerations in learning to teach. Initial experiences, in such a view of learning to teach, influence subsequent ones, ideally leading to a more refined, or transformed, understanding of what it is to teach. Advancing the Deweyan theory of experience, Oral (2013) described learning to teach as a transaction between "the recent and remote past as well as the imminent and far-off future" (p. 144). This transaction is one in which those learning to teach are active participants, *continuously* and collectively engaged in constructing conceptions of teaching through their *interactions* with students, colleagues, and contexts in episodes of teaching. With this view of experience, and how it serves as the foundation of conceptions of teaching, considered essential to the understanding of how high school students interested in teaching careers begin to learn to teach, I have developed a phenomenographic research design to explore these transactions and how they influence students' understandings of teaching.

My exploration of such understandings of teaching has been guided by the following questions, restated from the first chapter:

1. What are the conceptions of teaching of 5 high school students interested in teaching careers?
  - a. What experiences involving different types of teachers and forms of teaching do these students describe as being influential in the formation of their conceptions of teaching?
  - b. What desires and/or imaginings of teaching are bound up in these students' descriptions of different types of teachers and forms of teaching?
  - c. To what extent do these students' descriptions of different types of teachers and forms of teaching reflect the reconciling of teaching they have observed, teaching they desire and/or imagine doing, and teaching they view as appropriate or permissible in a given context?
2. What structures and/or relationships, if any, exist within and between these students' conceptions of teaching?

In the remainder of this chapter, I will describe the research approach I have used to explore these questions, including the overall design, the population, setting, and context, my data collection methods and methods of analysis, and the limitations of this study.

### **Research Design**

The questions motivating this study of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching and the experiences that influence them have necessitated a qualitative research design. Experience, as a personal and idiosyncratic aspect of human nature, is inherently complex. Pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching have sometimes been

described as idiosyncratic and ahistorical (e.g., Grossman, 1991), given the fact that the overwhelming majority of young people spend thousands of hours attending different schools in different communities, each presumably comprising its own distinct array of individual teachers, school resources, curricula, and other relevant factors. Developing what Creswell (2007) described as “a *complex*, detailed understanding of [an] issue” (p. 40) like pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching held from experiences interacting with teachers and teaching requires frequent and intensive researcher-participant interactions and analysis, as well as extensive descriptions to relate these interactions and analysis to a wider audience. Employing a qualitative design facilitating these interactions, I have sought to center in this study the experiences high school students interested in teaching careers have found important and worth discussing in terms of their respective understandings of teaching.

Qualitative research has been characterized as useful in describing relationships and associations between participants and their experiences, and the contexts in which these experiences take place (Creswell, 2007). These relationships and associations, particularly the ways participants make meaning from their experiences, a paramount concern not just in this study but an “essential concern to the qualitative approach” writ large (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 9). The experiences shared by the high school students interested in teaching careers who have taken part in this study have their own unique features, occurring in particular settings, contributing to the internal and external horizons that influence the structural aspects of conceptions. Descriptions of these horizons and aspects may be crucial to understanding significant events, as well as how students think of them, the referential aspect of conceptions. A qualitative methodology offers

opportunities to place participants' conceptions of teaching, and the contexts in which they occur, front and center.

A phenomenographic research approach has been utilized to situate participants' conceptions of teaching as the foundation of this study. Phenomenography, sometimes noted as a relatively recent research methodology (e.g., Åkerlind, 2005), has been used to explore "the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them" (Marton, 1986, p. 31). In this study, the aspect of reality, or object, defined as the phenomenon is teaching, as experienced prior to university study and formal teacher preparation. In keeping with the non-dualistic foundations of phenomenographic research (Marton, 2000), subjects, or high school students interested in teaching careers, interact with the object, comprised of different forms of teachers and teaching, in a single reality all humans share, leading to various ways in which phenomena like teaching can be experienced, and thus described. Unlike phenomenology, which has been described as focusing attention on phenomena, phenomenography is used to examine the relationship between individual and phenomenon, particularly "the variation in people's ways of understanding the phenomenon" (Larsson & Holmström, 2007, p. 56). By drawing on phenomenographic methods, I seek to surface the ways in which high school students interested in teaching careers describe their conceptions of teaching, as opposed to understanding teaching *as it is* in order to determine a general structure of teaching as phenomenon, referred to by some as its *essence*, "what the 'thing' is, and without which it could not be what it is" (Larsson & Holmström, 2007, p. 59).

Phenomenographic studies typically possess two important features (Francis, 1996). First, the core of phenomenographic studies is the individual experiences of subjects, meaning a phenomenographer insists on “attempting to capture conceptualisations [sic] which are faithful to the individual’s experience of a selected learning phenomenon” (p. 36). Second, within these studies, a phenomenographer uses their understanding of individuals’ experiences to develop conceptual categories of description, and to ascertain structures or associations within each category (Marton, 1981). These categories of conceptions have been described as being “collectively experienced” (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012), representing what Bowden and Marton (1998) described as a collective consciousness, created when different individuals achieve awareness of the same phenomenon. Both elements play an important role in this study. The individual experiences of high school students interested in teaching careers have already been established as an under-researched area, with few empirical research studies found exploring this population’s experiences with and conceptions of teaching. Categories of description, rooted in individual experiences yet analyzed across a cohort experiencing the phenomenon, provide a method of understanding a group’s conceptions of teaching, possibly offering the seeds of a pedagogy for teacher educators, in addition to being an analytical product of phenomenographic research.

Since its origins in the late 1970s, phenomenographic research has developed into separate lines of inquiry often exploring the different understandings students develop from instructional experiences on a given topic, or how these experiences modify students’ preconceptions (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997; Marton, 1986). This study takes up what has been called “‘pure’ phenomenographic interest,” the study of “how people

perceive various aspects of their reality” (Marton, 1986, p. 38). For high school students interested in teaching careers, much of their learning about teaching will undoubtedly come from interactions with individuals they identify as teachers, yet their interactions with teaching are less often studied as part of a formal course of study, and instead could be classified as everyday experience. Hasselgren and Beach (1997) have argued that what researchers have in the past called pure phenomenography would better be described as *discursive phenomenography* since it amounts, in their view, to “[using] discourse without regard for the rules of discourse production and analysis to ‘produce expressions of conceptions’ which can be analysed phenomenographically” (p. 197). The pure or discursive approach to phenomenography developed as responses “to the demands of investigating a particular kind of research object under different conditions” (p. 197), though, despite these different conditions, Hasselgren and Beach (1997) claimed the approaches generally followed a pattern consisting of conversation, transcription, compilation, analysis, and ultimately conceptions. Whether it is referred to as pure or discursive phenomenography, this study explores experiences with teaching in “everyday life rather than in course material studied in school” (Marton, 1986, p. 38), and how these experiences influence their pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching.

The adoption of a phenomenographic design is deliberate, a decision taking into account the problem motivating this study as well as my purposes in conducting the study. Conceptualizing teaching as a deeply personal endeavor, I have wanted to employ not just a qualitative design, but one grounded in the life-world of participants, as Ashworth and Lucas (2000) described phenomenography. My goal has been to explore each participant’s descriptions of teaching as thoroughly as possible, in the process



positioning teaching as a phenomenon inseparable from each participant's experience with it. Rather than examining the essence or common elements of teaching as phenomenon (e.g., Dornan, Scherpbier, King, & Boshuizen, 2005), or studying teaching through the storying of various experiences (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) or through an ethnographic analysis of high school students as a group (e.g., Everhart, 1983), I have been particularly interested in the possibility of variations between young people's descriptions of teaching as phenomenon. Part of what drew me to a phenomenographic design was not just the valuing of closeness to each participant's life-world or the non-dualistic relationship between participant and phenomenon, but also the way phenomenographers used categories of description and outcome spaces to explore hierarchical structures or models of variations in experience with a phenomenon. While I have been deeply interested in young people's descriptions of their experiences, I also have sought a design that might help to bring order and understanding to thick descriptions of the phenomenon, which I felt phenomenography had great potential to do for my study.

### **Population and Context**

The population of interest in this study is high school students interested in teaching careers. High school students, enrolled in ninth through twelfth grades, have been recruited, as these students are closer to making significant commitments to occupations or careers, including matriculation in university-based teacher preparation programs. Interest in any P-12 teaching career has qualified a high school student for this population, including interests in the pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle school, and/or high school levels of teaching. Potential participants' interests in teaching careers have

not been evaluated for inclusion in the study; rather, participants were asked to acknowledge that teaching is at least among the job or career prospects they were considering. Participants have indicated that they have various considerations or wonderings related to teaching as a career, with some high school students possibly influenced by parents who serve as teachers, while others may be considering teaching as one possibility for college study and/or occupational or career trajectories among many. Although some teachers do not decide to become teachers until they have matriculated at a college or university, or until after working in another field entirely for a period of time, this study targets those interested in teaching, just as the literature reviewed in the previous chapter examined the experiences of individuals actually taking steps to become teachers (e.g., preservice teachers in Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, Knapp, 2012, Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006) or working as teachers (e.g., Lortie, 1975/2002).

Given the concerns expressed in Chapter II regarding the apparent homogenization of pre-collegiate student experiences with teachers and teaching, every effort has been made to recruit a diverse population of participants, including high school students identifying with various gender, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic markers or backgrounds, as well as students interested in different levels or types of teaching (e.g., different age levels, subject areas, etc.). Considering these concerns regarding the homogenization of experiences, and also taking into account the limited number of participants, this study is not intended to generalize or to universalize participants' experiences, instead employing phenomenographic research methods to investigate possible variations between participants' experiences with teachers and teaching.

Recruitment quickly evolved during the early stages of the study, taking several different forms. Initially, pitches and presentations were made to high school students participating in pipeline programs for teaching and mentorship, including the pseudonymous *Teachers To Be*, a mentorship program sponsored by Bridgeton University for students of color interested in education careers. I also spoke with teachers and administrators affiliated with New Jersey's *Tomorrow's Teachers* courses in New Jersey, who participate in a high school level course on teaching and schooling for students considering education careers. While recruiting from pipeline programs, from which I ultimately recruited one participant, I expanded my recruitment to include personal recommendations of high school students considering teaching careers from classmates, coworkers, and educators I met through my graduate schooling and professional work; I also advertised in the Teachers College community page under *Research Participants Sought*. Personal recommendations led to the recruitment of five participants, resulting in a total of six high school students interested in teaching careers who assented—and whose parents consented—to the study.

### **Contexts**

Before offering an introduction for each of the study's participants, I will briefly share information about the contexts mentioned in their introductions and later described in individual profiles in Chapter IV. All but one of the study's participants were clustered in one of two metropolitan areas, with the remaining participant living 55 miles from one of these areas. Given that the participants are minors, I have elected to use pseudonyms for the communities in which they live and the schools they attend. The only real names

of locations appearing below are the states in which the participants reside, which I will use below to organize and to describe several communities and schools.

**Pennsylvania.** Two participants were recruited from the Dalton City area in Pennsylvania. Dalton City is a city of over 50,000 residents. Although its population is more than 50% white, the percentage of white residents has declined during the past 20 years, with Puerto Ricans constituting an increasingly large percentage of the city's total population. In recent years, the city has taken in refugees from several different countries. Approximately 30% of Dalton City residents live below the poverty line. The high school graduation rate of residents 25 years or older was approximately 70%, with less than 20% of this same population holding a bachelor's degree. Ninth through twelfth graders living in Dalton City attend Truman School, a comprehensive high school with several thousand students that was in the midst of a leadership change at the beginning of this study, in addition to the daily challenges brought on by poverty and the arrival of refugees.

The city is surrounded by lush farmland, as well as several desirable suburban, rural, or mixed communities, some of which offer stark contrasts from Dalton City in terms of their racial and ethnic demographics and income levels. For example, Midway Village, a rural town approximately 20 miles from Dalton City, demonstrates virtually all of these contrasts. The village is home to several thousand residents, with more than 90% of them identifying as white; Hispanics or Latinos are the largest racial minority in the village. Unlike Dalton City's high percentage of residents living in poverty, just 5% of Midway Village's population is below the poverty line. Midway Village's high school, Bell Heights, reflected the whiteness—and near absence of racial and ethnic diversity—

of the surrounding community, attended by a handful of students of color; the faculty was overwhelmingly white as well, apart from several foreign language teachers.

**New Jersey.** Midway Village was, in many respects, similar to Wakefield Township in New Jersey, where one participant of the study lived. Wakefield Township was the home of approximately 20,000 residents, more than 90% of whom were white; the non-white population consisted largely of Native Americans and Hispanics or Latinos, though each group was less than 5% of the township's population. More than 50% of Wakefield Township's residents have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. A high level of education, along with the township's relative proximity to major metropolitan areas 60 miles away in neighboring New York, and the employment opportunities the area provided, no doubt contributed to the low poverty level in the township, with less than 3% of the population living below the poverty line. Ninth through twelfth graders in Wakefield Township attended Wakefield High School, a comprehensive regional high school offering multiple tracks to students, including a wide array of Advanced Placement and college-preparatory courses.

**New York.** Three participants were New Yorkers, with two residing in Plymouth City, and the third living in a suburban community. Plymouth City is a large metropolitan area with a diverse population of more than 200,000 residents; less than 50% of its population is white, with blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and Asians constituting large and diverse minority groups. While approximately 20% of residents live below the poverty line, 40% have earned bachelor's degrees or higher, and the city draws thousands of highly educated workers due to its position as a major financial and commercial hub. The city's suburbs and surrounding areas include a wide range of

communities and characteristics, from economically depressed to highly affluent. For example, Cumberland Plains, where one participant lives, represents one of the more affluent suburban communities, with a median household income of more than \$100,000 and less than 5% of the population living below the poverty line. Unlike in Plymouth City, Cumberland Plains, as well as its high school, Cumberland High School, is more than 80% white, with Asians the only minority group constituting more than 5% of the population.

### **Participants**

Although all experience occurs in geographic and temporal contexts, my study investigates *people's* experiences, invariably influenced by the contexts in which they occur, yet not in and of themselves the subject of this study. Participants' descriptions of their experiences are more fully explicated in Chapter IV, which features profiles of each participant's descriptions of their experiences with teaching, and Chapters V, VI, and VII, which share the results of my phenomenographic analysis. In the following sub-sections, I briefly introduce each participant's background and demographic characteristics while also linking them to the context in which they lived and attended school during the study.

**Rachel.** Rachel is an 18-year-old who identifies as white and female. Her interviews all took place during her senior year of high school at Bell Heights High School in Midway Village, Pennsylvania, where she lived with her parents. She attributed her interest in teaching, at least in part, to her parents, both of whom she viewed as teachers; at the time of the study, her father was a tenured professor of education in a university near Dalton City, and her mother delivered educational workshops to both children and adults. Though she did not identify herself as a religious person, she came

from a Christian family. Rachel held teaching roles of her own, in a teaching internship with a former social studies teacher at Bell Heights, and in a more limited form as a percussion section leader in the school band, the latter a major interest for her. The most important influence on her views of teaching was the seven years she spent as a student at a private Montessori school in Dalton City.

**Ezequiel.** Ezequiel is a 17-year-old who identifies as Hispanic and male, participating in the study during his junior year of high school at Truman School in Dalton City. Although his parents were not from Pennsylvania, he was born and raised in Dalton City; Ezequiel's mother relocated from Puerto Rico, working at the time of the study as a housekeeper in a local hotel, while his father immigrated to the United States from Mexico and worked as a landscaper. His parents encouraged him to work hard and to pursue his interests. Ezequiel was active in mentorship programs, mentoring Truman School freshmen yet also being mentored by university students as part of the *Teachers To Be* pipeline program at Bridgeton University in Dalton City. In addition, Ezequiel had teaching experiences as he trained coworkers as part of his job at a footwear store, as well as at a music camp, which followed from his musical interests as a violinist.

**Marie.** Marie is a 17-year-old who identifies as white and female. Like Ezequiel, Marie was a junior in high school, attending school and living in Wakefield Township, NJ throughout her academic career. Throughout the interviews, Marie discussed her demanding college preparatory schedule, filled with several Advanced Placement and other demanding courses, and requiring preparations for college admissions tests, both likely products of a press from the school and broader communities, as well as from her parents, who worked in managerial roles in a hospital and a payroll and human resources

firm. Her involvement in an honor society required a tutoring commitment in chemistry, which had given Marie exposure to academic teaching, albeit in the form of a single-student chemistry tutoring session. Marie was a competitive volleyball player, and her interactions with coaches and teammates offered her a valuable window into teaching. Marie attended each interview with Ms. Thomas, a former teacher of hers, and a graduate school classmate of mine.

**Elsie.** Elsie is a 15-year-old who identifies as white and female. After attending a Waldorf school up through fourth grade, Elsie left the school following a chaotic year and became a homeschool student. In the absence of teachers from a brick-and-mortar school, Elsie's parents had taken roles in her education after she left the Waldorf school; her father, a law school professor, continued to teach her history after five years, while her mother had initially taught her English. At the time of the interviews, Elsie's mother played an important, and challenging, role in helping Elsie to find teachers and classes and to evaluate her progress in her classes as a ninth grader, classes she took through language training and cultural centers, as well as from teachers she interacted with in person or online. An avid knitter, Elsie had found opportunities to teach family, friends, and even strangers how to knit, her most recent experiences occurring in a homeless shelter where she and her mother volunteered as teachers of various fiber arts. Elsie attended each of her interviews for the study with her mother.

**Kayla.** Kayla is an 18-year-old who identifies as a Hispanic female. Born and raised in a Hispanic-majority neighborhood of Plymouth City, she attended City School, a recently constructed school situated within a cluster of three public schools, the demography of which reflected the surrounding neighborhood. By the time Kayla's first



interview took place, the school year was nearly complete, with state testing and college decisions looming large. Deciding to focus on these important challenges and events, Kayla withdrew her participation after completing one interview.

**Alex.** Alex is a 16-year-old who identifies as a white male. His parents had separately immigrated to the United States from Bulgaria, meeting in Plymouth City and ultimately marrying and starting their family before relocating to Cumberland Plains outside the city. Through his mother, Alex has been connected to teaching; while his father owned his own contracting business, his mother had been trained as an English teacher in Bulgaria, though she never taught, and in the United States she had worked as a human resources specialist at a college. Alex, like Marie, was a serious competitive athlete, swimming for both school and club teams; as was also the case for Marie, Alex identified coaching as a form of teaching, and his experiences with coaches—both good and bad—helped to spark his interest in teaching and the study.

### **Researcher Position and Positionality**

Given the various demographic differences between my participants and me, notably the 20-year age gap as well as my varied experiences as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher, I found it particularly important to consider my subjectivities in relation to participants. These considerations started at the proposal stage, based heavily on my initial intentions to recruit participants from teacher pipeline programs like *Teachers To Be*. Since I thought I would recruit several, if not most, participants from *Teachers To Be*, my working experiences at Bridgeton University and in Dalton City seemed paramount. As part of this work, I represented Bridgeton in an array of rural, suburban, and urban public secondary schools situated in communities including Dalton

City, from which *Teachers To Be* draws the majority of its participants. Given my intentions, I believed it was likely that I would work with participants from communities I had worked in, placing me in a borderland between Banks's (1998) *external-insider* and *external-outsider* typologies. Occupying this borderland meant I most likely would not "often [misunderstand] and [misinterpret] interactions," yet my various subjectivities and roles would make it very unlikely that I would be able to position myself as "an 'adopted' insider" (p. 8).

As recruitment stalled, and then progressed once I expanded my efforts to include personal recommendations, thus connecting me with participants from different contexts spread across three states, I realized that working from the borderland position between external-outsider and external-insider would be impossible, as each participant and context was markedly different. Working from the initial vantage point of external-outsider, I have positioned myself in this work as a knowledge broker, a person with "differential access to community knowledge, resources, and sources of power" (Muhammad, Wallerstein, Sussman, Avila, Belone, & Duran, 2014, p. 1049). While I may lack knowledge of particular communities, resources, and sources of power, I am part of several broader communities, possessing a background and knowledge of college/university admissions and studies and teacher preparation. I contributed the former to conversations when topics or inquiries related to college came up in interviews while focusing on the latter, as I saw my role as one in which I would work with the study's participants to "move from one level of understanding to another more complete one" (Bowden, 2000, p. 50). However, the knowledge I possessed as a college educated former teacher and my position as an external-outsider have required me to actively work

to prevent my own experiences and conceptions of teaching from overshadowing participants' voices (Milner, 2007), as participants' pre-collegiate experiences, and the meanings they hold from them, are the central focus of this study.

### **Engaging Subjectivities**

My *active* work to explore participants' experiences and voices has taken several forms. One measure I employ is the bracketing of my own presuppositions across a wide spectrum of theories and experiences, which I will describe later in this chapter. In certain cases, like with Marie, I not only knew the participant but also Ms. Thomas, who recommended Marie to me and also lived in the same community as Marie. While I did not reference artifacts exchanged between Marie and myself, I regarded Ms. Thomas as an informant on the community, and on occasion would ask her general questions to help me to understand Marie's descriptions.

These occasions dwarfed in number, intensity, and importance to my own commitments to employ processes of engaged reflection and representation to be vigilant of the content and volume of my own voice, and to ensure that this voice remained one voice among many unique and valuable ones (Milner, 2007). My reflections initially took place while I transcribed, read, and re-read interviews, identifying areas where my voice may have limited participants' opportunities to share their own reflections, or where my subjectivities may have impacted my understanding of participants' descriptions. As I have recognized these occurrences, I have recorded a brief 3-5 word description of each occurrence, along with specific transcript line number(s) for easy referencing. I then developed these descriptions into memos, focusing on subjectivities I had identified in

the proposal, as well as an item I have uncovered in the midst of the study. In the following sections, I outline the subjectivities I have engaged in this study.

### **White Male**

Working with students of color involved with programs like *Teachers To Be* and/or students in urban settings engages my subjectivities as a white male. From the outset of the study, I have been cognizant of the elements and practices of society, specifically schools, “that privilege the affluent, white, and male segments of society” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 22). While I did not note subjectivities possibly affecting my understanding of participants’ descriptions as I transcribed interviews and analyzed data, my awareness of such privilege has led me to put forth questions on race and gender to participants in order to investigate the importance of these identities for each participant, as opposed to framing questions based off of my assumptions about their meaning for participants. These subjectivities are also engaged in discussions of cultural knowledge, as participants reveal aspects of a cultural capital they possess and/or have access to, which I do not. I have listened vigilantly in interviews, pursuing topics related to culture and asking clarifying questions to better understand participants’ meanings.

### **Middle-Class Upbringing**

Discussions of pre-collegiate experiences have revealed differences in opportunities and possibilities affected, or at least influenced, by social class. My own middle-class upbringing afforded me a number of privileges, including opportunities to participate in competitive athletics, which evolved into additional opportunities to become involved in coaching. Raised in more affluent areas, Alex and Marie have had similar opportunities to participate in competitive athletics and to view coaching as a

form of teaching. As was the case with race and gender, I explored extracurricular activities of all participants, whether they were from more affluent areas like the area I grew up or if they were from less affluent areas. This line of questioning was fruitful with Ezequiel, who participated in baseball and football, describing teaching skills associated with each sport. Knowing that participants' school-based experiences may be heavily influenced by class and teacher expectations (e.g., Anyon, 1980), I have used profiles and memos to examine patterns of teaching and schooling across participants, and how these patterns were similar and/or different to my own schooling and social class.

### **Former Public School Student**

One of the surprises of the study has been listening to participants' characterizations of public school students, which at times sharply contrasted my memories of public school students, or perhaps the residue of my identity as a former public school student. For example, Alex discussed grades as a reward for academic performance, yet I never considered grades in such a way; in fact, in at least a few subjects, I believed I was "fixated more on understanding of *certain things*, rather than what was given as an indicator, or a reward, of that understanding" (Memo, 20180713). Another instance of the engagement of this subjectivity was Rachel's descriptions of her public school peers, who seemed either 100% engaged in classroom activities or completely apathetic. Drawing from my own memories, I wrote that for many students—myself included—schooling had a "cat-and-mouse, or game-like, quality" in that many students did just enough to convince teachers they were engaged (Memo, 20180130.1). Writing these memos has helped me to become more aware of the differences between

participants' public school experiences and my own, and also to minimize the judgment or disagreement I encountered as I took in their descriptions.

### **Prospective, Practicing, and Educator of Teacher(s)**

Having been a prospective and practicing teacher, I have developed from my experiences certain conceptions of learning to teach and teaching, and I have constantly had to consider these subjectivities throughout the study. Elsie's descriptions and reflections on an interview she read about an English woman who had changed careers to teaching brought the learning to teach element of this subjectivity to the fore. In the interviews, Elsie recounted how the woman was visited in her classroom by an observer, who penned lists of everything that was right and everything that was wrong in the classroom. I wrote in a memo based on this thread in the interviews that, while lists are fine, the mark of a teacher educator is how such lists or other artifacts or notes are "framed and curated," and what the teacher educator does after that point (Memo, 20180707.4), later wondering whether Elsie may have believed the list-making approach worked, thereby contradicting my notion of the supervisor's role and work. Other instances of the teacher subjectivity were more jarring. After Rachel told me public school teachers taught the way they did because *they were public school students* before becoming teachers, I wrote that I was "taken aback" by this comment, exploring in depth my reaction to the statement, as well as Rachel's reasoning for it.

Another layer of subjectivity that I have found myself contending with is a holdover from my time as a teacher. While I worked in public schools, I sometimes found there existed an *us vs. them* dynamic between teachers and students. Most often, at least in my experience, this dynamic has been observable when teachers assert that their

characterizations of events always trumped students' characterizations, which is to say that students' accounts were regarded as less truthful, or otherwise inferior. My views of what is accurate, appropriate, or realistic should be held subordinate to students' descriptions of their experiences with teachers and teaching, as I did with Ezequiel's descriptions of his teachers engaging students in *random learning*, to which I responded in memos that my role is "not to critique Ezequiel's view of certain experiences as *random learning*" (Memo, 20180626.2). The second-order perspective employed in phenomenographic studies like this one requires the researcher to avoid impulsive or hasty judgments of participants' descriptions, in the moment of the interview or afterwards.

### **Researcher**

My role as a researcher has also been engaged by my work with participants in this study, though not in the way I thought it might be. Initially, I thought the perspective of the researcher, with its basis in epistemology and the theoretical underpinnings of both the study and the topic under examination, could potentially create challenges, as the role and its responsibilities and priorities are much different than participants' roles. It is difficult to dispute the differences between the researcher and those researched in this study, but it was actually a similarity that has led me to examine this subjectivity. As part of one of her English classes, Elsie conducted interviews to learn more about her topic, with an eye towards supplementing a research report she was writing. I described the subjectivity at play here as "weird," as I wondered if our discussion of what an interview was and how Elsie was taught to conduct one had led me to "[try] to impose my expertise as a researcher here on Elsie?" (Memo, 20180524.7). In this instance, memoing allowed

me to consider my role as researcher, particularly when it was best for me to share the knowledge I have versus the times where it would be best to prompt participants to say more instead of possibly speaking for or over them.

### **Data Sources**

Although my position and positionality help to illustrate how I have worked to situate myself with regard to participants, the study's data sources serve as intersection points between teaching as phenomenon, participants, and myself. Although phenomenographic studies are most commonly linked with the interview as a method of data collection, phenomenographers have employed other means of data collection as well, including participant observations, drawings, work products, and written texts (Bruce, 1994). To explore the conceptions of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers, two categories of data have been collected. A series of audio-recorded interviews with each participant serves as the primary form of data for this study. In addition, participants have been asked to describe teaching they observe, as well as any thoughts or feelings they have stemming from their experiences through audio, textual, and/or visual artifacts uploaded to the workspace app Slack, which subsequently have been used in the interviews and analyzed along with interview transcripts. The following section details each data source and how it has been used in this study.

### **Interviews**

As previously mentioned, the interview, as a method of data collection, enjoys a privileged status among phenomenographers. Phenomenographic interviews have been used to surface conceptualizations of phenomena that "are faithful to the individual's



experience of a selected...phenomenon” (Francis, 1996, p. 36), a fidelity that relies on “descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomenon” (Kvale, as cited by Bruce, 1994, p. 49). Because the life-world of high school students interested in teaching careers forms the foundation of this study, a predominately “open technique” was employed in each interview, allowing participants the freedom to bring attention to what they regarded as important in their descriptions of their pre-collegiate experiences (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 302).

Each participant was interviewed three times, using a semi-structured protocol adapted from Seidman’s phenomenological interview structure. Seidman’s (2006) interview structure consisted of three separate interviews, with each interview playing a role in establishing the context in which a phenomenon was experienced. The first interview in Seidman’s (2006) structure focused on participants’ life histories, including “early experiences in their families, in school, with friends, in their neighborhood, and at work” (p. 17). The second interview provided an outlet for detailed accounts of experiences with the phenomenon in which participants reconstruct “the details of present lived experience in the topic area of the study” (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). Finally, in the third interview, participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experiences by delving deeper into relevant past experiences they have identified with the phenomenon, as well as the details of their present experiences, in order to better understand how they conceptualized their experiences with the phenomenon (Seidman, 2006). The following sections will detail each of the three interviews as they were carried out in this study.

**Interview 1.** Like the first interview in Seidman’s (2006) structure, my initial interview with each participant, the protocol for which can be found in Appendix A,

focused broadly on their life history. Adopting a wider starting berth through life histories was a deliberate choice, due in part to my own presuppositions, which at times emphasize the influence or importance of classroom and/or school-based student experiences in shaping conceptions of teaching. A life history focus has helped me to learn more about participants' lives by avoiding the ignoring or premature dismissal of experiences participants may have found significant to their understandings of teaching as phenomenon. One activity within the first interview involved participants' production of a timeline or list of individuals, potentially from school and/or non-school experiences, who have taught them something significant and/or useful (see Appendix B). The goal of this list, and the conversation that followed it, was to identify individuals who have served in a teaching role in participants' lives, not necessarily to immediately examine particular experiences with these individuals and their teaching, but to begin to understand the constellation of influences on participants' conceptions of teaching.

**Interview 2.** In keeping with the basic framework and purposes of Seidman's (2006) interview structure, the second interview, the protocol for which can be found in Appendix E, prompted participants to provide the details of particular "present lived experience[s]" interacting with teachers and teaching (p. 18). Mindful of Francis's (1996) claim that phenomenographic interviews tend to focus on long-term memories at the expense of short-term ones, I developed questions for the second interview with the expressed purpose of surfacing more recent, and perhaps ongoing, pre-collegiate experiences, though without altogether limiting participants' responses to a particular time frame. Participants were prompted to share experiences interacting with teachers and their teaching that were most memorable or meaningful to them, to begin, or to continue,

to develop a meta-awareness, an ability to better recall, understand, and describe their own experiences with teachers and teaching (Richardson, 1999).

Two approaches were incorporated into the second interview protocol to assist in this recollection, understanding, and description, both drawing on participant artifacts. First, before the second interview, participants were asked to use templates to create visual snapshots of teaching they had recently witnessed. In my Fall 2016 pilot study, I used a similar activity, adapting Fischman's (2005) drawing activity of *real* and *ideal* classroom settings by asking the participant to draw depictions of teaching they had previously experienced, as well as an image of what their teaching would look like; the participant in the pilot study produced two visuals, but, rather than visuals of teaching he had observed, he produced visuals describing certain strategies he had mentioned (e.g., writing "50/50" and circling it, a strategy he had described in interviews). By describing the visual as a snapshot, or picture, of teaching, my aim was to prompt participants to recall and to reproduce as vivid a sensory account from the original experience as possible, which could then be interrogated during the interview. Second, the list of teachers, or timeline, participants drafted during the first interview was reviewed. In the second interview, instead of drafting a list, participants were prompted to recall, and to describe in as much detail as possible, their experiences as learners within a moment or episode of the teaching of some of the individuals they listed on their timelines.

**Interview 3.** In the third interview, the protocol of which can be found in Appendix G, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of their lived, and perhaps shared, pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching. As Seidman (2006) noted, the third interview ideally should require participants to "look at how the

factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation” (p. 18). The connection between past and present explicit in Seidman’s (2006) description potentially makes participants’ artifacts valuable resources to turn to during the interview, and at least a portion of the protocol was devoted to reviewing the spoken, textual, and/or visual artifacts participants contributed to prompt reflections on experiences. The artifacts, as well as participants’ memories of their experiences, offered opportunities for participants to select experiences, to reconstruct the details of these experiences, and to produce some meaning from these processes (Seidman, 2006).

Yet Seidman (2006) also suggested that the meaning-making characteristic of the third interview of his structure possibly held “a future orientation” (p. 18), which offers a combination of perspectives resembling the transactional relationship Oral (2013) described between past, present, and future. The third interview of this study engaged this future orientation. By the time the third interview started, participants had been asked to consider themselves as teacher, or as a person engaged in some form of teaching. These considerations were recorded in several forms, minimally in visual form through the completion of the “Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching” form—described in the following section—that helped participants to depict how they see themselves teaching in the future. The final interview continued participants’ meaning-making through a review and discussion of the snapshots and other contributed artifacts, from which conceptions of teaching have been investigated.

### **Audio, Textual, and/or Visual Artifacts**

Participants’ lived pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching, and the ways in which they make meaning from these experiences, were also

pursued through participants' creation of audio, textual, and/or visual artifacts, which were housed in separate Slack channels shared by each participant and myself. Artifacts were intended to offer participants different mediums to guide portions of the inquiry through participants' capturing of pieces of their ongoing experiences, interactions, and meaning-making with teachers and teaching. These captured elements have included spoken and textual narrative descriptions using voice memos and Slack, respectively, as well as visual representations of participants' experiences using additional snapshot drawings. More importantly, and in keeping with both the goals of phenomenographic inquiry (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998) as well as this study of conceptions of teaching, I believe the contributed artifacts offer insights into participants' thinking or meaning-making from these experiences, and how this meaning-making contributes to the conceptions of teaching participants hold.

The directions for audio, textual, and/or visual artifacts paralleled the focus of subsequent interviews within Seidman's (2006) structure. At the end of the first interview, participants were asked to begin producing 1-2 artifacts per week during the duration of their participation in the data collection phase of the study, including at least one "Snapshot of Learning" visual before the second interview, the forms for which were distributed in person and also available on Slack (see Appendix D). Through their artifacts, participants were asked to think about, and to capture, observations of and thoughts on experiences they had with different types of teachers and teaching. A set of directions was included on Slack and reviewed as part of the first interview (see Appendix C). These directions included a list of possible topics, such as descriptions of people and events, the physical layout or arrangement of spaces where participants may

have interacted with teachers and teaching, voice memos or audio recordings capturing observations and/or reflections, as well as any hopes or fears they might have felt during these experiences or reflections as/if they considered themselves as teacher. However, these directions emphasized that the format for entries was at the discretion of participants. Participants' role in co-collecting data, through the noting, description, and/or depiction of experiences they found worthy of sharing as artifacts, was also emphasized.

The focus of the second artifact prompt was participants' meaning-making. Once again, participants were asked to produce 1-2 artifacts per week, including at least one snapshot visual. The revised artifact directions (see Appendix F) did not rule out the continued collection of data related to ongoing interactions with different representations of teachers and teaching, but they asked participants to consider their beliefs about teaching, as well as how they might see themselves in the future engaged in some form of teaching. As was the case in the first prompt, participants were again asked to complete a snapshot visual using the "Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching" form (Appendix H), though the prompt asked participants to record a depiction of themselves teaching. These artifacts targeting participants' considerations of themselves as teacher, or as individuals engaged in teaching, were then discussed in the third interview.

### **Data Organization**

Collecting data from textual artifacts, visual products like timelines and snapshot drawings of classrooms, and interviews and the transcripts derived from them has produced a number of physical and electronic data sources, all of which have been organized and stored in an efficient manner for access and analysis. Data sources

collected in physical form, namely the timelines and snapshot drawings produced before or during interviews, have been scanned in order to create an electronic copy; original paper copies have been stored in a secured location as this study has been conducted. These scanned sources, along with interview audio files and password protected typed transcripts, are stored on my computer, which is protected by a separate password from participants' individual data sources, and organized by a numerical identifier or pseudonym for each participant, as well as by date and activity.

In addition to storing and organizing data on my personal computer, I have maintained private password protected Slack channels, where participants have been able to access all data collected and contributed from their participation in the study. In addition to a desire to show participants the forms their various contributions to the study have taken, thereby allowing participants to see individual documents should they choose to do so, I have sought to provide participants with the opportunity to help me better understand their experiences and the conceptions derived from their experiences through informal feedback and critique in the channel, as well as a member check of individual profiles drafted for each participant. While Ashworth and Lucas (1998) noted certain theoretical criticisms with participants reviewing researcher interpretations of experience, they also noted the value of these contributions, particularly as an aid in helping researchers to avoid their own presuppositions obscuring participants' descriptions of their experiences with phenomena. Participant member checks, and the criticisms of this analytical approach, will be described later in this chapter.

### **The Bracketing of Presuppositions**

With a focus on “experience[s]-as-described” to discover “categories of description” identifying the different ways a phenomenon like teaching is experienced (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998, p. 416), this study employs a number of analytical procedures developed by phenomenographic and phenomenological researchers. Larsson and Holmström (2007) noted that many early phenomenographic studies shared little more than a list of categories, leaving little indication of how the categories were developed, and possibly dismissing individual experiences of research participants with the phenomenon in question. Since the root of any phenomenographic study is the experiences of individuals, these experiences must not be obscured by my presuppositions and experiences as a researcher and former teacher, nor should they fall to the wayside in a quest to construct logically structured categories of conceptions (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). In an effort to minimize these presuppositions, certain phenomenological procedures, namely the bracketing of a number of categories of potential presuppositions, have been employed. The following section will describe different presuppositions potentially significant to this study.

Even before data collection began, I carefully considered my own presuppositions related to experiences with, and conceptions of, teaching. Ashworth and Lucas (1998) asserted that phenomenographic research “must be grounded in the lived experience of its research participants” (p. 417). Despite strongly emphasizing the importance of revealing lived experience in phenomenographic research, Ashworth and Lucas (1998) noted that empirical research of lived experience, and phenomenography in particular, is beset by significant challenges, namely the privileging and separating of the research participant’s



life-world and experiences from the researcher's or research field's own understanding of and/or experiences with the phenomenon in question, as well as the actual success of certain research methods in surfacing the research participant's experiences. The principle or strategy Ashworth and Lucas (1998) described, which I have employed in this study, is bracketing, also referred to as the epoché.

Bracketing has an oft-debated and sometimes contentious meaning in research literature (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Larsson & Holmström, 2007), which can be traced back through empirical phenomenological research and idealist philosophy (Ashworth, 1999). Ashworth (1999) described two philosophical forks of the approach, one of which he traced back to Husserl, who framed the life-world in what Ashworth (1999) described as “an essential structure” (p. 708). Understood from an essentialist perspective, the role of bracketing was to “[turn] away from the world and...[concentrate] on detached consciousness,” to effectively separate one's self from prior experiences or knowledge of a phenomenon in order to better see the phenomenon's essential structure or characteristics (Ashworth, 1999, p. 708). The second fork was linked to the work of Merleau-Ponty, who viewed Husserl's work from an existentialist perspective, meaning bracketing entailed “*resolve* to set aside theories, research presuppositions, [and] ready-made interpretations” (Ashworth, 1999, p. 708), rather than a total separation of one's self and experiences with the phenomenon in question. The fundamental difference between these views of bracketing could be described as a life-world consisting of certain common structures, or essences, versus the life-world consisting of different meanings for different beings.

In this study, I have engaged, to the greatest extent possible, in bracketing based on Merleau-Ponty's existential perspective across eight different areas to ensure focus on research participants' life-worlds: 1) bracketing presuppositions based on theories or earlier findings; 2) searching the literature after analyses are complete; 3) setting aside the tendency to construct hypotheses; 4) setting aside apparent evidence from other authoritative sources; 5) bracketing assumptions based on personal knowledge and belief; 6) bracketing assumptions that would dictate specific research methods; 7) setting aside questions of "cause"; and 8) bracketing the issue of the relation of the experience to "objectivity" (see Ashworth, 1999, pp. 711-718). While each of these areas merit, and will receive, attention throughout this chapter, I will briefly address four of the areas before detailing my analytical procedures.

### **Bracketing Assumptions Based on Personal Knowledge and Belief**

In Chapter I, I provided an account of my own teacher biography, as well a description of how I became interested in learning to teach as an area of study. This biographical account, along with the theoretical framework also described in the first chapter, effectively serves as a statement of my core beliefs about how teachers learn to teach, underpinned by assumptions that some teachers may learn about teaching in similar ways from their pre-collegiate experiences, while others' learning may be quite different. Before drafting my interview protocols, I reviewed my first two chapters to recall these presuppositions-cum-dissertation chapters, and I have continued to review both chapters and protocols to minimize the influence of my own personal experiences and conceptions of teaching.

### **Searching the Literature after Analyses are Complete**

The requirements for completing the dissertation make it difficult, if not impossible, to wait until after data collection and analysis to conduct literature searches. As part of the proposal process, I conducted literature searches and drafted a review of literature. During data collection, I refrained from reading and reviewing additional literature, instead printing and storing new texts in order to review them once my phenomenographic analysis was completed.

### **Bracketing Presuppositions Based on Theories or Earlier Findings**

As a result of my literature search, I have outlined in the first and second chapters a number of theories and earlier findings, such as consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher in a classroom (Oral, 2013), and the apprenticeship of observation in the first and second chapters (Lortie, 1975/2002). Bracketing, in line with Merleau-Ponty's interpretation, does not allow the researcher to simply forget what has previously been written and read, but it can be used as a check against analysis that utilizes pre-determined categories instead of engaging in analysis that flows from research participants' experiences (e.g., checking to see if students are selfishly motivated, as Lortie asserted in his study). To limit the use of pre-determined analytical categories or themes derived from research, I have developed individual profiles documenting each participant's descriptions of and reflections on their pre-collegiate experiences and conceptions of teaching, using these as an iterative check for what Ashworth and Lucas (2000) called "internal validity" as I shifted my analysis from individual experiences to conceptual categories of description (pp. 304-305).

### **Setting aside the Tendency to Construct Hypotheses**

The individual profiles have aided in setting aside hypotheses as to the nature of research participants' descriptions of their pre-collegiate experiences and their conceptions of teaching, as well as the conceptual categories that may be developed from these experiences. While my own experiences in learning to teach, as well as my exposure to theories and previous findings through my literature review, have contributed to wonderings, and then educated guesses, concerning others' pre-collegiate experiences and how they influence conceptions of teaching, I have used the individual profiles developed for each participant to capture and to draw from descriptions of experiences with teaching, which in turn have been used to assist in my data analysis and discovery of conceptual categories of description.

### **Data Analysis**

Phenomenographic analysis of data helps to separate phenomenography from phenomenology. Whereas phenomenology is used to describe the "common, intersubjective meaning of [some] aspect" of reality (Marton, 1981, p. 180), sometimes referred to as *essence*, phenomenography is employed to draw out the various ways individuals experience this aspect of reality. However, a phenomenographic analysis is not exclusively a matter of explicating, to the best of the researcher's ability, the experiences of a cohort with an identified phenomenon. Instead, phenomenographic data analysis methods are used to transition from the described experiences of individuals to conceptual categories of description of a cohort (Berglund, 2006), from which a hierarchical relationship, or a structural relationship between categories, has sometimes been sought (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). This process of transition, as Prosser (2000)

wrote of phenomenographic analysis, “is more akin to an act of discovery (or constitution) rather than an act of verification” (p. 37), in that it seeks to explore experiences and conceptual categories of a cohort rather than confirm (or disconfirm) findings of others. In the following section, I will outline my specific procedures for data analysis, which have drawn from my Fall 2016 pilot study and include a continuation of my efforts to bracket my presuppositions.

### **The Focal Point of Analysis: Interview Transcripts**

Interviews are frequently utilized in phenomenographic studies, and as a result they often serve as the focal point of phenomenographic data analysis (Åkerlind, 2005). With individual descriptions of pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching discussed during each interview, participant interviews serve as an integral component of the study, with the development of interview transcripts an important first step in data analysis. Each individual interview with participants was audio recorded. As soon as possible after the interview was conducted—almost always beginning the next day—I carefully listened to and transcribed the audio file produced from the interview into a verbatim transcript of the interview, which was initially recorded in a spreadsheet along with timestamps and empty columns for later use. The process of listening, transcribing, and checking was repeated at least twice for each interview in order to capture all data that might be suggestive of how participants describe their conceptions of teaching (Svensson & Theman, 1983). After the second review, the transcripts were copied from spreadsheet to word processing document, where they were presented in tabular form. In addition, field notes drafted during the interviews were integrated into

the transcript, including descriptions of participants' tone and expressions during the interview, as well as the manner in which responses were provided (Franz, 1994).

As transcripts were produced from audio recorded interviews, I resisted the urge to categorize the transcripts or to develop themes or conceptual categories from them. Åkerlind (2005) argued that individual transcripts lack meaning when separated from the entire body of transcripts generated during a phenomenographic study. While Åkerlind (2005) emphasized the exploration of "the range of meanings within a sample group" over such range for each individual within the group (p. 323), I have remained mindful of the desire or aim to create a structure of categories as a presupposition of phenomenographic research (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), one I sought to bracket in the initial wave of analysis. Instead of drafting possible categories, I focused on developing as accurate a transcript as I could for each interview, and on understanding the different components of the experiences therein described.

Instead of developing conceptual categories from individual transcripts, I engaged in an adapted form of Marshall and Rossman's (2011) analytic memoing during and after the transcribing of each interview. My analytic memos have not been used for coding data and/or understanding coded items, as Marshall and Rossman (2011) described their apparent use of memoing, but instead to carefully and to iteratively review participants' descriptions of their experiences with teaching. As I transcribed interviews and read and reviewed transcripts and artifacts, I drafted *mini-memos* on small post-it notes, consisting of 3-5 word "questions, musings, and speculations" I considered during my initial analysis of participants' data (Creswell, 2007, p. 290). When mini-memos dealt with similar topics or events, I physically grouped them together in a notebook until I had a

chance to draft more expansive analytic memos describing my questions, musings, and speculations, and connecting these back to, and across, each participant's three interview transcripts. By reviewing transcripts and writing analytic memos after each interview, I sought to identify experiences that participants situated as influential or significant to their understandings of teaching, as well as to find references to individuals, places, or experiences crucial to an understanding of participants' experiences, and also those worthy of further explication in subsequent interviews. Ultimately, analytic memos expanded my understanding of participants' experiences, helping to direct questions in subsequent interviews and to expand what Creswell (2007) called the "data corpus" for individual profiles and subsequent analysis (p. 290).

### **Grounding the Study in Experience through Individual Profiles**

As interviews were transcribed, uploaded or provided artifacts were reviewed (and transcribed, if originally spoken), and analytic memos were written, they were used to generate a comprehensive individual profile of each participant's experiences with teaching. Like Ashworth and Lucas (2000), I see potential value in generalizations (i.e., categories of conceptions) across individual participants, but I also believe "it is important that the individual's unique experience is not lost" in a drive to create generalizations or categories (p. 304). Individual profiles have served at least two important purposes in this study. First, Ashworth and Lucas (2000) noted that profiles offered opportunities to produce evidence of what they called *internal validity*, which they described as "the consistency in the account given by the participant" (p. 305). Second, by dedicating time in analysis not just to transcribing interviews, but also to "dwell[ing] on the participant's experiences" through the creation of profiles (p. 304), I

have sought to develop greater understanding of each participant's pre-collegiate experiences and how they may contribute to conceptions of teaching. Understanding the ways in which individuals describe their pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching has been an essential purpose of this study, a prerequisite to any inductive analytic approaches that seek to develop themes or categories across individuals' experiences.

Several uniform steps were taken to create individual profiles after interviews were transcribed. Following the completion of memoing based on a participant's completed series of interviews and artifacts, all data sources were reviewed multiple times, during which I categorized each line in the transcript, as well as specific elements of teacher timelines and artifacts, to assist in pooling and investigating topics or themes across the data, as well as exploring relationships across different aspects and horizons in the descriptions. Two types of categorization were employed. First, each line was identified as potentially indicative of either the structural or referential aspect of conceptions, consistent with Marton and Pong's (2005) distinctions. For lines identified as indicative of the structural aspect of conceptions, I further categorized each line using Marton and Booth's (1997) external and internal horizon distinction. Second, each line was separately assessed for its relevance to conceptions of teaching using the following categories: 1) statements/data reflecting pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching, for data that included participants' descriptions of their pre-collegiate experiences and possibly conceptions of teaching; 2) statements/data possibly related to pre-collegiate experiences and conceptions of teaching, for data I was not sure about and that might have been seen as related with additional analysis, and 3)



statements/data unrelated to pre-collegiate experiences and conceptions of teaching, for any data that was not relevant to participants' pre-collegiate experiences with teachers and teaching.

After data was categorized and sorted so that similar statements or data points were considered together, I started to draft a narrative, initially by describing my sorting process and understandings in separate profile memos. These memos helped to produce an outline for each profile, and I repeatedly referred to them as I drafted lengthy narratives for each participant. As the narratives were drafted, and even after they were completed, I read, re-read, and reviewed them and all memos I produced concerning the participant, to evaluate each data point and statement to identify shifting understandings, and to possibly include more developed understandings and relevant data points and statements that warranted inclusion in the narrative. The profiles produced from this process were then included as part of the data corpus, and regularly referenced as data analysis transitioned from individual descriptions of experiences to conceptual categories. The version of the profiles appearing in Chapter IV has been subjected to two additional steps. First, the full profiles, and the topics or themes written about in them, were revised into a series of 1-2 page letters addressed—though not sent—to the participant, an analytical approach sometimes used by phenomenographers (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), and then reconstituted as a narrative. Second, the shorter, revised narrative was shared with participants for their feedback as a validity check (e.g., Åkerlind, 2005; Ashworth, 1993).

Using the standard prompt found in Appendix I, I asked participants to review their own profile, and to suggest corrections or revisions that might make the profile a

more accurate rendering of their understandings of teaching. Asking participants to validate their own individual profiles offered opportunities for my understandings of participants' experiences to be scrutinized, and possibly revised, ideally bringing me closer to the participants' life-worlds through more faithful descriptions of experience (Francis, 1996). The member check also served as a check on my presuppositions as a researcher and teacher educator (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998), which could come in the form of classifications and/or interpretations of data points and statements. Though Ashworth (1993) previously noted several theoretical criticisms of participant validation of profiles and other research products—namely that participants' scrutiny is a performance to the researcher that creates questions of validity—he and Lucas posited that the approach could assist phenomenographers in bracketing their presuppositions (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Ashworth's evolving views on the utility of participant validation could be attributed to the fundamental assumptions of phenomenography, which regards participants as "reporting subject[s] rather than an interrogated object," thus trusting that the account given by participants is faithful to, and not a front or performance divorced from, their lived experience (Francis, 1996, p. 38).

### **Exploring Possible Categories of Description**

Once individual profiles were drafted for each participant, my analysis shifted emphasis from the explication of individual experience to considerations of the variations in experience and conceptions of teaching of the cohort of participants through the discovery of categories of description. Categories of description are phenomenographers' efforts to arrive at as accurate and as complete an understanding of participants' conceptions of, or "different ways of understanding," a phenomenon as they can (p. 335),

typically regarded as the end goal of phenomenographic inquiry (Francis, 1996; Marton & Pong, 2005). By shifting my analysis to categories of description, I analyzed the individual profiles and data from participants as a single cohort to explore variations in their experiences, as well as the possibility that participants develop, or access, a collective consciousness (Bowden & Marton, 1998) related to conceptions of teaching, possibly suggesting additional structural and/or referential aspects, or more complex internal and external horizons, significant to the construction of their conceptions of teaching.

As Berglund (2006) explained, phenomenographic data analysis adopts a visual sorting and resorting of data into piles, the latter of which may become the categories of description. The first step I employed in this next layer of analysis was to sort all participants' data into what Bowden (2000) referred to as "tentative allocations...of the draft categories" (p. 52), which involved reading and reviewing data, cutting transcripts, and grouping them with transcripts that appeared to focus on similar topics, themes, or even words. These piles were placed into manila folders, which were identified with a letter and a brief dated description intended to describe each folder's contents. Although the folders included transcripts from all participants, each data segment could still be linked to participants due to the color-coding of transcripts and artifacts, as well as the interview and artifact numbers/letters recorded on each piece of data. Once all data was sorted into a draft category and placed into a labeled folder, I created a spreadsheet that has served as an audit trail, which included a record of the dates folders were created, their assigned letter, and a brief description before drafting a more complete category description that identified the folders' contents and the reason(s) why they were grouped

together. I repeated this process of reading, reviewing, and sorting all data two more times, adding and consolidating draft categories and revising the category descriptions I had initially written to more accurately reflect each folder's contents.

After the third review of all data, I continued the same process a fourth time, though I added an important step on this next pass. As I read and reviewed the data in each folder, I identified specific segments within each folder. For my purposes, a segment was data from a particular participant in one of the folders that described an observation or reflection about a single event or idea. This required me to physically separate (i.e., cut up) transcripts in each folder, which were bounded as segments with a paper clip and a post-it note that was numbered and identified by a short description. As I identified and reviewed these segments, I listed them by number in a separate spreadsheet, effectively creating an inventory of segments identified by item number, folder/tentative category, participant, and description.

During my subsequent passes through each folder's contents, I read, reviewed, and (re)sorted segments, while also categorizing the segments within each folder to investigate the structure and variation within the tentative categories, identified by some phenomenographers as the expressed aim of phenomenographic inquiry (e.g., Marton & Pong, 2005). These subcategorizations involved reading the segments and grouping them with similar topics or events within the category, then annotating the segments and my spreadsheet folder inventory with a letter and/or number to denote the subcategory. By this point in the analysis, the movement between folders was less frequent than it had been at the beginning. While mindful of Berglund's (2006) account of phenomenography as the development of approximately 5-10 piles of segments, I focused my efforts less on

the number of categories and more on the descriptions of each folder's contents so they could be easily understood and demarcated from the other categories of description. In addition to examining the within-category structure of experiences, I used the folder inventories and segments to investigate how the categories of description relate to one another, and whether and/or how they "illuminate different aspects of one phenomenon" (Berglund, 2006, p. 3). Through bracketing, I sought to minimize the influence of my presuppositions concerning the existence of conceptual categories, or structures within or between categories throughout the analysis.

Finally, I returned to the literature related to pre-collegiate experiences and their influence on conceptions of teaching. With individual profiles created from the data collected throughout the study, and after a careful analysis of profiles and raw data for conceptions and structures both within and between conceptual categories, I compared and contrasted my findings following the creation of profiles and an inductive and iterative process of sorting and resorting relevant data, to the literature I reviewed. In particular, I examined the field's characterizations of pre-collegiate experiences and conceptions of teaching, and how my findings compare and contrast with those characterizations present in the research literature.

### **Limitations**

A number of potential limitations of this study should be noted, particularly those following from the choice of phenomenographic methods. Arguably the most important limitation of this phenomenographic inquiry into pre-collegiate experiences and how they influence conceptions of teaching is its use of what Marton (1981) has called *second-order perspective*. The purpose of this inquiry has not been for me as the researcher to go

into the field and to investigate the lived experiences of high school students interested in teaching careers, an arduous, and likely impossible, task, which Marton (1981) would have described as involving a *first-order perspective*. Instead, this inquiry has adopted the second-order perspective, in which I engaged people's (i.e., my participants') experiences with a phenomenon (i.e., teaching). Therefore, the intent of this study has been to examine the ways high school students interested in teaching careers understand teachers and teaching through their descriptions of their pre-collegiate experiences, rather than to attempt to capture their lived experiences interacting with teachers and teaching.

By adopting Marton's (1981) second-order perspective, I have been left with a second limitation. Because I cannot possibly investigate, let alone experience, the totality of my participants' pre-collegiate experiences and the understandings of teaching potentially derived therefrom, I must assume they are providing an account that is faithful to their experiences. An alternative to a *faithful account* would be a performance, in which the participants, for one reason or another, offer descriptions of their experiences they think will be helpful, interesting, or some other motivating factor. Using multiple interview transcripts in which experiences with teachers and teaching are discussed, as well as the various artifacts contributed by participants, I have worked to identify consistency across each participant's descriptions of their experiences, in pursuit of the internal validity Ashworth and Lucas (2000) described. Nevertheless, these efforts have been inherently limited, as they ultimately have relied on descriptions of pre-collegiate experiences interacting with teachers and teaching.

Finally, this phenomenographic inquiry has focused upon the experiences of five high school students interested in teaching careers, falling short of the recommended

number of participants recommended by some scholars. For example, Trigwell (2000) identified between fifteen and twenty participants as an optimal number, with ten participants a minimum number “to create a reasonable chance of finding variation in the range” (p. 66). However, Trigwell (2000) also asserted that less than fifteen participants could yield a successful phenomenographic study “[i]f it is suspected that person X might describe an interesting conception or one which might be considered extreme,” and participants were added to the sample to explore possibly interesting or extreme conceptions (p. 66). The small number of participants may mean the study does not surface all the “finite and relatively limited number of qualitatively different ways” teaching has been experienced by high school students interested in teaching careers (Richardson, 1999, pp. 61-62).

### **Presentation of the Findings**

In the following chapters, I present the study’s findings, based on the analytical procedures described in this chapter. The remaining chapters can be broken into three categories, which I will briefly introduce before detailing their structures. Chapter IV features the revised form of the individual profiles I drafted for each participant. Transitioning from individuals to the cohort, I move into the categories of description revealed by my analysis, discussing them in greater detail in Chapters V, VI, and VII. Finally, in Chapter VIII, I discuss the study’s findings, linking them to existing literature on anticipatory socialization and teacher learning. Though Chapter VIII’s contents are not a product of phenomenographic analysis, they do represent another layer of analysis, providing additional findings and implications for the study.

### **Structure of Chapter IV**

Chapter IV contains the revised forms of each participant's individual profile, including any changes made following participant member checks. My goal was not to offer a standardized profile, but to engage in a deep and thorough reading and analysis of each participant's descriptions of their experiences with teachers and teaching.

Consequently, each participant's profile is structured differently, with headings and subheadings intended to highlight the experiences participants situated as most significant to their understandings of teaching. The profiles are organized into two sections; while the first section groups the three participants who identified as white and female since they are, in terms of race and gender, similar to the majority of teachers in the US, the second section shares the profiles of participants with at least one parent who had immigrated to the US. This structure was employed primarily as an organizational move to group profiles, rather than as an intentional attempt to construct profiles comparing participants to certain groups within the total teacher population.

### **Structure of Chapters V, VI, and VII**

In the next three chapters, I present the findings of my phenomenographic analysis, the categories of description of participants' experiences with teachers and teaching. Chapter V features categories closest to participants, teaching as *seemingly ubiquitous*, teaching as *discernible approaches, routines, and patterns*, and teaching as *relational*. By closest, I mean to say that these three categories help to describe highly visible characteristics or events involving teaching, including everyday situations involving teaching, the approaches and practices teachers used, and the types of interactions and relationships they had with learners. In Chapter VI, I share categories



that together represent different purposes of and pressures on teaching, including teaching as *dependent* and teaching as *prioritizing*. These categories help to explain the various ways participants viewed teaching's fundamental purposes, as well as the different goals or priorities teachers stated, or appeared to enact, in their teaching. Finally, Chapter VII focuses on a single category, teaching as *convergence*, in which I seek to explain the different types of intersections I started to see between the initial five categories, as well as converging expectations for teaching and how these contributed to participants' assessments of teaching.

### **Structure of Chapter VIII**

Chapter VIII consists of a discussion and extension of the study's results. After comparing and contrasting my findings to the research I reviewed in Chapter I and Chapter II, I revisit the distinction I made in these chapters between *asset views* and *deficits views* in prior experiences and conceptions of teaching, discussing the presence, and often coexistence, of assets and deficits within participants' descriptions of their experiences with, and the cohort's conceptions of, teaching. Among the assets I identify and discuss is participants' views on learning to teach, and how teacher educators must engage with these views within teacher preparation programs. In the remainder of the chapter, I focus on the implications I see stemming from this study, including implications for teacher education practice, policy, and research.

## Chapter IV

### GROUNDING THE INQUIRY IN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

Although phenomenographers are more interested in the output of their studies, which is the explication of categories of description meant to surface a group's conceptions of an identified phenomenon, the core of phenomenography is—or, at least, should be—the descriptions of experiences of each participant in the cohort. The normative statement I just made actually originates from a particular tension some scholars see between the experience participants bring to any phenomenographic study and the desire of researchers to represent the cohort's collective experiences rather than any one individual's experiences. By dividing conceptions into structural and referential aspects (e.g., Pang, 2003), some phenomenographers, particularly through the external horizon, have carved out a space in their work to consider the significance of the context, or contextual factors, of individuals' descriptions of their experiences with the phenomenon under study, considerations that might better ground phenomenographic research in the lived experience of participants (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Lucas, 2000). Ashworth and Lucas (2000), in addition to arguing for individual experience to be more carefully considered in phenomenographic studies, suggested the use of participant

profiles as a way of grounding these explorations of experience, and to this end I have taken up their suggestion, employing the process outlined in Chapter III.

As I wrote profiles for each participant, I was primarily concerned with developing a greater understanding of each participant's experiences, in effect using the profiles as a space to carefully consider the three sub-questions underneath my first research question:

1. What are the conceptions of teaching of 5 high school students interested in teaching careers?
  - a. What experiences involving different types of teachers and forms of teaching do these students describe as being influential in the formation of their conceptions of teaching?
  - b. What desires and/or imaginings of teaching are bound up in these students' descriptions of different types of teachers and forms of teaching?
  - c. To what extent do these students' descriptions of different types of teachers and forms of teaching reflect the reconciling of teaching they have observed, teaching they desire and/or imagine doing, and teaching they view as appropriate or permissible in a given context?

My intent was not to elicit conceptions of teaching for each individual participant, but instead to come as close as I possibly could to understanding each participant's experiences with, and understanding of, teaching, in an effort to develop the kind of empathy Ashworth and Lucas (2000) advocated for in phenomenographic work. Each profile was constructed in three broad phases. First, I read, sorted, and re-read each individual's transcripts, eventually drafting a 20-25 page profile. Second, I revised the

profile for brevity and clarity, yielding profiles anywhere between 8 and 11 pages. Third, I made the revised profile available to each participant and invited them to read the profile and to offer feedback on my portrayal of their descriptions. For those participants who did offer feedback, I then revised the profile again and invited the participant to read it again, with several cycles of reading and revising taking place.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present the revised profiles I drafted for each participant. The focus, as one might expect having read the previous paragraphs, is the participant's, rather than the cohort's, experiences with teaching. While I will foreground the profiles, I will largely refrain from using this chapter to analyze participants' experiences with teaching, either individually, across individuals, and/or collectively. Instead, I hope the reader will take the opportunity, as I did in reading transcripts and writing and revising each profile, to reflect on participants' descriptions of their experiences with teaching, including what they found important in understanding teachers and teaching.

### **Exemplifying the Demographic Imperative in Teaching: Rachel, Marie, and Elsie**

Rachel, Marie, and Elsie personify the demographic imperative Lowenstein (2009) described. All white, female, and at least middle-class English speakers, they reflect, in at least two of these four descriptive areas, the majority of a public school teaching force that in 2013 was 76.3% female and 81.9% white (National Center for Education Statistics). Should they become teachers, the three are likely to teach in a public school system with starkly different teacher and student demographics. Moving beyond these basic, though important, demographic characteristics they share, Rachel's, Marie's, and Elsie's living circumstances and school experiences were, like many

prospective teachers', or even *white* and *female* prospective teachers', experiences, similar in some ways while quite different in others. For example, while Rachel and Marie lived in rural areas of Pennsylvania and New Jersey respectively—though within short drives of urban centers—Elsie resided in a diverse neighborhood of Plymouth City, a large urban area in New York. Elsie and Rachel both attended private schools during their elementary years, with Elsie attending a Waldorf school through the fourth grade while Rachel attended a Montessori school through sixth grade in Dalton City near her hometown. Of the three, only Marie attended public schools in one geographic area throughout her entire school career; Rachel transitioned to public schools starting in seventh grade. By placing their profiles consecutively, more similarities and differences will no doubt be apparent, but more importantly there will be an opportunity to look closely at Rachel's, Marie's, and Elsie's experiences with teaching, part of an effort to, as Marton (1981) explained, shift perspectives to experiences with a phenomenon rather than variations across individuals.

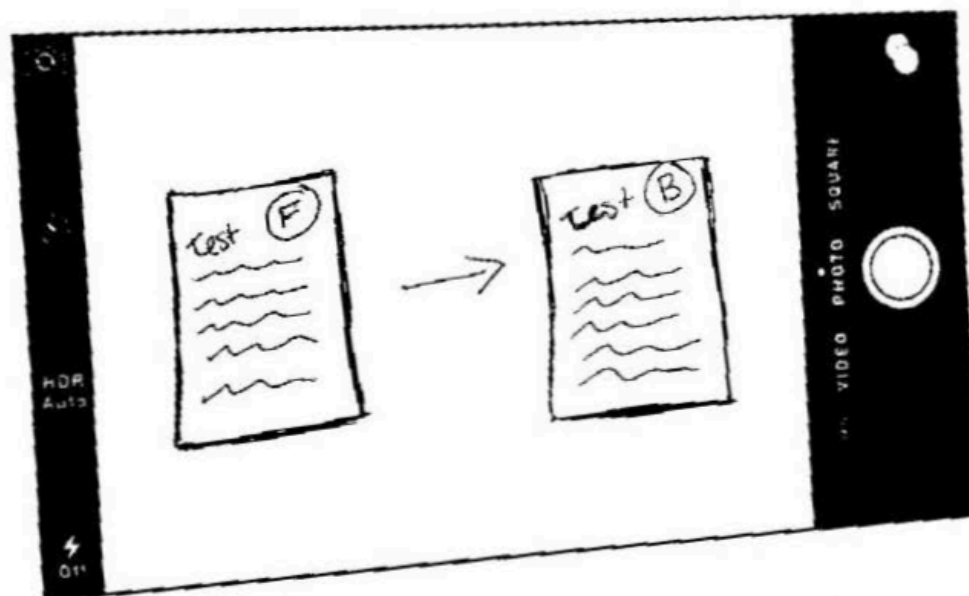
### **Rachel**

For Rachel, a 17-year-old white female high school senior from Midway Village in Pennsylvania, teaching has been “[her] whole life” (Int 1, 74). She readily attributed this reality to her parents, both of whom she identified, at least initially, as “pretty much teachers” (Int 1, 75). Yet Rachel saw teaching in a variety of places: at home through her parents, at Christian meetings, in the school parking lot done by *experience*, and many other settings. By middle school, Rachel had started to consider the prospect of becoming a teacher as a result of an art class she took, though she had since lost interest in teaching art. With experiences involving various forms of teaching, Rachel had developed

different ways of categorizing teachers, discussing their work, and identifying challenges and constraints they might face.

**Fundamental aspects of teaching.** Teaching, as Rachel characterized it, is something that involves “explain[ing] something to someone and they understand it” (Int 1, 76). Explaining, as Rachel described it in this context, involved “this transfer of knowledge” (Int 1, 77), which I understood as a *movement* or *shift* in understanding, as well as “this moment of, ‘Oh, he got it!’” (Int 1, 77). This idea of movement or shifting may have something to do with Rachel’s desire to teach biology, a class that involves what she called *facts*, among the knowledge moving or shifting between student and teacher. Rachel also noted that in her own teaching she wanted to relay information without engaging in what she called “fact-reading,” the repetition or listing of facts, which she described as “sounding stupid” (Int 3, 626). Knowledge may have also consisted of “what was happening in the world” (Int 3, 485), or the “important” perspectives of the few foreign teachers Rachel and her classmates encountered (Int 3, 490). Within this shifting understanding of knowledge or relaying of information, Rachel also saw “maintaining [students’] interest” as an important consideration (Int 3, 626). Ultimately, teaching well, in her view, required learning. As she told me of teaching and learning, “it’s impossible to have one without the other” (Int 2, 736).

Rachel also seemed to view learning as a shift or movement of facts, knowledge, or perspectives, occurring in various places in her own life, meaning teaching, given its close relationship with learning, appeared in several different forms. One of these forms she described as “the experience...taught a lesson” (Art C), where a person was “learning from the experience” (Int 2, 726). To describe what she meant, she wrote about Samuel, a



In my AP Biology class, the student next to me received an F on a test. When she took it again, she told me that she had decided to study for longer. A valuable lesson was learned about applying yourself for a good outcome.

Figure 1. Rachel on learning from an experience (Snapshot of Learning)

student she identified as disabled, and who she had come to know in her teaching internship. In this particular example, Rachel and her students shared an experience where Rachel read an essay Samuel wrote, which “was very impressive for someone of his age,” and her classmates “were impressed when I read it out loud” (Art C, Lines 9-12); in effect, Rachel explained, the experience had helped them to see Samuel’s abilities as a student in a new light, one allowing them to appreciate his writing and his contributions to the class. In another example, she recounted an episode in the school’s

parking lot in which a parent, who she regularly observed speeding through the crowded lot, rammed into a student's car as he attempted to adjust his parking (Art A). Rachel noted that, in these examples, "there's not really a physical being...teaching at all" (Int 2, 727), and that the episode of teaching was "unintentional" and "wasn't, like, voluntary" (Int 2, 746-750).

Another example of this shift or movement, which Rachel referred to as "teaching yourself" (Int 2, 730), described a learner's movement closer to accessing knowledge or being able to perform a skill or activity. Unlike an experience teaching a person, Rachel described teaching yourself as "kind of something you already know, or like, you can access and gain that knowledge" (Int 2, 730). Accessing and gaining knowledge in this manner was something she found to be "a really positive thing" (Int 2, 709), as she "didn't have to rely on anybody else for this lesson, or...whatever you want" (Int 2, 717). The example she offered was playing *The Wind Waker* video game, and how she, after "a lot of hours in that basement" at home (Int 1, 271), taught herself how to play and to successfully complete the game.

In addition to these examples of depicting a shift or movement of knowledge through experience or accessing and gaining it on her own, Rachel told me about *conventional teachers*, or being a *literal teacher*. She identified her father, a college professor who was "very obviously animated and...interested in what he's teaching" (Int 3, 625), as "literally a teacher" (Int 1, 138), one who taught students in a classroom setting. Her mother, who taught workshops on disability rights to adults, was a teacher, though, in Rachel's view, "not...a conventional teacher" (Int 1, 140). Not only did her parents' work involve the movement of knowledge and skills, but they, like many



teachers, possessed “those characteristics that make them, like, easy to follow” (Int 3, 313). These characteristics included respect, something teachers could use with students that would “[give] them power” (Int 3, 324). In other words, teachers were leaders, words Rachel regarded as synonymous. Her view of a conventional teacher was further shaped by the differences in her formal school experiences, which included both Montessori education through grade six, and public schooling from grades seven to twelve.

**The significance of the difference between Montessori and public education.**

Montessori education’s influence on Rachel’s life was something she explicitly stated when it came to teaching. “I want to be a teacher because I’ve been to a Montessori education, and I’ve been through a public education” (Int 1, 552), she told me during the first interview. Rachel described the difference between these two forms of education as “incredible” (Int 1, 554), noting how she felt “years ahead” of (Int 1, 563), and “had to wait” for (Int 1, 559), her public school classmates at Bell Heights, her public high school. Her former Montessori classmates who transitioned to public schools were straight-A students, “even the kids who were way behind or having trouble” (Int 1, 556). Rachel credited Montessori education with teaching her far more than what public education may have taught her peers, regarding assignments like 12-page research papers as manageable, while she found many of her public school classmates struggled to write a single paragraph.

Not only did she regard Montessori as “such a good education system” (Int 1, 573), but Rachel also valued the teaching she experienced in her Montessori school as well, telling me she wanted to “try and make that happen” in her own teaching in the future (Int 1, 574). She described her experiences in the Montessori school as “an

extension of her life” (Int 1, 696-697), as opposed to something separate and distinct from it. Montessori education was “learning driven by the student’s own interest to learn” (Int 1, 579), where teachers oversaw projects that were “completely driven by [students], and what the outcome is is totally [the student’s outcome]” (Int 1, 587). Even the more structured activities, like the *marshmallow lesson*, seemed to embody some of these characteristics, taking an everyday—and, for students, apparently tasty—object and centering it in an episode of teaching, in doing so building excitement and interest in geometric concepts like volume.

The *marshmallow lesson*, or perhaps more accurately the teaching of geometric concepts like volume, in many respects epitomized the difference Rachel saw between Montessori and public education. At Bell Heights, the same lesson was taught using a worksheet with a picture of a square or cube on it. “[T]hat’s how they do it” (Int 1, 655), she assured me, and she expressed a belief that the reason for this type of teaching was “[b]ecause that public school teacher grew up in a public school” (Int 1, 655-656). And these were schools situated in a system that she felt “totally makes you hate learning” (Int 1, 592), as so much of what went on in these public schools, particularly for high school students, is “unit test, unit test, unit test” (Int 1, 677). Not only was public schooling not based on students’ interests, but Rachel saw the focus on testing as “ineffective,” an assessment backed by “a ton of research” (Int 1, 682-683).

Rachel saw differences not just in the way teaching and learning were conducted within Montessori and public schools, but in her own thinking about teaching as well. She told me that when she first started attending public schools, she had “all these different ways of how we can teach this and how we can do that” (Int 1, 660), which she

even shared with teachers on occasion, only to be met with an “Okay..” from the teacher before the teacher moved forward with the class (Int 1, 663). One consequence of year after year of public schooling was the way Rachel, as she considered what her teaching might look like in the future, “literally had trouble thinking of a different way to teach” other than one centered on testing (Int 1, 673-674), something she thought she could remedy by “spend[ing] some time in a Montessori school” in order to “get...back” what she lost when it came to teaching.

**An exemplar of teaching in public school.** Despite a rather negative view of public education, Rachel found, in Ms. North, what was for her an excellent model of the teacher she wanted to be. Her description of public schooling left the impression that she viewed these schools as mostly homogenous. For example, she inferred that teachers in public schools were, themselves, products of public schools, and therefore taught in a certain way. Rachel also repeatedly mentioned the prevalence of and emphasis on testing. These characterizations were similar, at least in terms of their homogeneity, to the way she described Bell Heights. Situated in Midway Village, a “very white...religious, conservative” farm town (Int 3, 416, 456) that is “probably one of the whitest areas in history” (Int 3, 416), Bell Heights was staffed by an almost uniformly white administration and faculty, the comments of the former group sounding “weird” and “like [living in] the twilight zone” (Int 3, 447-448), exemplified when administrators told Rachel “whatever you do with your girlfriend is your business” after she was referred to the office for hugging a friend of hers in class (Int 3, 438-441).

In the midst of the weirdness and antiquated attitudes she perceived in certain administrators and community members, Rachel found teachers and their work to be

highly variable. Her teachers were not static depictions like Ed Rooney in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, who “just wants to track down Ferris Bueller and ruin his life” (Int 1, 759-760). Instead, they were “human” (Int 1, 757), demonstrated by “the effort that they are putting in to teach this class and how much they want you to succeed” (Int 1, 764). In certain cases, it may have been more a case of *her* attitudes and/or opinions of teachers changing over time, particularly when she realized after a period of time that teachers she had once thought little of were “maybe...not so bad” (Int 1, 765).

Considering her view of public school teachers, it may be surprising Rachel found a model of what she wants to be as a teacher among her public school teachers. She left little doubt about this, saying Ms. North, her Advanced Placement Biology teacher, “is, like, exactly who I want to be in life” (Int 2, 304). Some of what resonated with her about Ms. North came down to the ways she interacted with her students, including how she was “very relaxed,” “very funny,” “smart...and quick” (Int 2, 329); even though she was “like having a friend” who would talk about any number of topics, she was also *teacher enough* to exert “authority to be able to kind of, like, keep us in line” (Int 2, 375).

Yet part of this resonance or appeal also seemed to come from how Ms. North knew and encouraged her students, and how she organized her class. Rachel claimed that students who take AP Biology are very organized and interested, and Ms. North helped them to remain organized by providing lists and schedules for her class. AP Biology was a class where facts were valued, which served as “a starting point” for crafting arguments, debating, and other activities (Int 1, 132). Ms. North’s online resources at times allowed Rachel to *get lost* in biology facts, which was easy for her since she was “really into” and “really understand[s]” facts (Int 1, 100). In other words, Ms. North’s

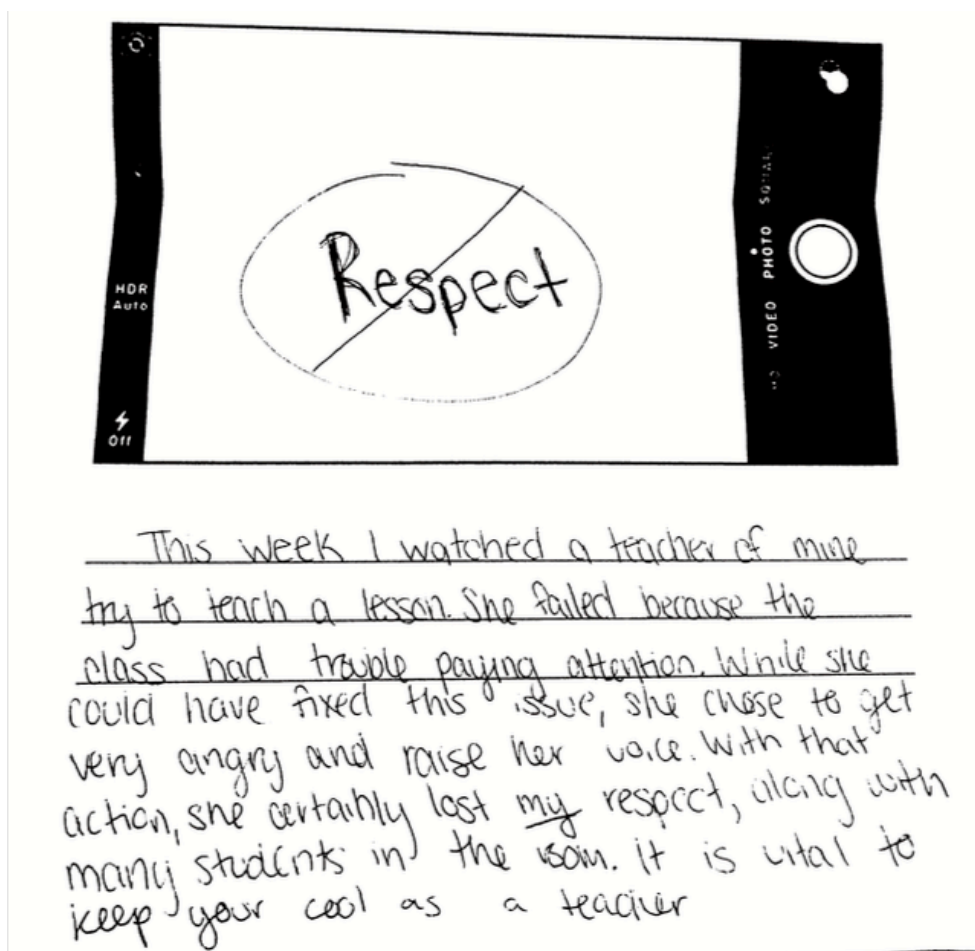


Figure 2. Rachel on losing respect for a teacher (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching)

class offered a structure, or a place even, where Rachel could engage in a sort of “self-propelled learning,” in which she felt she was not focused on anything else” (Int 3, 160).

In this way, Ms. North’s AP Biology class seemed built upon a foundation similar to one Rachel had previously encountered in some (or all) of her Montessori schooling.

**Rachel as teacher.** Rachel’s situation this past year was somewhat unique, as she had the opportunity to participate in a teaching internship. As she told me, this afforded her a “learning to teach” experience, in which she “watch[ed] [Mr. Arnold] teach” his history classes, yet also had opportunities “to be a teacher without having

to...completely, like, have that control” (Int 3, 503-505). The internship provided Rachel opportunities to experiment with different tactics, including those she had seen and/or heard teachers use in the past. These included *control tactics* like those used by Ms. North, such as saying “if you can hear my voice clap once, if you can hear my voice clap twice” (Int 3, 611), which Rachel may have used following a difficult episode of teaching in which “the talking by students continued and I had trouble getting their attention for very long” (Art E). Rachel expressed a view from these internship experiences that a teacher had to strike “a balance between treating [students] like an adult...and also treating them like they’re the student” (Int 3, 785), effectively identifying a “middle ground” that required teachers “to keep your cool as a teacher” (Int 3, 785; Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching), a middle ground she found “really difficult” to locate (Int 3, 791).

While control of the class was certainly an issue she considered and tried to develop during her internship experiences, Rachel also tried to help students to learn facts while also cultivating their interest in the class and topic. She made an intentional effort to avoid what she described as “fact-reading,” instead attempting to be “relaxed without...sound[ing] stupid,” which she further described as “being relaxed” and “maintaining interest” (Int 3, 626). To do this, she actively drew from the way her father talked as a teacher, as well as by using animation, “like walking around and, like, showing [students] on paper” different facts or ideas (Int 3, 639). In the future, Rachel wanted to increase the “participation level” amongst students (Int 3, 808) by planning and implementing class discussions, which allowed students “to kind of reach outside of what you literally got taught” (Int 2, 482), ideally constructing a respectful classroom

environment in which students are almost “force[d]...to participate” and can “get really into” these activities (Int 3, 810).

Although Rachel espoused preferences for certain teaching approaches in the future, she was also aware of some of the challenges she might face in implementing these approaches. In public schools, she found testing to be “[t]oo common” (Int 3, 819), to the point of serving as a “structure and all the teachers kind of forget anything that they were gonna do because they have to be focused on all the testing” (Int 3, 827). At one point, she wondered whether testing represented a challenge for teaching because it lacked utility for teachers’ day-to-day work teaching students, or because its use, or overuse, led “people [to] get too concentrated on what they need to be doing and not what would help the actual student” (Int 3, 833). Rachel proposed engaging with both of these interests or requirements in her practice, perhaps “one day [doing] a really cool discussion...and do[ing] all this awesome learning” while on other days directing students “to take this test” (Int 3, 828). Rachel may have had a clear preference towards student interests, yet she also did not appear to regard testing as wholly useless to teaching or schooling, or antithetical to or incompatible with teaching.

### **Marie**

“The world is focused on quality teachers, basing their success on the students’ test scores,” Marie wrote as the caption to her first snapshot drawing. “But what people forget,” she added, “is that a good educator doesn’t just teach their subject, but skills an individual can use throughout their entire lives, not just in the classroom” (Snapshot of Learning, Cap). The tension that can be drawn from Marie’s statement, between teaching for students’ test scores and teaching for something *not just in the classroom*, clearly is

perceptible to Marie in public schools, helping to depict an *environment* that was both “not what it used to be” (Int 1, 126) as well as not really something Marie “want[ed] to be, like, around” (Int 1, 124). By articulating a difference between what schools *were* and how she saw them *as a current student*, Marie’s descriptions reflected a complex classroom environment at Wakefield High School, situated in, and perhaps shaped by, a predominately white and wealthy county, in which teachers may not have been entirely in control of the aims and priorities of students, and a school environment at odds with the aims and priorities Marie believed should be present and/or pursued in public schooling.

**Grades, tests, and self-worth.** From a young age, even at her elementary school, Marie came to see school as a place where she “felt like [she] was always being judged by other people” (Int 1, 93). Perhaps consequently, Marie found herself placing “a lot of...[her] self-worth in the hands of other people” (Int 1, 94), who shaped the parameters of self-worth through comparisons with other students. At first, these judgments may have been related to Marie’s participation in an IEP program due to certain delays she was said to have in communication. Rather quickly, though, it seemed that Marie may have internalized these judgments and how they characterized or described her, possibly contributing to a focus on “pleasing other people rather than, like, being concerned with just being yourself” (Int 1, 95). Fourth grade could be considered a point where Marie started to reconsider her self-worth and how others saw her. After meeting Ms. Thomas, whose personality resonated with Marie and how she wanted to present herself, Marie described how she learned “to be just concerned with just, um, being yourself rather than pleasing other people” (Int 1, 112). Despite still feeling that she “just wasn’t on the same level as everyone else” (Int 1, 98-99), particularly in Language Arts and History, Marie



left the fifth grade feeling “kind of caught up” (Int 1, 88) with her peers. This change in how Marie viewed her self-worth remained influential, given her expressed desire to help students in the late elementary years the way Ms. Thomas helped her.

Nevertheless, middle and high school both presented new challenges, particularly in terms of how Marie and her peers assessed their own self-worth and school performance. The transition from middle school to high school was “eye-opening” for Marie due to “change[s] in expectation and curriculum, like types of testing and workloads and everything” (Int 1, 186, 174-175). Her math class with Mr. Miller may have exemplified this eye-opening feeling, especially the day he returned a test to Marie with a 62% grade, after she had spent virtually her entire middle school career “get[ting] 100s every marking period” (Int 1, 186), an event that prompted Marie to “put in a lot of study time” and “really [focus] on, like, the packets and everything” to perform better on her next exam (Int 1, 196). Part of what made grades so important to Marie, and presumably to her classmates as well, was the fact that they were “especially emphasized in applying, like, to college and everything” (Int 1, 130), an outcome that seemed broadly accepted and expected at Wakefield High School. Yet the importance of grades transcended college applications, which Marie demonstrated when she said, “it’s like your self-worth is, like, so attached to the grade that you get” (Int 1, 128). Instead of escaping these measures of self-worth, they seemed to grow more important as Marie progressed through school.

In fact, college—namely what Marie needed to do or complete to apply to one—loomed larger as she moved into the final grades of school. “[A]s you get older to, like, high school, college, even now,” Marie said, “success in the classroom is very focused on

standardized test scores, and grades” (Int 1, 123). Her views on testing depended on the test in question. For example, Marie told me she “just [didn’t] really see the point...altogether” of standardized tests like the SAT (Int 1, 148), which she did not believe was effective “in terms of measuring like future success in college” (Int 1, 146). Not only did the SAT, as she understood it, test what Marie referred to as the *basic curriculum*, rather than academic content she was learning in school at the time she sat for the test, but she also asserted that these tests “only really benefit a specific type of, like, learner” (Int 1, 150), in particular those who excelled at “reading textbooks” (Int 1, 156), while failing to “[adapt] to the range” of other learners in the student population (Int 1, 150). And yet, despite an almost palpable disdain for the SAT, Marie saw value in tests like the Advanced Placement [AP] exams, which tested skills like “just...applying the knowledge” learned in classes students were in the process of completing (Int 1, 152). The AP exams, rather than pointless or inapplicable expenditures of time, “actually [work], in terms of actually applying the knowledge that you learn in the classroom” (Int 1, 139), even if they were stressful for Marie. But they, like other standardized tests, ultimately formed the grist of college applications, with only AP tests offering additional benefits in the form of college credits, if students earned a qualifying score.

Grades and testing heavily influenced the school environment that Marie described, down to the level of each individual classroom she entered. These were the kinds of environments Marie viewed as “stressful” (Int 1, 123) and something she did not “really want to be, like, around” (Int 1, 124), where classmates were “frantically, like, [quizzing] each other up for the upcoming test or quiz,” or perhaps “comparing grades” by logging in on phones or computers to the school’s grade management system (Int 1,

123). Schooling, as Marie saw it, was centered on the idea of finding the right answer; “[g]aining knowledge,” she wrote in a school assignment, “is no longer about the process, but finding the right answer” (Art I, 12-13). This particular critique extended beyond stressful day-to-day experiences at Wakefield High School: Marie also saw the goal of education, as well as the way learning and teaching should be carried out and/or thought of, as quite different than what she typically experienced as a student in school, where success in school only served to “[prepare] us for more schooling” (Int 3, 104).

**The true goal of education and teaching.** To Marie, there was a “bigger picture” than individual school classes, grades, and tests (Int 2, 382), and this meant that schools had a responsibility for helping students to “become, like, active participants in the world to help hopefully make it better” (Int 3, 83). Part of what Marie appeared to mean by *make it better* was students developing capacities to address the problems that exist in the world, at least some of which she characterized as “really complicated problems” (Int 3, 84), which would not be solved by “regurgitat[ing] information that you memorized” (Int 3, 3), as these problems were akin to “open ended response questions” on tests (Art I, 16-17). Thus, Marie saw *the true goal of education* as preparing students to participate in, and make better, the world, a goal in part pursued by teachers “teach[ing] others how to think, rather than what to think” (Int 3, 82). Thus, in Marie’s view, teaching played an important role in this preparation for the *bigger picture* of life, not just in teaching others how to think, but also in teaching young people how, and developing capacities to, “confront [problems] head on” (Int 1, 353), as well as through teachers’ efforts to “care about, like, the students as a whole,” a person independent of the class or academic subject that brought student and teacher together.

Although Marie believed that teaching and tutoring served “to just, like, spread knowledge to others” (Int 3, 310), she was opposed to teaching that fixated on the repetition of right answers. She described teaching as something that should have a greater end than the mastery of a textbook or discrete fact or skill; Coach Denise, Marie’s volleyball coach, did not fixate only on spiking, just as teachers like Ms. Young from her AP Biology class should not fixate on reading a textbook, as spiking and reading were just single elements of a bigger picture of volleyball and biology, respectively. This was why teachers’ use of *application*, which Marie described as telling “how does, um, one process affect everything else” (Int 2, 260), or coaches requiring players to *incorporate what we learned* in volleyball by “do[ing] similar techniques [in the match] as what we learned in the drill” at the start of practice (Int 2, 524), were so important. Teaching and coaching should “go far beyond” basic questions or skills, helping young people “to test if [they] can apply what [they] learn in the classroom to real life situations” (Int 1, 406).

Marie’s teachers and coaches did not just teach subject-matter or skills limited to their class or activity, but also ways of approaching challenges and problems individually and with other people. At times, these approaches would be taught to groups, but would mostly be intended for students to individually determine, and act upon, their meaning. For example, Mr. Turner’s “types of lessons” at the beginning of math classes served as an individual example, one centered on messages like “To engage in hard work is to engage in all work” (Snapshot of Learning). Other times, these approaches were directed at groups of young people together, like when Coach Denise would force Marie and her teammates to play with their off-hand in order to demonstrate that what really defines a



The world is focused on quality teachers, being their success on the students' test scores. But what people forget is that a good educator doesn't just teach their subjects, but skills in individual can use throughout their entire lives, not just in the classroom.

Figure 3. Mr. Turner teaching Marie skills for life (Snapshot of Learning)

team is “how they react when they’re losing” and/or struggling (Art A, 11), or when her gym teacher made repeated and conscious efforts to “approach...groups of students and kind of, like, help them solve the issue” they may have been struggling with in class (Int 1, 352). Thus, teaching aided learners and teachers to identify certain challenges and problems, as well as approaches to frame and/or to develop ways of engaging these challenges and problems.

As important as teaching students how to think and how to approach or confront challenges and problems were to Marie, they were almost subservient to the concern she thought teachers *should* have for students. “I think, like, the best teachers in my opinion

are the ones that, like, care about, like, the students as a whole” (Int 2, 385), Marie said. She went on to explain that by *whole*, she meant the teacher was aware of students’ lives “outside the classroom,” and thus beyond the interaction teacher and students had within a given academic area or class (Int 2, 385). Such care for students as a whole was personified by Mr. Turner, particularly his emotional reaction in front of Marie’s math class to the unexpected death of Bridgette, a Wakefield High School student. This demonstrated that teaching should be about more than the class or subject, as teachers could show “how much one person can affect someone else’s life” (Art E, 15), an effect that led Marie to assert that, because of the tremendous influence people can have on one another both in and out of school, “in reality everyone is a teacher” (Art E, 19).

**“Discover...solutions and create original thoughts”: Marie and teaching.**

Even though Marie identified everyone as a teacher due to their influence on other people, she was also in the process of engaging in tutoring, which she identified as a particular form of teaching, one that may have influenced some of her descriptions of teaching. Marie identified tutoring as work centered, at least in part, on “be[ing] able to translate...information to [a tutee] in a way that she will be able to understand” (Art H, 3). Marie encountered several challenges in her tutoring work. First, her tutee asked a number of questions extending beyond the “simple concepts” Marie was prepared to help her with, and Marie surmised that a teacher had to develop “a whole, like, bigger picture understanding of the material” (Int 3, 311), an understanding that may have started with *simple concepts* yet one that could not solely consist of these concepts, either. Second, she expressed a concern that she was “not able to give [the tutee] the help that she needs” (Art H, 2), and that teachers’ work was even more challenging than that of tutors given

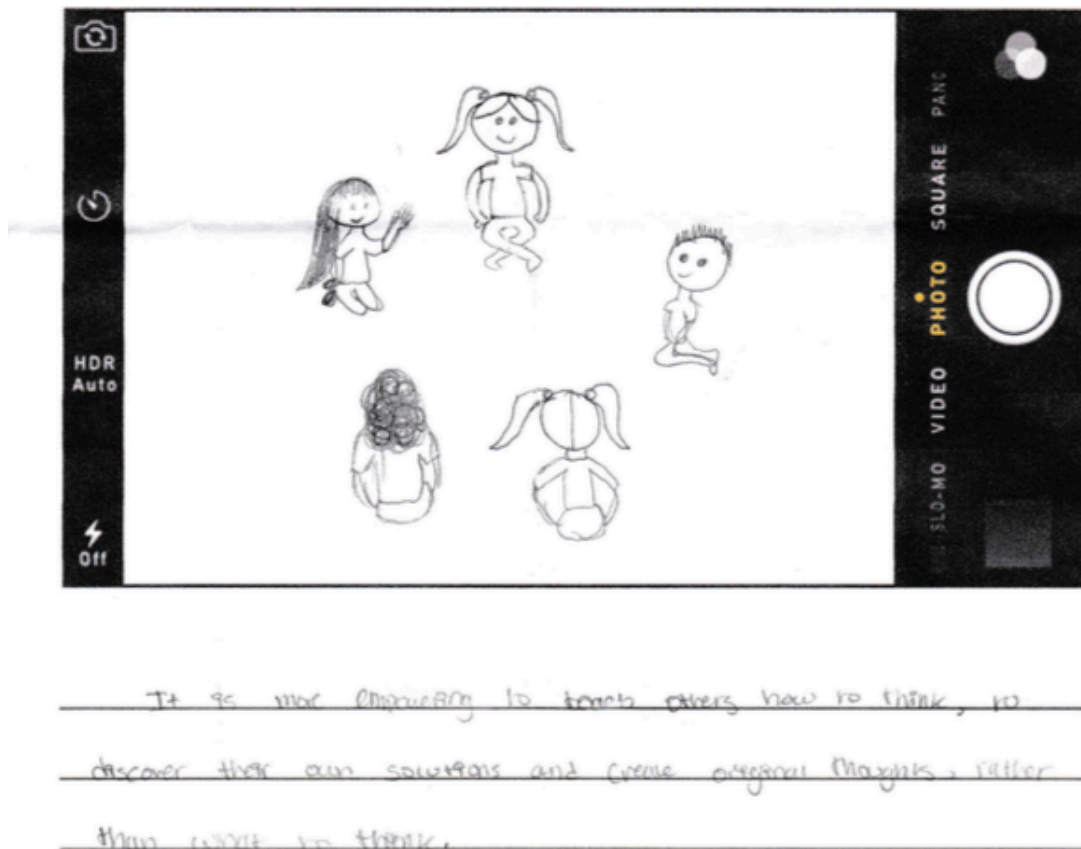


Figure 4. Marie on teaching others to think (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching)

that the teacher “[has] to be able to adapt to the needs of every single student” (Art H, 7).

Finding all the qualities or characteristics Marie found appealing or effective in a teacher might be difficult to do, but Mr. Turner may have come close to personifying many, if not most, of these qualities or characteristics. “I kind of like how Mr. Turner like, makes, like, the class, like, very fun” (Int 3, 546), Marie said, having, by that time, already described his reaction to Bridgette’s death. Marie recounted a story of a difficult morning class, one in which students were having trouble focusing on the day’s lesson on inverse trigonometry. Rather than complain, Mr. Turner instead provided a solution,

recognizing “his usual way of teaching, doing problems on the board, was not working for that particular group of students,” and instead changing to an entertaining kinesthetic style, where he acted—by waving his arms and running around—out an imaginary gumball machine to show how equations changed (Art B, 23). In the lesson, Mr. Turner seemed to exemplify a teacher who was concerned with teaching math, yet one who was able to adapt and meet the needs of his students.

Ultimately, though, Marie summarized her *philosophy of teaching*, as she called it, by saying that “it’s more empowering to teach someone how to think rather than what to think” (Int 3, 421-423). Although she cited a need for *background information* on a topic, something that might be spread by a textbook and/or a teacher, the goal in teaching was to help students to “[get] certain conclusions on their own” (Int 3, 363), ultimately “reach[ing], like, a deeper understanding...by working with...other people” (Art 3, 364). Marie described debate as a teaching or classroom activity that held the potential to enact her teaching philosophy in the classroom. Debate was particularly powerful, “cause it does happen in real life” when scientists “debate about what’s right and what’s not” (Int 3, 382-384). Through debate, students could “discover their own solutions and create original thoughts” regarding issues and problems, which Marie saw as vitally important, for young people since “no one can produce an original thought” due to the fixation on right answers and testing (Int 3, 86-87). As Marie discussed debate and its real world significance, her comments seemed to come full circle, as she presented teaching students how to think, but in the context of using skills that were of significance to life, and the challenges or problems it might present, beyond the classroom.



## Elsie

“Here I am, teaching a class,” Elsie wrote on her Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching, adding, “I’m at the front,” a location she also highlighted in the third interview. Much about the image was hazy, perhaps given its age, as Elsie recalled it being with her for as long as she could remember. “I wouldn’t say exactly which kind of school” (Int 3, 548), she told me as we discussed teaching in the future. Elsie saw herself teaching “somewhere from fourth through twelfth grade,” but she admitted that her desire to be at the front of a classroom “might be as specific as it gets” (Int 3, 549). The focus on being at the front of a classroom, as well as the prospect of teaching students beyond the fourth grade, could be seen as surprising, given Elsie’s departure after fourth grade from school to begin homeschooling, which she continued as a ninth grader when we met. After spending more time as a homeschool than as a brick-and-mortar school student, Elsie still did not feel that being a homeschool teacher would be her “main way of teaching” (Int 3, 555). Despite engaging in an array of educational experiences that included parents as teachers, one-on-one teaching, and online classes, and after leaving her grade school following a distinctly negative experience with her teacher in the third and fourth grades, Elsie maintained not just an interest in teaching but envisioned herself teaching in a school setting, something she had “envisioned the longest [time], and still like[d]” (Art I).

**Exiting a Waldorf school while increasing involvement with teaching.** Elsie’s experiences in a Waldorf school seemed influential to a number of teaching interests as well as her understanding of teaching. Her Waldorf school years emphasized “nature and...learning” (Int 1, 230) through woodwork, fiber arts, singing songs, and presumably many other activities. Encountering several “interesting people” (Int 1, 280) as teachers

who “had actually never taught a class before” (Int 1, 279), Elsie found her fourth grade year especially challenging, encountering a teacher who was “[not] particularly likable” (Int 1, 275) and “just wasn’t good” (Int 1, 270). Her classmates thought so little of this teacher that they were generally out of control in his presence, and on one occasion even locked him out of the classroom. Despite leaving the school after this year, primarily because of the teacher, Elsie’s time at the Waldorf school offered important experiences. Perhaps coupled with conversations with friends and/or her reading about boarding school classes in Enid Blyton’s *Malory Towers*, Elsie came to see differences in schools; where the activities in the Waldorf school often seemed to be “learning for the sake of learning” (Int 1, 248), other public schools, which appeared to her as stressful environments, and even representations of schools, situated learning as concrete learning done “for the tests” (Int 1, 248). These stressful environments were not the kind of places where an interest like knitting, something that Elsie *wouldn’t be tested on*, could develop and flourish, as it did for her at the Waldorf school.

Knitting clearly occupied a special place in Elsie’s life. Following exposure to sewing in kindergarten, she started to learn to knit at the Waldorf school as a first grader. “It’s relaxing,” she told me, and over time she developed a deep appreciation of what she could create by knitting. This appreciation led her to pair activities with knitting, as she did with dyeing yarn, and it also led to the formation of goals, including the “big” project of knitting a sweater, something she was in the process of doing with her mother (Int 2, 464). In addition to her mother, knitting was a social activity done with friends, coalescing at some point into a knitting group that sounded like it met regularly. In the midst of knitting, creating, and socializing, Elsie also discovered something else that



Me, on the left, teaching someone  
how to knit. Samples and a basket  
of supplies are on the table.

Figure 5. Elsie teaching knitting (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching II)

could be *done* with knitting: teaching.

In fact, knitting had led Elsie to take on several teaching roles, from teaching individuals to working with larger groups at a homeless shelter. As a younger child, she had taught a friend of hers to knit, who she noted was still knitting. More recently, she had started teaching adults to knit, including her father and a neighbor, experiences that came with mixed results; while her father was nearing completion of his first project, the neighbor routinely engaged in scathing self-critiques of his knitting, telling Elsie *it looks horrible*, even when she complimented his progress. This experience led Elsie to differentiate between learning in adults and children, with adults focusing on mistakes,

whereas “children are used to learning,” treating it more as a gradual process (Art G). While she told me that she would not refuse to teach adults, she thought “teaching children is what I will definitely prefer” (Art G). Teaching children was not without its own challenges, though, which Elsie encountered at the homeless shelter working with groups. Elsie and her mother realized early on in their visits that they were not “able to predict other factors” that might affect their teaching sessions, like the number of students, their ages, as well as “what their ability will be” (Art F); children in the shelter sometimes reacted in unexpected ways, including “tantrums” and “refus[als] to participate” (Art F). Rather than frustrate her, these challenges helped Elsie to learn something about teaching, particularly the importance of flexibility, and always returning “with a Plan B.” By introducing her to knitting, the Waldorf school not only helped to introduce Elsie to what was so far a lifelong interest, but also (and admittedly indirectly) an entrée to teaching.

**Teaching via homeschooling and friends.** After leaving the Waldorf school, Elsie transitioned to homeschooling, through which she was exposed to several forms of teaching or teaching arrangements. These forms and arrangements took on a great variety in terms of studied subjects, teachers, and even formats, the latter consisting of both one-on-one classes with parents, one-on-one classes with teachers and another student, as well as online classes that included approximately 20 students. Elsie and her mother were able to find teachers in a number of places, such as cultural centers throughout Plymouth City. Though the background and quality of individual teachers also varied, there were similarities across the group. Of her teachers, in both homeschooling and the Waldorf school, Elsie said somewhat hesitantly that they were mostly Caucasian and

overwhelmingly female. These characteristics were a product of “who we’ve come across” and not “because I learn better from women or something” (Int 3, 609). Elsie’s homeschooling started literally in her home, but quickly branched out to other settings and formats as well.

Initially, Elsie’s parents helped to fill the void created when her family decided to discontinue her studies at the Waldorf school. Her mother served as her English teacher, and her father taught—and continued to teach her during the study—history. This arrangement was not without challenges for Elsie and her parents. “I guess one thing that is challenging is making sure the class meets all the time” (Int 2, 556), Elsie said of having parents as teachers, noting that her father was able to hold a consistent meeting time more often than her mother was. She also found, at least with her father, that she would receive periodic reminders about readings and other classwork. These challenges seemed relatively minor, appearing alongside strengths her parents had as teachers, particularly noticeable when she described her father. A law school professor, he most likely knew more of teaching—and planning as a teacher—than most parents, an advantage that may have stood out to Elsie since she could tell “a difference between when the teacher isn’t prepared” and when a teacher was (Int 2, 564), which her father always was. Through her father’s law school classes, history teaching, and also audio-recorded lectures from Yale University the two listened to in her history class, Elsie saw different approaches to teaching, with her father “ask[ing] more questions” than the recorded professor from Yale, who “just tells them the information” (Int 2, 587). She described her father as “kind of...in the middle” (Int 2, 589), which I took to mean in the middle of just *telling information* and *asking questions*.

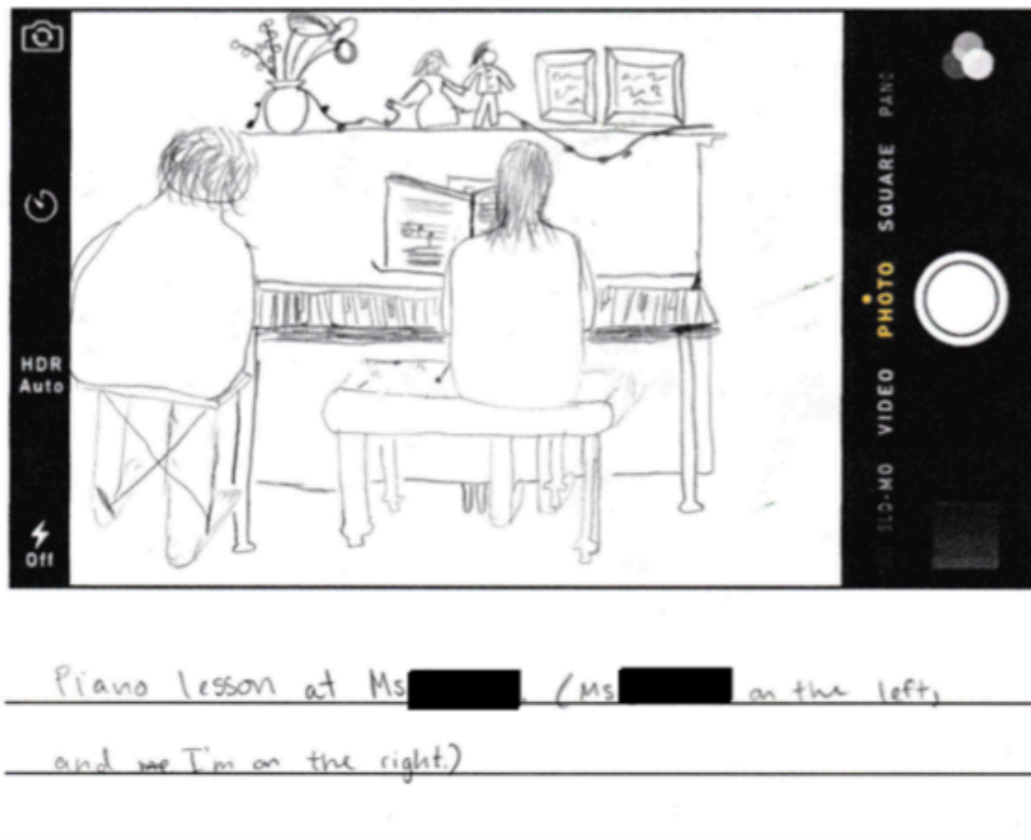


Figure 6. Elsie with Ms. Cheryl (Snapshot of Learning I)

Much of Elsie’s homeschooling involved one-on-one teachers hired by her family, and it seemed like she was interested in finding teachers who could offer a *customized* learning experience that helped her to *progress*. Finding teachers and experiences helping her to progress appeared to be an ongoing challenge. Some teachers, like her German teacher with her plodding pace and insistence on copying texts, felt like they were “holding me back” (Int 1, 433) by failing to “[m]atch what I think I needed” (Int 1, 475). Others, like piano teacher Ms. Cheryl, were “chaotic” (Int 2, 385) and perhaps “very easily distracted” (Int 2, 396), assigning work and occasionally offering

feedback, yet not allowing additional opportunities to better understand the work in class. The teacher who would remain focused and customize their teaching, effectively “sitting [you] down and saying, okay, you need this, you need that” (Int 1, 578), seemed rare, though Elsie, with her mother’s judgment and support and Plymouth City’s great resources, was able to find such teachers, as was the case with her Italian teacher, who taught rules and conjugations, held conversations in Italian, and generally helped Elsie to “see myself moving, and using the things that they taught me” and not just “repeating the same thing” (Int 1, 493). It was here that homeschooling offered choices, ones Elsie acknowledged might not be possible for the student in a traditional school. When the “fit stops working” (Int 2, 124), and a class became less customized and inhibited progress, Elsie could change teachers and classes, where as a student in a school “can’t obviously run away from a class” that was disliked (Int 1, 577).

Through books and letters, Elsie was able to access other images and descriptions of teaching and schools. Perhaps the best example of this was her correspondence with Lilian, a Londoner who Elsie found “might teach me more than any other friend” (Art D). A portion of this teaching came in the form of what Elsie described as “misunderstanding[s],” like the way Lilian thought Elsie had placed a gift Lilian sent her in the garbage when Elsie told her she had put it *in a bin*. But Elsie also felt as though she learned a great deal about the English school system from Lilian’s stories, a system Elsie found “kind of strict and intense” (Int 2, 69). Not only did Lilian take 14 courses—roughly double what a friend of Elsie’s in New Jersey took as a public school student—but Lilian’s school had many rules, like forbidding students from touching snow, and teachers disciplined students with *letters of insolence*. All of this cultivated an

environment Elsie characterized as stressful, which school leaders may have sensed, as they instituted a special *feelings class*. Yet the feelings class was derided by Lilian and her peers as ineffective since teachers dismissed their comments as “not a good feeling” when they spoke in class (Int 2, 78). These stories left Elsie with the belief that English schools were intense, which may have been part of the “culture” in England (Int 2, 124), something Lilian helped her understand as her “dictionary of the English culture” (Art D).

**English classes: Teaching across two distinct classes.** Elsie’s English writing class stands out from her other homeschool classes, as she took this class with a teacher, Ms. Pinkerton, as well as a friend, Marina. The class was centered on *workshopping*, described by Elsie as “bring[ing] multiple copies of our essays and shar[ing] them with each other, and...giv[ing] the other person feedback” (Art B). Elsie found feedback from Ms. Pinkerton “always insightful” (Int 3, 467), prompting her to “think more deeply about my essay” (Art B). In recent weeks, Elsie and Marina had been working to develop a research paper, which Elsie had used to investigate how female spies in the first and second World Wars sometimes used knitting as cover for their espionage. Throughout this work, Ms. Pinkerton led activities to break research down into steps, from “find[ing] our quotes” in sources all the way to “writing up the first draft” (Int 2, 216-218). She also *pushed* Elsie to interview several individuals through email, something Elsie was “unappreciative” of at first but ultimately found she “really did learn from” and “was a valuable experience” (Int 3, 69).

Unfortunately, Marina did not regard the class highly, something Elsie attributed to how Marina viewed Ms. Pinkerton. At the ice skating rink, Elsie had already seen



Marina teaching as she attempted to show Elsie how to skate, in the process demonstrating both limited patience as well as a need to keep herself engaged—to *talk*, *do*, and *feel productive*—which sometimes came at the expense of opportunities for Elsie to practice and to learn what she was being taught. In Ms. Pinkerton’s English class, Marina fulfilled a role as “someone who gives me advice, and input on my work” and who was “therefore...a teacher” (Art C), yet Marina also had decided that “she doesn’t like the teacher” (Int 3, 453), a feeling brought on by the way Ms. Pinkerton “wears make-up a certain way” and how she frequently said “you did a good job” (Int 1, 550). However, Marina’s disdain for Ms. Pinkerton was detrimental to her work and teaching in the class: she frequently did not “pay attention or respect the teacher as much” (Int 3, 453), and often “debates things that I guess I don’t quite see, as...necessary” (Int 2, 171). Elsie saw Ms. Pinkerton as challenged by Marina’s behavior, leading her to be “very diplomatic” when it came to Marina and her protestations, often avoiding “[to] fault anyone...or say, like, oh, that’s not what I asked” (Int 3, 164). Despite these challenges, Elsie regarded Ms. Pinkerton as a good teacher, and the class as a positive experience.

Her other English class was online, focused on the works of Shakespeare. Even before she took this class, Elsie had participated in other online English classes, presumably centered on different topics and definitely taught by other teachers. “I had a previous online class the year before,” she explained, “and that guy wasn’t engaging” (Int 1, 581), a problem he exacerbated by disabling the chat feature of the class. Elsie’s current teacher, Mr. Terry, enabled this component of the online platform, which allowed him to ask students questions and also helped Elsie to “feel a little bit less alone” since she could see her peers’ “yes or no” answers (Int 1, 600-602). The class typically focused

on a reading homework assignment from texts like *Romeo & Juliet* or *Macbeth*, as well as a related reading or assignment, such as watching a film clip of a scene. In class, then, Elsie and her peers often discussed the related assignment, then transitioned to line-by-line reading of the text. Memorizing passages was also a requirement in the class, something Elsie found “interesting” (Int 2, 284) and helpful in “get[ting] to know that passage” (Int 2, 287), thus aiding her understanding of the text. Reciting these memorized passages to her classmates helped Mr. Terry’s class to feel “more like a group” than other online classes Elsie had taken in the past (Int 1, 602).

**Returning to the *teacher in front of classroom image*.** From her English classes and the teaching of Terry, Pinkerton, and even Marina, several aspects of teaching were present, and may have contributed to Elsie’s understandings of teaching. A teacher, she said, is “someone who *explains* something to you,” which she differentiated from telling, or “just saying” something to a person (Int 3, 427). The difference between explaining and telling lay in the involvement and needs of learners in teaching; merely telling a learner something might lead to a situation where what was being told “wouldn’t really be relevant” (Int 3, 433). On the other hand, an explanation, which could constitute “advice or help” (Int 3, 432), might be something a learner could “apply...to more than one, exact specific case” (Int 3, 438). Teachers who could effectively explain something to someone else had to be able to transcend their own experience and be resilient, repeating explanations and using “different” angles” (Int 3, 453) and/or “way[s] to explain it” (Int 3, 410) in order to make the explanation more helpful or useful to the individual being taught. As she differentiated between explaining and telling, Elsie emphasized the former’s central role in teaching, yet, as she discussed teachers also

taking into consideration learners' developing grasp of and/or needs for what was taught, she appeared to reveal other features of teaching she found salient.

Teaching, as Elsie appeared to see it, invariably constituted a series of interactions between teachers and learners, in which teachers were faced with decisions and actions about being *firm* or *strict* with learners. Elsie's account of Ms. Pinkerton's and Marina's relationship, in particular, surfaced questions of being *firm* or *strict* as a teacher. Elsie had seen different types of interactions between students and teachers, from a teacher "banging his shoe on the desk" in anger (Int 3, 184) to teachers who wanted to be "nice to the students, and not be mean or strict" (Int 3, 511). Both of these examples help to illustrate some of the challenges Elsie believed teachers face, and what they might have to learn in order to interact with students. For Elsie, this learning seemed to include developing some awareness of "how [it] would feel if [the teacher was] the student" (Int 3, 338) and "how it feels to be on the receiving end" of a teacher's words, particularly harsh or angry words (Int 3, 342). Teachers might be the ones saying things, Elsie said, yet "someone is also hearing what's...[said]" (Int 3, 344).

Across her interviews, Elsie's descriptions depicted a central focus of teaching for teachers: learners and/or students. A teacher does not simply explain things, but explains things *to other people*. Of course, it was rewarding "when the students really understand what you are teaching them" (Int 3, 583), as Elsie felt at the homeless shelter while teaching fiber arts. But there was more to students than their understanding of what was being taught, or even pushing them to consider "new and slightly uncomfortable ideas": the "little things" students say that help you to "kind of get to know their perspective" (Int 3, 574), and the challenges of day-to-day life they carry with them. *Generous heart*



Here I am teaching a class (I'm at the front).  
 I imagine that maybe I'm discussing  
 a book or story with my students  
 (I should also add, I only included the  
 front row in the drawing, but I think  
 it is an entire classroom).

Figure 7. Elsie teaching a group of students (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching I)

and *compassion* were, for Elsie, essentials for teachers; in a way, they are to students' perspectives and stories what *customization* is to a students' academic needs: an appreciation of the *fit*, or whether things were *working*, in the classroom setting and beyond. Teaching was for Elsie about what was "best for the students" (Art L), yet this core concern in teaching was a multifaceted one, demonstrated by Elsie's emphasis on explaining, as well as her references to compassion for students' academic and non-academic needs. What was *best for students* depended on students' particular needs

within a given episode of teaching, needs Elsie believed teachers should be sensitive to and able to meet.

Though students and their needs did hold a central role in her image of teaching, Elsie, after reading an initial draft of this profile, was somewhat skeptical of the suggestion of a direct link between some of the experiences she described and her image of herself as a teacher. Some colors or corners of this image were less clear to Elsie than others. For example, she wrote that the reason the classroom aspects of her image of teaching had remained with her, despite years of classes and episodes of teaching as a homeschool student, because she had not “seen many examples of teachers who teach children outside of a brick-and-mortar school where it isn’t a part time job” (MC, Comment 1). Other accounts of her experiences, such as her admission that it “can be hard in a group class” like her online Shakespeare class to make teaching customized (Int 3, 455) or how she saw herself as a teacher making sure “[students are] staying focused” (Int 2, 240)—a marked departure from an early English teacher of hers who constantly allowed her and students to be distracted—appeared to Elsie to portray her image of teaching as forged directly and intentionally from her recent teaching experiences. However, many of Elsie’s descriptions during the study were based on her homeschool experiences, which she seemed to differentiate from her formal schooling experiences.

As a student who was homeschooled yet had studied in a brick-and-mortar school, Elsie held views of teaching influenced by her experiences in schools and with one-on-one teaching and online classes, which both “effected [her] understanding of teaching” (MC, Comment 3, *sic*). However, she appeared to grapple with the fundamental contextual differences across teaching contexts, namely the way many of her homeschool

teachers were unable “to support themselves fully” through their teaching (MC, Comment 1), an observation that led Elsie to wonder if her image of teaching was derived from and sometimes even depicted in a classroom or school setting, where she believed she was more likely to make a living teaching, as opposed to experiences involving the tutoring of students, online teaching, and/or teaching in a cultural center, forms of teaching in which many of her own teachers were involved. Thus, her developing understanding of what teaching was, and what it could be, was influenced by the career prospects she saw for herself as a person who was contemplating teaching as a professional, prospects Elsie admitted were very likely to lead her towards classroom and school-based teaching assignments consistent with the images of teaching she depicted as part of the study.

### **A Glimpse at a Possible Future in Teaching: Ezequiel and Alex**

If Rachel, Marie, and Elsie in certain respects reflect the present demographic realities of public school teachers, Ezequiel and Alex might be part of a new future for teachers as a group. The same demographic imperative that explains the high number of students of color in public schools, taught by an overwhelmingly white and female teaching faculty, will, by 2045, lead to an entirely new demographic reality in the United States in which white Americans will constitute a racial minority in the United States (Frey, 2018, September 10), assuming non-whites are considered, for demographic purposes, to be a uniform group (Linker, 2018, May 11). Regardless of how these groups are conceptualized and compared, education scholars have observed demographic shifts for at least 25 years, with Gay (1993) observing that teachers who were members of ethnic minority groups constituted less than 15% of America’s teachers. If fewer than

50% of Americans are white by 2045, as Frey (2018, September 10) believes will be the case, it seems unlikely that white Americans will continue to constitute more than 80% of the public school teaching faculty.

These changes in American society mean that teachers may be more likely to be people of color, and possibly immigrants or the children of immigrants, the latter describing both Ezequiel and Alex. Lumping the two into a single group like this is problematic, as Ezequiel and Alex come from different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Ezequiel's father was from Mexico and had immigrated to the United States before Ezequiel was born, marrying his mother, an American citizen born in Puerto Rico. Ezequiel had lived his entire life in Dalton City in Pennsylvania, attending Truman School, a large urban high school. Alex's parents were both immigrants, born and raised in Bulgaria, but meeting and marrying in the United States. Initially settling in Plymouth City in New York, Alex's parents later relocated to Cumberland Plains, an affluent suburb of Plymouth City. Excluding gender and their roots outside of the United States, the closest similarity between Ezequiel and Alex may have been their attendance in public schools throughout their school careers.

### **Ezequiel**

“[I]n 9th grade, I would help people” (Int 1, 205), Ezequiel told me when I asked him how he became interested in teaching. That year, he was one of two freshmen enrolled in a math class with a number of seniors who had failed their previous math class. The year before, math had been challenging for Ezequiel, yet in high school he found the situation to be different. “I knew how to do the work,” he told me, and he used that knowledge to help his classmates (Int 2, 207). “[I]t feels good to help people,” he

continued to say, referring to how he “helped them get through their senior year” (Int 2, 208). *Helping people* seemed to be an activity or service Ezequiel was frequently involved in, or maybe a term that could be used to describe the common thread through many of his interests, from his retail job at a shoe store to coaching baseball and to his involvement in school and university-based mentoring groups. His involvement in these groups, and perhaps even his success, may have stemmed from the importance he saw in relating to people, particularly high schoolers, who he felt he “could more definitely, like, relate to,” as a fellow high school student and perhaps later as a teacher as well (Int 1, 233). *Relating* had much to do with the connection between people, partially evident in the “decisions I made, [and] what decisions they should make” (Int 2, 234). For Ezequiel, relating with, and thus developing connections between, people was done within a number of settings—Truman School, the *Teachers To Be* group, and his workplace, among others—all situated in a common place, Dalton City. In fact, *knowing the city* was an important aspect for Ezequiel in relating to people, including students, so it might be advantageous to start with Dalton City and Truman School first before discussing teaching in particular.

***Holding it down in Dalton City at Truman School.*** Truman School was located in Dalton City, a medium sized urban area located in Pennsylvania. While the city itself was not generally considered to be a gritty or dangerous locale, Truman School had what Ezequiel described as “a bad reputation” (Int 3, 93). Ezequiel attributed this reputation, at least in part, to what he called *ignorance*, with people simply “not knowing, like, what actually happened in schools” like Truman School (Int 3, 105), yet claiming the school suffered from heavy drug usage, frequent fights, and even the presence of weapons. Both



the school and community were in a state of transition throughout Ezequiel's participation in the study. Truman's principal had been fired earlier in the school year, and he was replaced by several outside administrators who had to "[hold] it down for all the kids to be safe" (Int 3, 169); this mandate to *hold it down* may have received more attention during the school year, especially in light of recent school violence, which Ezequiel thought "could "happen everywhere, and then it's, like, it could happen here" (Int 3, 167). In the midst of these administrative changes, both Dalton City and Truman School saw an increase in the arrival of refugees, many of whom Ezequiel believed hailed from Muslim-majority countries. "I think, like, our...community is well aware of, like...who's in our school" (Int 3, 178), he said of Dalton City residents and the new arrivals. He also described some of the measures Truman School had adopted to help refugee students feel more comfortable, which helped to punctuate the importance he saw in relating and understanding between teachers and students.

**Relating, interacting, and being comfortable in classrooms and with students.**

Truman's demographic realities meant *relating*, which may have meant to Ezequiel "know[ing other people] went through the same thing" and "understand[ing] how it was...and how it was before" (Int 2, 567), was important on several levels or for different groups of students in the school. Ezequiel would go on to describe how *knowing the city*, and thus being able to relate to students—or achieve some level of understanding—through common experiences in Dalton City could help teachers in planning and setting goals. For students who had arrived in Dalton City as refugees, the hiring of teachers with similar backgrounds and/or who came from the same home countries as the students could help these new students connect to teachers and thus the school community.

Relating or understanding were important at Truman, as Ezequiel saw things, particularly for teachers, or people involved in teaching.

***Knowing the city.*** To Ezequiel, part of teaching was *knowing the city*, which could even be generalized to *knowing the place*. At its core, knowing the city was “like knowing people’s background[s]” (Int 3, 375), which included any number of individual circumstances, like the block students lived and/or the resources they might have had at home, such as resources including computers and internet access. Ezequiel believed it was “good...to know, like, what, like, everybody goes through,” as this might help a teacher “to understand” students better (Int 3, 377). One of Ezequiel’s managers at work may have exemplified knowing the city, as she grew up in Dalton City near where Ezequiel lived, and was able to leverage her knowledge of the city to help the store’s employees, which effectively made her “a good, like, teacher” (Int 3, 394). Knowing the city also had implications for teachers in classrooms. If teachers knew the resources students had access to, and those they did not have access to, they could more effectively plan teaching and school work by avoiding situations where students could not complete assignments. Age was also cited by Ezequiel as playing a role in relating, as younger teachers were more likely, in Ezequiel’s interactions with or observations of these teachers, to have experienced things in the city and school that their students were experiencing.

Believing that living and learning in Dalton City likely held different meanings for refugee students, who were not brought up in, and thus less familiar with, the city, Ezequiel saw teachers relating to refugee students as important in teaching, though the connections teachers cultivated with these students may have been different. It was

important to Ezequiel that refugee students interacted with teachers from the same background, if not the same places, as these teachers “could relate to [students’], like, struggles and, like—to their life, basically” (Int 2, 563). Relating in this sense dealt less with physical location and more with how certain countries could be dangerous, a descriptor that went undeveloped in the interviews. Teachers from these areas might know something about the struggles and dangers of places refugees had come from, yet they also understood “how beautiful like the culture is and stuff” (Int 3, 388), which teachers could share with native Dalton City students while also helping refugee students to “feel like they’re at home” and “have a piece...of their homeland with them” (Int 3, 390).

*Being yourself.* From both his sister at home as well as his music camp teacher Mr. Hunt, Ezequiel heard strong messages encouraging him to *be yourself*, which played a part in relating to or understanding people in a student role. Ezequiel’s sister urged him to be himself in order to develop more meaningful friendships with “a small group of friends that are actually gonna stay there” (Int 1, 504). However, it was not until music camp with Mr. Hunt, where he heard a strikingly similar message, that Ezequiel found value in the idea of being yourself, particularly when it came to “being myself around new people” (Int 1, 432), which Mr. Hunt never failed to do over the years of interactions Ezequiel had with him at the camp. *Being yourself* likely played a part in teachers developing “their own way of, like, being, like around kids” (Int 2, 549), which might include everyday efforts like small talk and conversations, but could also yield teachers’ “own way of doing things” (Int 551), something that might set them apart from other teachers and colleagues.

**Ways of teaching.** Ezequiel framed teachers' own ways of doing things along two axes: their way of teaching or helping students, and their way of being around kids. The former was something he saw in school as well as in movies, where teachers might be unwilling to help students yet sometimes shift or develop into "a good teacher at the end" (Int 1, 572). He also observed that some teachers do not like kids, an observation he characterized as "not a bad thing" while also "not a good thing" (Int 2, 550). The key for Ezequiel was that teachers "[were] actually trying," as opposed to being in school "to get money and all this stuff" (Int 1, 522-523). This was just one description of teachers and teaching—sometimes in the form of dichotomies while other times labels that could be paired with others—that Ezequiel used to describe teachers' ways of teaching.

One particular way of teaching Ezequiel referred to throughout the interviews was the *this is this, this is that* way of teaching. When Ezequiel used this expression, he seemed to be describing two behaviors of teachers. One was emphasizing the completion of activities, in which a teacher would "just give you worksheets and worksheets to keep redoing the paper" (Int 1, 539). The other emphasis was on students' lack of understanding, rather than helping them to understand. If students struggled with the various rounds of worksheets, a *this is this, this is that* teacher like Mr. Granit, Ezequiel's eighth grade math teacher, might be reluctant to help, saying things like, "[Y]ou know, this problem is literally what I did on the board" and "I don't understand why you still need help with his" (Int 2, 132). At times, Ezequiel linked this particular way of teaching to teachers *just doing it for the money*, though he would later describe his science teacher, Mr. Reyes, as a *this is this, this is that* type of teacher, who may have emphasized completing work yet was "one of the best teachers" for Ezequiel (Int 1, 532).

Part of what helped Mr. Reyes to be effective despite being a *this is this, this is that* type of teacher was the way he connected lessons together, another way of teaching Ezequiel described across his interviews. Connecting here means that class activities like *Do Nows*, worksheets, or even teacher questions related to one another, as well as activities from previous weeks. Just as Ezequiel saw with Mr. Reyes, his ninth grade math teacher Mr. Silva also took time to “actually [explain] how to do [problems]...to help us learn” (Int 2, 101), which ultimately helped Ezequiel to “[start] pulling everything together” (Int 2, 101), including content and skills from previous school years. Ezequiel described the opposite of connecting as *jumping*, where teachers would “[repeat] things over and over” until suddenly deciding to “jump to, like, something else” (Int 2, 197-198), invariably a topic that was totally unrelated to what students had been studying. When teachers jumped in their teaching rather than connecting lessons and activities, it left Ezequiel with the impression that lessons, and their substance, were “just, like, random stuff” (Int, 192).

Not only did jumping, and a lack of connection across lessons, make school learning seem random, but so too did classroom activities that seemed disconnected from the *real world*. Random learning might also consist of activities that were “not important to an extent,” or activities that might only be related to specific college majors or jobs (Int 2, 183). The essence of random learning may be captured in Ezequiel’s description of the longevity of this learning in students’ lives: “I’m never gonna see this again” (Int 2, 183). *Real world* learning, on the other hand, consisted of “necessities” (Int 2, 173), the kinds of things “you can use...in the future” (Int 2, 176) rather than just throw away after class. Ezequiel had encountered at least two classes that featured *real world* learning. His



In our street law class we are doing mock trials and the room is set up like a court

Figure 8. Ezequiel depicting the layout used for the mock trial (Snapshot of Learning)

Business Math class was “nothing but, like, things we could use in the future” (Int 2, 171), including balancing checkbooks and completing tax forms. He also appreciated his Legal Studies class for this same reason. Throughout the class, Ezequiel and his classmates participated in mock trials and field trips to learn about courts and the criminal justice system, with field trips in particular demonstrating to students that “what we learned in class is what they actually do in the prisons and stuff” (Int 3, 286). While Legal Studies was apparently intended for students interested in legal or government careers, Ezequiel noted that some students were assigned to the class rather than electing to take it, which to them made the class seem like “random school stuff” (Int 2, 436),

suggesting that interests and goals—and not just teachers and teaching—affected how students behaved in class.

**External forces and ways of teaching.** Teachers' decisions about their ways of teaching, as well as student interest and goals, played important roles in shaping teaching and classroom life, yet Ezequiel identified other factors outside of the classroom significantly impacting teaching, and perhaps even teachers' ways of teaching. For example, school districts influenced the classroom, as they “choose everything that we learn” (Int 2, 185). Other factors, like the Keystone Exams and classroom technology, also were noted by Ezequiel as consequential in teaching.

The Keystone Exams loomed large, particularly in Ezequiel's third interview. Originally scheduled to start with Ezequiel's class, the Class of 2019, the Keystone Exams had recently been postponed to 2020. Ezequiel was not shy about his disapproval of the exams, telling me, “[W]e shouldn't be graduating off of a test, a standardized test,” but instead should be graduating based on “the hard work we put in...all the 12 years we were in school” (Int 3, 332). Ezequiel saw the purpose of the exams as “mak[ing] [teachers] look good” (Int 3, 333), though he also acknowledged that they could make teachers look ineffective, which might prompt school leaders to “[go] back to your teaching, and...change the way you teach, I guess” (Int 3, 351). Either way, the exams seemed to provide a goal and a measure of student and teacher success or failure, and Ezequiel believed “[teachers] have their lesson plan set up for” goals stemming from the Keystone Exams (Int 3, 349).

In addition to the Keystone Exams, Ezequiel found technology to be another factor influencing the ways teachers taught and/or interacted with students, his feelings

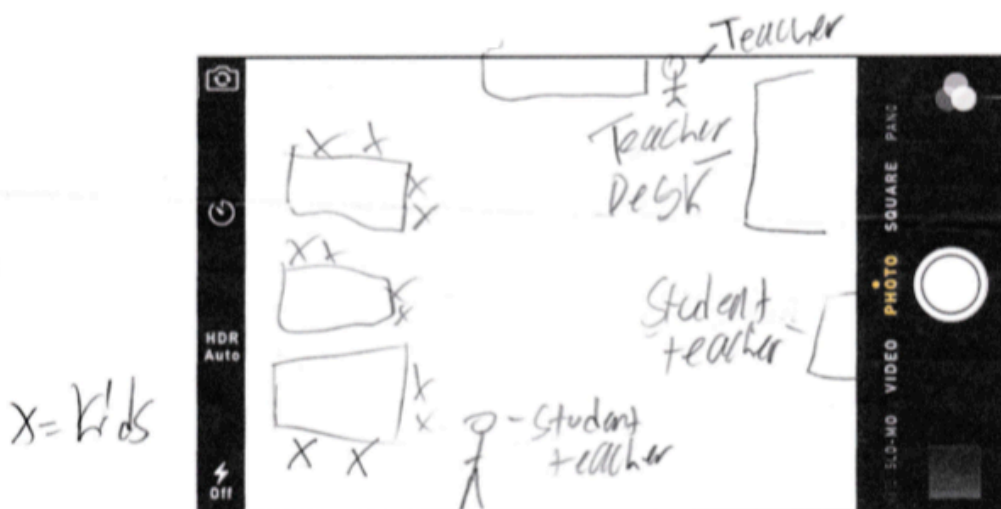
on its use in schools perhaps best characterized as mixed. Technology, he believed, was “helping people” and used for “significant reasons,” yet Ezequiel noted that its use in schools sometimes led to problems when assignments or grades were accidentally erased (Int 3, 234). The greater problem at Truman School was the fact that students often had limited technological resources at home, something teachers would only be aware of if they knew the city and their students, considerations that had to be made when developing assignments. Online platforms like AcademicsOnline helped teachers to efficiently collect, grade, and return work, as well as share instructional resources like worksheets and PowerPoints, and students could access their work and resources anywhere they had internet access. Despite this potential benefit, Ezequiel observed changes in the interactions between teachers and students in technology-heavy classes. For example, AcademicsOnline was, at times, a central component of his Legal Studies course, and during lessons drawing heavily from AcademicsOnline questions were more often addressed using Google than student-teacher interactions. Though Google may have offered a more efficient pursuit of answers, Ezequiel preferred the *old school way* of teachers like Mr. Reyes, who preferred the board to AcademicsOnline, and who worked to answer questions instead of sending Ezequiel and his classmates to the internet.

**Good teaching.** Given his emphasis on *relating*, it comes as no surprise that Ezequiel identified *caring* as a central element or aspect of good teaching. “[G]ood teaching was to me,” Ezequiel explained, “you know, somebody who’s, who’s caring of, like, everybody in the classroom” (Int 3, 433). Caring, as I think Ezequiel meant it, was not just about *knowing* students; indeed, knowing or understanding students was, in part, the reason for relating to students. By drawing on common backgrounds and cultures,



teachers could help students to acclimate to classroom and school environments, and this function or work was certainly important. In this usage, caring also involved “want[ing] everyone to learn, and not just [being] there for pay” (Int 3, 433). The center of good teaching was not just to be in the presence of students and/or overseeing a classroom, but working “to help people to learn” (Int 3, 433). Good teaching, rather than reduce to either, was the enactment of care and a desire to help people to learn.

Teaching was also about knowing when and how to help students. As Ezequiel told me, there are different people with different capacities in each class. Sometimes, “people...are better in math,” and teachers aware of these student capacities have “an easier time with them” (Int 2, 481). Some people “have a hard time in Legal Studies,” and presumably other classes, and teachers may have “a harder time with them” (Int 2, 481). Every class, Ezequiel asserted, was “always gonna be a mixture of kids who get it and don’t get it” (Int 2, 482), and teachers had to be able to work with this mixture of students they would invariably have, yet they also had to think about what it was they were teaching, and how they could help within the structure of the activity or lesson. He saw his father do this by being “just there” while teaching him to drive (Int 1, 329), allowing Ezequiel to focus and learn rather than dwell on his mistakes, or telling him in a step-by-step manner how to drive. These judgments occurred in teaching as well, like when Mr. Reyes had to make such decisions in laboratory activities to avoid giving answers or observations to privilege “what [students] see” (Int 2, 456), or how Ms. Dyer provided “the freedom of, like, our own choices” in theater class (Int 3, 428). Thus, part of knowing how to teach was knowing students and activities, the degree of freedom students might need, and the teacher aid they might find helpful and/or necessary.



While the teacher would teach  
 the student teacher would  
 be in the back with the students  
 helping

Figure 9. Ezequiel's teacher and student teacher helping students (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching)

Yet good teaching was more than a series of discrete decisions, or the maximizing of students' freedom in the classroom. *Good teaching* was about “captivating...the audience” by putting together activities or experiences that are “interesting for the kids to see, but they’re still getting the, like, their knowledge based off of the activity” (Int 3, 420), a feeling Ezequiel had in Mr. Reyes’s science classes, where “the activities were cool, and we still learned” (Int 3, 421). Good teaching was also connected, which was done through lesson plans, which served as a blueprint for teaching. Through their planning, and the teaching that followed it, students and teachers would know “where

you have to go from the beginning and where you want to end” (Int 3, 276). This kind of organization may have allowed teachers to promote or to encourage freedom for students in their activities, but they also prevented “jumping from like point A to like point C” in a way that diminished or eliminated coherence across lessons and activities (Int 3, 278). Good teaching was about “activities which relate to the lesson plans during that time,” as well as the connections between homework and other lesson elements, which prevented class activities from seeming like “random pieces of, like, paper for homework” or “just doing like busy work” (Int 3, 289). These things to Ezequiel were “not really learning” (Int 3, 289), and therefore not good teaching. After all, good teaching, as Ezequiel told me, was focused on caring and helping people to learn.

### **Alex**

“Um, one of the project[s] was, we took a topic to review for the AP exam and we had to pretty much teach it from scratch” (Int 1, 144), Alex said as he recalled his presentation for his Environmental Science class during his ninth grade year. The class, and the assignment, paralleled some of the fundamental tensions that Alex saw in school. On the one hand, he saw in school classes activities that he really enjoyed, like his Environmental Science class and teaching, with the former even providing his “first taste” of the latter (Int 1, 142). Yet he sometimes presented his classes as means to an end; for example, Alex did what he needed to do in classes to get “a good grade on the project” with the goal of helping him to prepare for class exams in mind (Int 1, 148), which, when combined with successful performance across classes, would ideally serve as a springboard towards university study and a stable career. In the midst of the pressure to “get these good scores so we can set up for a good life” (Int 1, 124), he found

something in teaching that was special, which perhaps unexpectedly was “kind of what [he] fell in love with” (Int 1, 149). He recognized that some of the forces that helped to make school competitive and future-oriented had cast a *mold* of teaching—a largely ineffective type of teaching he frequently saw, and a mold he wanted his own teaching to *break*.

**Grades, competition, and a *mold* of teaching.** From a young age, school success had been emphasized by Alex’s parents and teachers, and he came to see such success as a pathway to college and a better life. School performance was “incentivized” by Alex’s parents, which he attributed to the fact that his parents “came here from another country, and they didn’t start out with much, and they worked really hard to get, like, to the place they are” (Int 1, 120). One of Alex’s goals—perhaps *the* goal, when it came to school—was to “[get] into a good college and [set] up myself” for work and life (Int 1, 343). Early in school, tangible rewards encouraged school success. “I love that feeling, that reward,” Alex said, especially in Ms. Allen’s first grade class when Smarties were given for each correct answer (Int 1, 333). As Alex approached high school, grades supplanted these tangible rewards, with grades lower than a 90 not “what I want, and that’s not what my parents want” (Int 1, 183). College always seemed to be a source of motivation for Alex’s plans and activities, as he told me during the second interview that he was pursuing a number of “things that look good for college” (Int 2, 87), like his participation in this study as well as volunteering as a data collector in a separate university study of lead samples from homes in and around Plymouth City.

Testing also played an increasingly important role in the pursuit of college studies, an evolving reality that troubled Alex, particularly the changes to teaching Alex

attributed to testing. Teaching had become less about “giving the knowledge” in recent years and was “more like just preparing kids for those tests so they can do good” (Int 3, 290). The tests may have represented a requirement with which the college-bound student had to contend, as competitiveness for college admissions required the highest scores possible, yet Alex saw other purposes for the tests aside from “kids go[ing] to better colleges” (Int 3, 290). As he described it, the tests also played a major role in teachers “keep[ing] their jobs, and then mak[ing] their school better just because they have better test scores” (Int 3, 290). These pressures to keep jobs and make the school better through test performance, and most likely the pressure to help students prepare and be competitive for college, influenced the teaching done in many of Alex’s classes, which was often centered on what he referred to as “distributing material” (Int 3, 283).

Teaching by *distributing material* was so common in Alex’s school experiences that he referred to it as a *mode* of teaching. Teachers who taught by distributing material would “just spit...out” the curriculum, the “textbook to learning” (Int 3, 314), utilizing activities and/or providing students with worksheets or other resources directly from the textbook. As they did this, teachers offered students the curriculum in its “simplest form,” without additional efforts to “elaborat[e] further” on it (Int 3, 310). This form of teaching seemed to parallel the teaching of several of Alex’s swim coaches, who “just nam[e] sets” to swim without “actually studying what we’re doing,” “telling the student” (Int 2, 143), and/or “adjusting...the ‘teaching time’” (Art A). Distributing reduced teaching and learning to the transmission of *straight-forward* tasks, the kind of work Alex had little interest in doing and that suppressed his creativity, or his ability to “[go] outside the box” by “using what you’re given and not just one way...to get around things” (Int 1, 227). The

root problem in this form of teaching was the way its emphasis on memorized formulas or concepts contributed to “a lack of engagement” among students (Int 3, 134), who might stop caring about their studies because they saw teachers in the distributing material mold as “lazy” and apathetic (Int 2, 380), which in the lower grades was especially problematic since students’ apathy could develop early on, adversely affecting subsequent school performance and even college or career prospects.

**Engagement in teaching.** Alex employed terms like *atmosphere* and *participation* throughout the interviews as well, yet these feelings or actions seemed to be derived from an overarching idea of engagement within classes. He may have come closest to illustrating what he meant by engagement as he described his Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching, telling me that the students he portrayed were “enjoying the class” and “enthusiastic about it” (Int 3, 29). Atmosphere, “which could be made by the teacher,” was more of a feeling students had in certain classes, like if they were places where “everyone’s comfortable” and “happy” (Int 3, 53). In classes with an atmosphere where students felt comfortable and happy, Alex observed that students “[were] more willing to open up” (Int 3, 43), which was even more so the case if the teacher “made themselves open to the students” (Int 3, 58). This openness, and the comfort and happiness from which it came, could lead to the conditions where students were “not afraid to raise their hand, [and] things like that” (Int 3, 32), the most basic form of participation Alex identified, as well as “[to do]...group work together” and/or “to actually [help] to run the class a bit, too” by making decisions about what was learned or how it was learned (Int 3, 59). Lacking such openness, students might be unwilling to

participate, or there might be a familiar situation in which the same students repeatedly participate (Art F), and few students altogether are engaged in the class.

For Alex, engagement, atmosphere, and participation all were related, a relationship that might be most effectively explained in the opposite order these three terms were just presented. For Alex, participation involved students shifting from isolation to a more active role in the classroom; it was not, however, engagement in and of itself, though it could be indicative of it. Alex noted that students were more inclined to participate in classrooms with an open and accessible atmosphere created and facilitated by teachers to make students feel comfortable. This atmosphere was probably necessary for engagement in a class, though, again, atmosphere was not the same as engagement. Engagement was described as enjoyment and enthusiasm of a class, perhaps in part due to its atmosphere, and when students felt engagement with a class they were more willing to participate. Although these terms seemed to help Alex to describe elements of teaching he viewed as important, they did not offer a complete picture of how teachers went beyond the distribution of curriculum, thus breaking the mold he had referenced and begun to describe. Alex used other terms, like *segments* and *targeted progression*, to describe such efforts.

Alex told me during the first interview that he thought “it’s really important when you teach someone that you describe the basic, basic part of it, and then you connect it to what you have” (Int 1, 285). While this statement was said in a specific context—he was describing how he would teach someone to solve a sort of puzzle he brought home from a museum trip when he was younger—Alex’s descriptions of teaching were very similar, even if the ways he described teaching and its integral parts varied. While his own

teachers and some of his early life experiences, like the puzzle, helped him to frame some of his ideas on teaching, the most significant contributor to Alex's understanding of teaching may have actually been swimming, and some of the teaching he observed his various coaches doing, or not doing as was sometimes the case

As Alex plateaued at one point during his youth swimming career, he seemed to gain greater awareness of the differences between his coaches. During training, he actively sought to improve by "looking at what other people did" (Int 1, 391), but he found the approach stopped helping, leaving Alex frustrated. After overcoming his shyness, he asked his coach, Jason, to help him. That night, and for two weeks afterwards, Alex stayed after practice to talk to Jason, who "kept teaching me and teaching me and teaching me" (Int 1, 400). Jason did this by identifying specific problems he saw in Alex's strokes, like the way "cross[ing] my arms across my body" led to drag, and he broke the problem down "one by one, little, little baby step by baby step" (Int 1, 419), offering corrections Alex could work on in his practice laps like "just try and stretch out" (Int 1, 419). Alex found the approach highly successful, as it "gave, like, just a bit, and I focused on that" (Int 1, 425), working to "really [perfect] it" (Int 1, 428) rather than becoming overwhelmed by "three or four things" that "you have to remember" all at one time (Int 1, 424).

This process of targeting specific aspects of the swim stroke to work on was something Alex would later refer to as *segmenting*. Segmenting was not just a teaching act of coaches, but one also used by classroom teachers, with Alex's science class offering perhaps his most well-remembered example. "[W]e were learning about what the cell does in science class" (Int 3, 88), Alex recalled, and as the class engaged in this



learning Alex and his classmates “learned about each specific function first, and then we learned, like, pretty much there’s the cell, we learned all the parts, and then what each part does and how it does that” (Int 3, 90). The alternative approach, or *an* alternative, was “just saying, alright, the cell does that that and that, and then saying, like, generally, things” (Int 3, 90). Protein synthesis was another concept learned in class where a segmenting approach was used. The teacher did not simply offer a general description of what protein synthesis was, at least not at first, but started with “figur[ing] out what proteins were, then we figured out, um, like, how to make them and what they were made up of” (Int 3, 91). The one difference that sticks out between Alex’s descriptions of segmenting in swimming and segmenting done by school teachers was the lack of references to *perfecting each step* in the latter of the two. Yet the way different aspects of swimming and biology were broken down, and then “put...together by looking at the big picture” (Int 3, 93), still made them seem quite similar.

The teaching occurring as part of coaching was not only working little-by-little towards perfecting certain elements of swim strokes, but Alex felt it was “more personalized and more targeted” (Int 2, 138). Coaches were able to perform more targeted training by identifying sets to swim, then “actually studying what we’re doing, what they see, and they’re changing the sets” based on their observations (Int 2, 143). Their goal was not to simply complete a fixed number or array of sets; when their studying, or *assessing*, of swimming revealed some “part wasn’t good,” they would decide to abandon the set and instead put together “a set to work on that, what we need to do” (Int 2, 144). By watching swimming studiously and making changes based on their observations, Alex’s coaches set the *direction* of training, or what the group was working

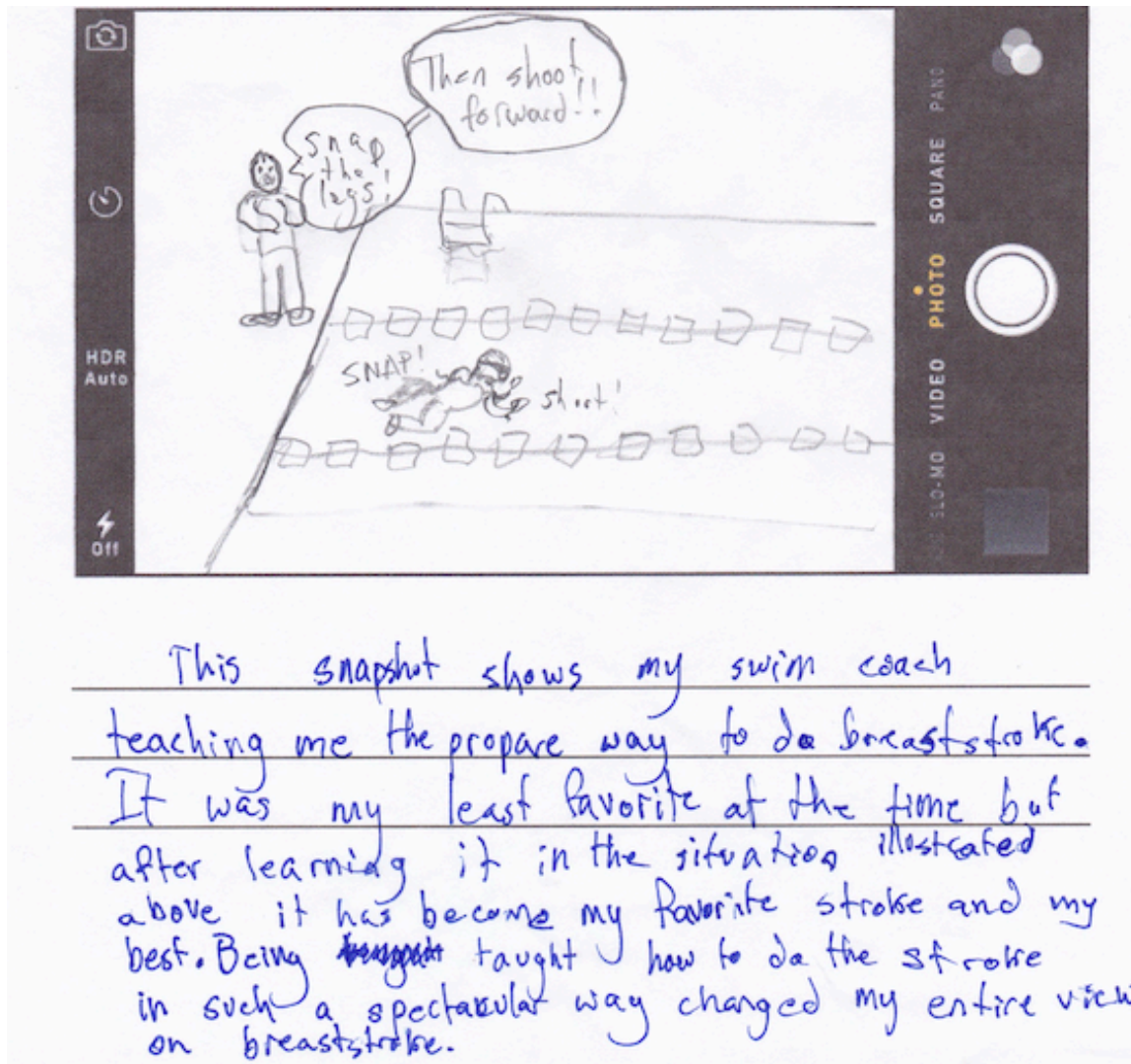


Figure 10. Alex's swim coach using segmenting (Snapshot of Learning)

on as a whole. This direction might even focus on a very specific technical component of a swimming stroke, like “get[ting] better kicking” (Int 2, 145).

At the core of a coach's ability to employ targeted progression, or targeted training, was awareness of both formal rules as well as their own personal experience. Alex compared the development of a swimming stroke to “creating like a shape, and then [working on] any little bumps or imperfections you target” (Int 2, 181). The shape was

based in part on “strict rules” for certain swimming strokes, resulting in disqualification from any event if the rules were not followed. For example, freestyle might have been the least regulated stroke, yet it had to be done in a way so that the swimmer’s “stomach is facing the bottom of the pool” (Int 2, 188). But swimming was not just about “going by the rules,” as the end goal of competitive swimming was to swim fast in order to win races; this meant that the swimmer had to work on an appropriate stroke while “just working on those muscles and just being faster and stronger” (Int 2, 187). Efficiency is where personal experience came in to the work of coaches. As swimmers, coaches knew what was fastest for them, so part of their work was helping swimmers to progress towards a more efficient and faster stroke, from which they could draw on personal experience. As they did this, their ability to really use targeted progression meant they could break complex tasks or maneuvers into integral parts and lead the swimmer through working towards the most efficient stroke possible.

Alex believed the person who was learning to teach “should recognize” things like segmenting (Int 3, 115), but he felt “it should [not] be enforced” (Int 3, 113), as part of this individual’s learning was “find[ing] your style a bit and get[ting] a feel for teaching” (Int 3, 114). Style, which Alex described primarily in the context of a coaching style, is “just made up of all these experiences you’ve had” (Int 2, 225). From these experiences, a coach might “get ideas,” and then “form them into something, and then whatever you want to do with what you just formed” is your style (Int 2, 226). Alex also described style as “kind of just trial-and-error,” and since it is based on personal experiences, “it’s really hard for someone to just, like, tell you, and then, like, alright, that’s my style” (Int 2, 225), meaning it was challenging to simply describe one’s own

style. Style was something that could be “pass[ed]...down to other people,” which coaches invariably did as “they pass down their style to other people in the form of ideas” (Int 2, 227). Athletes like Alex, as *receivers* of these ideas, would then “make up [their] own style from that” (Int 2, 228). Alex outlined the movement of such ideas in teaching as well, suggesting teachers from different cultures may pass a certain style to students, including tricks or approaches to problems. Style was a sort of prerequisite for learning particular approaches to teaching, with approaches like segmenting funneled through one’s style rather than learned apart from it.

**Teaching exemplars.** Alex’s descriptions of several of his more influential teachers may help to illustrate what he meant by *engagement* as well as *targeted progression*. Throughout the interviews, he discussed several teachers in great detail. For example, his ninth grade English class featured two teachers who stood out to Alex, though for totally different reasons; one was Ms. Marti, the teacher of record for the class, and the other was Ms. Lewis, who served as a long-term substitute for the class during Ms. Marti’s lengthy absence to start the school year. In addition to Ms. Marti and Ms. Lewis, Alex spoke of Ms. Kluivert, who he identified as a “[w]onderful teacher” that was “probably the best teacher” he had ever had (Int 1, 345).

While he did not use the expression while discussing her class, Ms. Kluivert may have demonstrated teaching approaches quite similar to *targeting* or *targeted progression*, if she did not exemplify their use as a classroom teacher. Through a style Alex described as “really interactive” (Int 2, 238), Ms. Kluivert “made it her quest or her goal to make sure that we...really [understood] this stuff” (Int 1, 348). If this meant that certain assignments or activities had to be postponed, she would do this so she had the

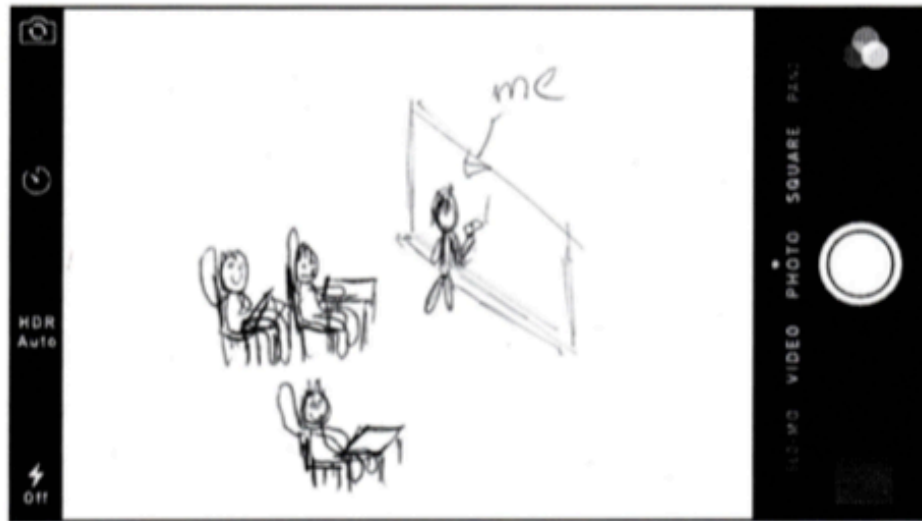
opportunity to “go back and...re-teach this, and really just make sure everyone understands it” (Int 2, 243). What may have impressed Alex most about Ms. Kluivert was her willingness to consider the demands of class activities and the way students might be able to engage these demands, even working collaboratively, perhaps bridging between Alex’s ideas of engagement as well as targeted teaching. When students asked to work in groups, she would never dismiss the request without consideration. The decision, as Alex saw it, always came down to the activity, and “if it was doable in groups and it’d still be of benefit to us” (Int 2, 258). To determine if the activity was *doable* and *beneficial*, Ms. Kluivert would even go “over the entire activity, [do] it, and [decide] at the end that, like, yea, it’s doable in groups” (Int 2, 259). Her efforts might not be personalized, but they appeared targeted to the group and the activities she facilitated.

Alex’s ninth grade English class featured two dramatically different exemplars of teaching. Ms. Marti was Alex’s scheduled ninth grade English teacher, who he clashed with on more than one occasion since she was “[not] the brightest person” (Int 2, 318) and often “wouldn’t get things” and “wouldn’t want to hear me out so I can, like, explain my thoughts sometimes” (Int 2, 320). Generally speaking, Ms. Marti might personify the *mold* Alex saw in teaching; rather than distribute the curriculum via textbook activities, she routinely, and even forcefully, required students to “just write her notes, which she made, on the board” (Int 2, 433), while other times she seemed to distribute her opinion, which typically “would reign supreme over all” (Int 2, 447). During a prolonged absence at the start of the year, the class was led by Ms. Lewis instead, who sounded like she could not have been more different from Ms. Marti. “Um, lotta conversations” (Int 2, 416), Alex said, recalling the class under Ms. Lewis’s direction. Literature was still the

focus, yet reading would frequently be supplemented by a “constant exchange in idea[s],” often “develop[ing], develop[ing], develop[ing] to, like, really good ideas” that were helpful in spurring Alex’s own thinking and writing (Int 2, 423). Unlike Ms. Marti, Ms. Lewis valued students’ ideas, as well as how they felt they learned, allowing them to develop an approach to studying characters in stories like *Animal Farm*. Like Ms. Kluivert, Ms. Lewis may not have offered personalized lessons, yet her activities targeted students’ interests and often incorporated their input as learners as well.

**“[B]reaking the mold”: Alex and good teaching.** “[E]veryone loved her,” Alex recalled of Matilda’s teacher, a memory of a positive portrayal of teachers found in Roald Dahl’s story *Matilda*. Matilda’s teacher was “supposed to be doing everything this boring way,” yet she found ways to “kind of like [spice] it up a bit and mak[e] it interesting for the kids,” without sacrificing “what she’s supposed to [do] as a teacher” (Int 3, 381). As he described Matilda’s teacher, Alex seemed to be describing a characterization of his notion of *good teaching*. Good teaching to him was *simply* “engagement,” while “effectively using the time you have” (Int 3, 247) to “effectively [deliver] the material...in a way that the kids can understand and not doing it in such a way where they’re just overwhelmed” (Int 3, 248).

The root of engagement in teaching to Alex was cultivating “good student-teacher relationships,” something Alex felt “dead-set on” when he thought of himself teaching since these relationships “could really make or break a class” (Int 3, 277-279). If he was able to cultivate a relationship in which students are “able to talk to me” and “not...afraid to raise their hand,” he would be more likely to “create that awesome atmosphere of, like, where kids wanna come to my class, and that’s the one they look forward to” (Int 3, 279).



In this ~~with~~ snapshot I am teaching my class in the future. It shows an enthusiastic students that are engaged and enjoying my class. That is something I want to strive for when I become a teacher. As well as having the kids learn everything effectively.

Figure 11. Alex teaching an engaging lesson (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching)

Yet it was also important for teachers to take their work seriously, as Alex believed the relationships between teachers and students could not be “really lax” either, as “the kids like pick up on that” (Int 2, 477). This desire for teaching Alex expressed very much seemed to have originated from interactions with several of his own teachers.

Engagement, or a class that is engaging, did not necessarily involve teaching that traded the dry-erase board or Smartboard for teaching approaches like group work. In fact, Alex divulged his reluctance to employ certain approaches that did not involve a

teacher at the front of the room. Like many of his own teachers, Alex said he “wouldn’t have that much group work” if he was teaching (Int 2, 310), which he saw as holding advantages in how possibilities could be discussed, yet also drawbacks. In some cases, “there’s some people that won’t get the stuff delivered,” or “[i]t’ll be sloppy work” (Int 2, 311). If relied on too often with poor results, “the class might be wasted,” which Alex saw as highly problematic given that “you only have a year to teach that much stuff” (Int 2, 313). And yet, Alex did not oppose teaching with groups, even telling me with excitement that he is “gonna be one making experiments and things” for his students when he is a teacher (Int 3, 318). Though potentially “kind of intimidating” when “people start to not get it” and the activity “go[es] wrong,” and like group activities could “[drain] a lot of time” (Int 3, 351), experiments held a special place in teaching for Alex. He saw the teacher in experiments as “almost like a magician” (Int 3, 352), with experiments used to capture students’ attention, which teachers “can play around with” (Int 3, 352). Experiments, like group work, held particular value in cultivating the kind of student engagement Alex wanted among his students.

*Breaking the mold*, as Alex put it, required more of a focus on developing such engagement. While he acknowledged that a teacher explaining things at the board could also be considered a *mold* of teaching, he framed his description of this teaching approach in terms of engagement. The board, whether it was electronic or not, was “just a blank slate,” something that Alex as a teacher “[could] put whatever I want on” (Int 3, 322-323). If the board was removed from teaching, and students were leading activities or working in groups, Alex argued that such teaching required “another level of engagement” (Int 3, 343), one in which the teacher had to “[explain] it even better than



before than you would be on the board,” as there was no focal point in the classroom to anchor the class’s attention. (Int 3, 343). Experiments offered yet another level of engagement, where a teacher “would be walking around, making sure [students have] it right” (Int 3, 345). Thus, breaking the mold was not about executing a certain strategy or approach to teaching—even one like segmenting, which Alex also thought he would use as a teacher—but rather moving beyond “the textbook” or “print text” (Int 3, 322). “I think that’s, that’s the beauty of...not be[ing] confined” by textbooks and curricula (Int 3, 322), Alex said. That beauty, in a word, was engagement.

### **From Individual Experiences to Categories of Description for the Cohort**

As I draw to a close this chapter featuring profiles for each of the five participants, I want to briefly restate my intentions in devoting so much time to the construction of profiles. The profiles, as conceptualized and utilized in this study, should not be understood as a *beginning* or an *end* when it comes to these five participants’ experiences. Each participant will, of course, continue to accrue experiences beyond this study with teachers and teaching, some of which may be powerful and perhaps even consequential in decisions to take up professional teaching. By necessity, the profiles are themselves a snapshot of understandings of teaching, never intended nor believed capable of depicting some state of finality, whereby participants’ understandings of teaching are regarded as fixed and unchanging from this, or any point, moving forward in time. Instead, the profiles represent an honest and intensive effort to enter, to the greatest extent possible, the life-world of each participant, to vigorously pursue and to move ever closer to understanding the uniqueness of each participant’s experiences with teachers and

teaching. In doing so, I sought to better understand participants' understandings of teaching, and to better equip myself to examine shifts in meaning across data points.

Through a careful examination of each participant's own experiences with teachers and teaching, and the various iterations of profiles and member checks, I have endeavored to reach a starting point in understanding not the totality of all prospective teachers' pre-collegiate experiences and the meanings they may hold from them, but to surface at least a measure of the range or variations in these meanings across the cohort of participants. As I drafted the profiles, I became increasingly aware of the tension in phenomenography between the experiences of individual participants and the press to develop categories of description (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). As a graduate student and researcher, I was taught to search for and to analyze connections across texts and data points, processes phenomenographers engage in as they pursue conceptual categories of description. However, the profile phase of this study was not conceived of as the grounds for surfacing conceptions of teaching. Instead, I viewed this phase as an approach to move closer to participants' life-worlds, and thus to place myself into a position later in analysis in which I could leverage my intimate understanding of the study's data set to explore conceptions of teaching across the cohort. While I am sure the latter has been done without the former—that phenomenographers have presented conceptions of some phenomenon without using individual profiles—I wonder if these studies, lacking other methodological approaches like profiles, are truly grounded in descriptions of the phenomenon rather than constructed from relevant literature, theories, and/or researcher experiences with the phenomenon.

The methodological challenge in phenomenography present in investigating descriptions of participants' experiences with a phenomenon yet shifting to a cohort's conceptions of this same phenomenon parallels, in at least one respect, one of the fundamental tensions in teacher preparation. Pre-collegiate experiences, particularly those in schools and classrooms, are regarded by teacher educators as influential in conceptions and understandings of teaching, as outlined in previous chapters of this dissertation. Yet prospective teachers' experiences with teachers and teaching are unique to the prospective teacher, making it challenging, if not impossible, for teacher educators to engage with the totality of each prospective teacher's own experiences and the meaning they hold from them. The challenge or impossibility of engaging experience and its influence is two-fold: the richness of each prospective teacher's descriptions of their own experiences could potentially take years to examine and to better understand, an investment teacher educators likely cannot make since they are teaching a large number of prospective teachers at any time in their teacher preparation work. Thus, learning to teach in the majority of teacher preparation programs, like phenomenographic research, involves individual prospective teachers and participants, respectively, yet is overseen or conducted by teacher educators and researchers ultimately responsible for or interested in a group of learners.

Taken together, the individual profiles for Rachel, Marie, Elsie, Ezequiel, and Alex help to narrate pieces of the varied experiences these five participants have had with teachers and teaching, as well as the ways these experiences have shaped their understandings of what teaching is and can be. Though there may be broad similarities across the five profiles, such as attendance in a formal educational institution, the

substance of these profiles helps to illustrate many more differences. The many differences I have written of across the profiles demonstrate the potential perils of homogenizing or generalizing the experiences high school students interested in teaching careers have with teachers and teaching. If researchers of conceptions of teaching or teacher learning, or teacher educators, begin their respective work from deficit assumptions that participants or prospective teachers hold flawed understandings of their experiences with teachers and teaching—and therefore deficient notions of what teaching is—they potentially risk missing, if not avoiding, variations in conceptions of teaching, and the rich and powerful experiences that shape or even deform, in certain ways, these conceptions.

Even if *movements* or *shifts* in conceptions of teaching are the goals of one's work, as they were in Wood's (2000) phenomenographic study of prospective teachers, and appear to be for teacher educators like Boyd et al. (2013), *understanding* seems like a necessary prerequisite for such movement or shifts. Consummation in experience, wrote Dewey (1938/1997), required not just an enhanced understanding of one's past, but also a movement *towards* something, creating a tantalizing tension between "the import of what has gone before" and the "suspense and anticipation of resolution" (Dewey, 1934/2005, pp. 137-138). Without this tension between what has been experienced and what one might anticipate or desire to experience in the future, Dewey (1934/2005) asserted "there is arrest and a break" (pp. 137-138), a failure to unify experiences and to empower one's self by developing and drawing upon a richer understanding of certain experiences as a whole. Teacher educators, then, have to tread carefully as they frame prospective teachers' pasts while guiding movement or shifts in their conceptions of teaching. If the

former is excessively problematized while the latter is removed from prospective teachers' own anticipations and desires, and thus *de-lived*, as Oral (2013) described this situation, prospective teachers may struggle to see the desired ends identified by teacher educators in their own past experiences with teaching as well as their anticipated teaching in the future, effectively resulting in the kind of arrest or break in understanding Dewey referenced.

Thus, the movement or shift of prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, or their understanding of their own experiences, is unlikely to occur in the absence of consummation in experience. In other words, prospective teachers are unlikely to change the ways they understand their own experiences if they are unable to integrate the meanings these experiences hold for them, the forward movement they seek to make through their anticipations of or desires for teaching, and the movement or shifts teacher educators desire for them to make. Prior experiences, as well as others' desires for them, must become part of prospective teachers' forward movement, a reconciling of experiences potentially leading to more refined, and perhaps even entirely new, understandings of one's past, what one is learning or seeing in the present, and what one desires to do or to become as a teacher in the future. In this way, consummation of experiences occurs through the integration of one's experiences, leading to growth as a teacher, all of which depends upon, at least in part, a prospective teacher's prior experiences and anticipations of or desires for teaching.

Teacher educators, then, must make themselves students of their own students' experiences, and this is where I see phenomenography, and this study in particular, playing an important part in teacher learning. This is learning that should take place with

both individuals and cohorts as the focus. Although teacher educators more than likely do not have time each semester to carry out phenomenographic studies of their cohorts of students, they are in a position to continue learning about teaching and prospective teachers. Studies such as this one will not offer a complete view of prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching, but they will offer insight in two important areas. First, phenomenography is the investigation of variations in experience with a given phenomenon, and such an approach offers at least the potential to surface the different understandings of teaching prospective teachers as a group hold. Second, and I believe just as important in terms of the work of teacher preparation, phenomenographic studies may also be successful in identifying and aggregating specific experiences participants see as important and influential to their own understandings of teaching, understandings that more than likely will feature at least hints of the direction prospective teachers want to take teaching, as well as tensions between these forward directions, prior experiences, contextual elements, and other factors. Beginning in Chapter V, I will shift my focus from individuals to the cohort, sharing a phenomenographic analysis, and thus the categories of description discovered from this study's cohort of participants.

## Chapter V

### TEACHING AS *SEEMINGLY UBIQUITOUS*, *DISCERNIBLE*, AND *RELATIONAL*

While the process of developing individual profiles for each participant proved useful in tracing participants' descriptions across data sources, and illuminating in terms of the view it offered of participants' distinct descriptions of their experiences with teachers and teaching, the purpose of phenomenography is not to surface individual descriptions. As I explained in Chapter III, developing deep understandings of participants' descriptions of their own experiences is instead a tool to move towards the conceptions of teaching, in this study, of the cohort of all participants. Another tool I, like other phenomenographers, employ to move closer towards the cohort's conceptions of teaching is categories of description, which provide a broad framing of the cohort's understandings of teaching. The purpose of this chapter, along with Chapters VI and VII, is to share the categories of description I found through my analysis, including the variation between participants' descriptions of their experiences with teachers and teaching within each category. In Chapter V, I describe three of the categories of description my analysis yielded: teaching as *seemingly ubiquitous*, teaching as *discernible*, and teaching as *relational*.

In line with Holt-Reynolds' (1992) finding that teaching beliefs or lay theories are developed from a variety of sources, from "participation in and observations of classrooms" to "teaching/learning incidents occurring in schools, homes, or the larger community" (p. 326), participants in this study described teaching as seemingly ubiquitous in their lives. Teaching was not something confined to classrooms, but also carried out by tutors, athletic coaches, parents, and even friends. At times, participants even characterized teaching as something done by events or experiences rather than people. While teaching could be episodic or ongoing, confined to one-off interactions or part of a lengthy class or membership in a group, participants often seemed to identify teaching *because* they felt they learned something. Teaching was something they situated as preceding, or was something they believed was intended to inspire, learning, evidenced by the way they *discerned*, and then explained and even reasoned about, certain approaches, routines, and patterns in teaching, or "the act of teaching," as Wood (2000) seemed to call it in his phenomenographic study of learning to teach. Teaching was also *relational* work, existing most of the time in the interactions of teachers and learners, or even learners with other learners. In some instances, relationship-building was characterized as instrumental to teaching, efforts teachers undertook to better know their students so they could more effectively teach them. Other times, teachers cultivated these relationships out of genuine concern for their students, their well-being, and their future success.

The crucial takeaway from these categories, further described in the following pages, is not just the extent of participants' experiences with teaching, or the variation that exists within each category, but also the assets sometimes evident within their



descriptions. Rather than coalescing into a unitary understanding, as Wood (2000) found when he charted how student teachers like his participant Mark moved from a single conception of teaching to another over the course of their involvement in a formal teacher preparation program, young people may not view teaching in the same way each time they experience it. They may exhibit assets, or perhaps capacities, as this study's participants did, to read the intentions of their teachers, which they attempted to decode through the Rosetta stone of their own experiences as learners within teaching, from which they saw teaching as regularly occurring in different approaches and forms and also constituting different types of relationships. Yet reading the teaching of others, and understanding their own teaching and how it appears to others, appeared to be, in some ways, very different capacities, which, although related, did not necessarily translate in the same way into their teaching.

### **Teaching as *Seemingly Ubiquitous***

For the five participants of this study, teaching was something they experienced across their lives, and often within discrete phases of their lives such as seasons of a sport or years of school, in various situations involving different people, places, and/or activities. To characterize teaching for the cohort as *seemingly ubiquitous* is not to be guilty of exaggeration. On their Timelines of Educators and Teachers, and across interviews and artifacts, each participant identified parents as the earliest source of teaching they observed, moving forward in time to include siblings, athletic coaches, music instructors, religious leaders, tutors, friends, and, of course, schoolteachers. While each participant named individuals encountered at different points in their lives, and included both school-based and non-school based teachers, the teachers identified, and

their influence on each participant's present understandings of teaching, also varied, sometimes considerably. The common link across these five individuals and all their respective experiences with teachers and teaching was the presence of *learning* within these experiences. To experience teaching, for these five participants, was, in large part, to also experience *learning*.

### **Bounded in Experience: Teaching and Learning**

In fact, participants, through their interviews and artifacts, helped to excavate a complicated relationship between teaching and learning, the complexity of which sometimes came from the almost interchangeable use of the terms. For Rachel, it was at times “easier to say learn when you mean teach,” something that owed to the close relationship between the two, given that “it’s almost impossible to have one without the other” (Int 2, 735-736). In her artifacts, she offered two examples of *experience* teaching her and others: one in which a car accident she observed at her school likely taught the person who caused the accident, a parent who routinely sped through a parking lot with many cars driven by younger, less experienced drivers, as well as a class during her teaching internship in which she read the essay of a student she identified as disabled, leaving “the other students...impressed when I read it out loud” (Art C, Lines 9-12). In Rachel’s artifacts, she recounted experiences she identified as teaching, experiences similar in that someone had learned, yet experiences also marked by an important difference. While the parent and Rachel had no apparent expectations to learn or to see teaching as they arrived at school and navigated a crowded parking lot, the realization that students with certain learning challenges were just as capable of exemplary work as other students occurred in a setting where students and teachers likely expected to learn

one thing, or to experience a certain form of teaching, yet possibly experienced unintended forms of one or both.

Two additional examples, one from Elsie and another from Marie, further illustrate the presence of learning when participants discussed teaching. On her timeline, Elsie had listed *Shirley* as a teacher or educator. When I inquired as to who Shirley was—she had not been mentioned previously in interviews, or written about in Elsie’s artifacts—Elsie told me Shirley was a former working elephant in a circus, who helped her to “[be] more aware of elephants now” after seeing her on a postcard her mother had received after donating money to the sanctuary where Shirley lived (Int 3, 621). The *awareness* Elsie referred to sounded quite similar to the realization Rachel felt her class had after she read the student’s essay. Another example of this awareness may have been offered by Marie when she shared her belief that “everyone is a teacher” (Art E, 19) since people “can affect someone else’s life” each day (Art E, 15), something that became clearer to Marie as she witnessed Mr. Turner break down in front of the class following the death of a student. Each of these examples of teaching involved something participants identified as learning, yet the similarities and contrasts between the examples reveal some of the challenges of understanding teaching as phenomenon.

### **Reading and Enacting Intentions, while Learning or Teaching**

Rachel’s and Elsie’s examples suggest that at least a percentage of pre-collegiate students may view teaching as something that is not necessarily done intentionally. In her second interview, Rachel said as much, telling me that the parking lot example involved teaching that was “unintentional,” as it “wasn’t, like, voluntary” on the part of the parent who caused the accident (Int 2, 746-500). She added that in this particular example

“there’s not really a physical being...teaching at all” (Int 2, 727), a clear difference between the parking lot example and Marie’s recollections of Mr. Turner. However, in the case of Mr. Turner, what Marie learned from the episode of teaching she described—that *everyone* is a teacher because of the interconnectedness between people, and the influence we have on one another—was not necessarily what Mr. Turner may have meant to teach at this moment, which Marie described as an emphasis on “see[ing] us grow to be better people than a better math student” (Art E, 14). In this case, Marie seemed to perform an on-the-spot assessment of intent, using what *she* learned from an episode of teaching as a marker or indicator of the *teacher’s*—or the person doing some form of teaching’s—intent.

In other cases for other participants, these assessments, done retroactively, likely captured the intent of the person identified as teaching. Ezequiel’s recollections of his mother’s efforts to teach him to walk and to speak almost certainly captured an intentional effort on her part to teach core skills for living and communicating, the kinds of teaching every parent does with their child. Other instances were less clear, or even murky or uncertain. Alex found his parents encouraged him and his brother to “get these good scores so we can set up for a good life” (Int 1, 124), a statement that again appears to capture learning, this time in the form of a message repeated by both parents, efforts that may have constituted teaching. Another parental example was the Ahmeds, the soon-to-divorce parents of a friend of Rachel’s who “kind of [taught]...the wrong thing to do” through their obvious animus towards one another (Int 3, 243). In each of these three examples with parents, participants viewed intent and teaching through the prism of learning, which appears to separate and clarify certain aspects of teaching, like what was

taken away from the episode, while blurring others, including the exact form teaching may have taken. Regardless of the episode of teaching they described, be it *an experience teaching you* or the classroom teaching practice of a high school biology teacher, the high school student interested in teaching careers is often attributing teaching to an actor or event. Thus, as students like these five participants identify and describe various instances of teaching, including someone else's teaching and/or teaching participants observed, their own descriptions may share, or appear to reflect, *their* learning and interpretation of the teacher's intent, both potentially influential to students' understanding of what teaching is in that moment, and what it can be in the future.

Not every experience with teaching involved such assessments of intent, at least not assessments that resulted in a potentially dubious or debatable conclusion. Some teachers clearly identified their intentions, or perhaps the essential purposes behind what they did as a teacher. While Marie's learning from this experience resulted in a message that may have been unique to her—that people were interconnected, and were constantly teaching one another—Mr. Turner had also explicitly identified one of his intentions, or perhaps goals, in teaching: to help his students grow as people, not just as students of mathematics. When participants were involved in teaching themselves, whether it was Ezequiel training a coworker at the shoe store, Rachel in her teaching internship, Elsie teaching knitting at the homeless shelter, Marie tutoring a chemistry student, or Alex teaching an AP exam topic as part of a class assignment, they identified at least vaguely stated goals for their teaching. Though they encountered different challenges in these respective episodes of teaching, like kids handling scissors, students treating the teacher more as friend than teacher, and possessing an insufficient understanding of the material

under study, each participant stated some basic intention or goal in what they were teaching, using this intention or goal to examine the methods they employed and to propose alternatives when they felt they were unsuccessful in accomplishing their goals.

For high school students interested in teaching careers, the prism of learning does not form a two-way mirror, in which these young people, having taken up teaching roles, can anticipate how *their* teaching is understood by individuals they are teaching. For example, while tutoring a chemistry student, Marie knew that the student “was struggling with just, like, the covalent bonding unit” (Int 3, 274), and could even determine in the midst of her tutoring that the student “just looked, like, very confused...from just, like, body language” (Int 3, 348). Marie was able to correctly assess her tutee’s understanding of the chemistry lesson, yet she offered no other indications that she was able to foresee what else the student might learn from the episode of teaching, whether the student’s learning related to chemistry, teaching, Marie as a person, and/or something else.

What Marie discussed in interviews had much more to do with her own learning from the episode, including the assertion that tutoring required her to “try to re-explain the lesson,” possibly through alternative methods aside from repeating a teacher’s lesson or slides, such as “[teaching] like my own mini-lesson version” (Int 3, 285-289). When Marie looked back on her teaching as a tutor, she saw what she intended to do—“answer, like, more like basic questions, in terms of like common misunderstandings” (Int 3, 285)—and how her efforts helped, or failed to help, the student to learn chemistry. Unintended or highly personalized learning, the latter a reference to what learners might take away on their own from an episode of teaching beyond the teacher’s explicitly stated intentions or goals, and the activities employed to take up these intentions or goals, did

not seem to be matters worthy of additional consideration, despite the importance they could have when participants were observing the teaching of others.

Thus, these every day, seemingly ubiquitous experiences with teaching appear intimately bound with learning. When observing, or playing the part of a learner in, the teaching of others, high school students interested in teaching careers view and assess teaching in terms of what they perceive the teacher's intent to be for the episode of teaching, as well as what they learn from the teaching, whether this learning corresponds to the teacher's actual intent or not. As they move into teaching roles, in classroom and/or academic contexts or otherwise, their focus turns more to themselves and their own intentions for an episode of teaching. The unintended learning they did as students within the teaching of others does not appear to be a consideration when they assume teaching roles, or at least the emphasis is heavily placed on what they say and do and how these actions relate to the learning they intend for their learners.

### **The Possibility of Open-Endedness in Teaching**

The differences that may exist in students' learning *within* the teaching of others and their learning *from* their own teaching suggest that these students do not consider teaching in strictly technical terms. As Rachel and Elsie saw teaching, it did not always involve a person, or even a physical being. Since teaching was seen in many different contexts, it was regarded as intentional or unintentional, and perhaps in some episodes of teaching spurred both intended and unintended learning. Learning and teaching, along with studying, formed three phases Rachel identified as she discussed "absorbing the information" (Int 2, 757). Teaching typically formed the initial phase, in which a student "get[s] taught" and "receives" the information, or in some cases "the knowledge is made

available to you” (Int 2, 763). Having been taught, the student can then “pick it up from there with the learning” (Int 2, 763). Rachel’s statements about teaching, learning, and studying leave little indication as to *who* or *what* might teach, or what *getting taught* might entail. Pointing out these absences is not to say that high school students interested in teaching careers do not ever describe teaching as something done by a person, or that this person might employ particular approaches or strategies to inspire learning, both of which are discussed later in this chapter. Teaching was not solely the execution of such approaches or strategies, but instead focused upon any action or event that resulted in some form of learning.

Identifying teaching at various points and places across their lives reinforces for high school students interested in teaching careers the potential open-endedness of teaching. Rather than a narrow view of teaching as something confined to schools and classrooms, and conducted by professional teachers, these students see teaching in a number of categorizations and configurations. Teaching could include daily encounters with teachers, like Rachel described with Sandra Townes, in which teaching organically occurred in the form of demonstrating how to undo and do buttons on clothing. It could include regular class meetings, where Marina, due to the format of the class as a writing workshop, was thrust into what Elsie saw as a teaching role when she provided feedback on Elsie’s writing. Of course, teaching could include teachers in schools with entire classes of students, like Mr. Walters in Rachel’s band class, Ms. Lewis and Ms. Marti in Alex’s English class, and many other examples. The open-endedness these students saw in teaching was not limited to *who* was teaching, nor was this wide array of individuals even of the utmost importance.



The importance might better be represented in descriptions of *how* these different people were teaching. Parents like Alex's and Ezequiel's frequently repeated verbally the importance of studying and doing well in school. Sandra Townes used demonstration and routine to teach Rachel how to negotiate the overalls her mother insisted she wear to school. Elsie experienced teaching that included workshopping, online lectures and discussions on Shakespeare, and even casual conversations with her friend Lilian that taught her lessons about schooling in England. Teaching was not just telling, either; Rachel pointed out the use of POGILs as a framework for students learning together, while Ms. North, the teacher who employed POGILs, also made concerted efforts to share online resources that to Rachel facilitated "self-propelled learning" (Int 3, 160). Even if the previously mentioned examples involving *experience teaching you*, as well as others, were excluded, and we just focused on examples of teaching in schools, it seems evident that high school students interested in teaching careers do not see teaching as something that is monochrome, or done in the same way, all the time, across people, classes, and settings. To be fair, teaching approaches like *lecture* may have represented a singularly boring and common approach to teaching, yet one that was not ubiquitous, either. Teaching seemed to appear to these young people as *technicolor*, coming in various colors and images, even if some episodes of teaching did not feature the color and imagery that others portray.

This variety means that the possibilities young people see for teaching, and hold should they enter teacher preparation, are similarly diverse. Though they include many descriptions of episodes of teaching, including things teachers said and did—and/or did *not* say and do—they also portray teaching as something transcending, or occurring

alongside, the learning of academic knowledge or skills. As she described Mr. Turner's reaction to Bridgette's death, Marie recounted the movement not of academic knowledge but of emotions, and how these emotions had an impact on Marie, and likely many of her classmates. Sometimes, the authentic emotions or feelings teachers portrayed were distinctly negative. Mr. Walters "definitely taught [students] something" when he responded to a section's performance in class by telling the group, "I just think it's so funny because they sounded like a bunch of *foreign* women" (Int 1, 403), adding that he "never met a foreigner that I [have] liked" (Int 1, 403-410). Yet Rachel also pointed out that some students "really love" Mr. Walters since he was willing to "pull you aside...[and] talk to you if he knows you have something going on in your life" (Int 3, 293), as he did with Rachel when her phone was flooded by hateful text messages one day in school, his actions representing good teaching, in Rachel's view, since it taught her "how to fix a problem" (Int 1, 488). When someone says teaching, or even *good* or *bad* teaching, the image that may come to the minds of high school students interested in teaching careers may be quite different than a stereotypical image of a teacher in front of a classroom, or succeeding/failing to impart knowledge or skills, within a particular academic area, on students.

For high school students interested in teaching careers, this variety may even include episodes of teaching some people, like teacher educators, might not necessarily see as teaching, particularly in the midst of their own commitments to and/or conceptions of teaching, such as viewing teaching from a social justice orientation, or, in an entirely different example, as a more rigidly defined technical act. The best example of a potentially divergent example of teaching from the study is *teaching yourself*, something

both Rachel and Marie described, though in very different contexts; Rachel found herself teaching music and drums to herself after she had to give up her early drum lessons due to a scheduling conflict, yet Marie recalled teaching herself to break bad habits in volleyball, as well as having to teach herself when classes in school became progressively harder, or when teachers, in her view, simply did not teach. Though *learning* or *studying*, or perhaps other terms, might seem to better characterize what Rachel and Marie described, they repeatedly used the expression *teaching myself*. These episodes of teaching point to another fundamental characterization or purpose of teaching for participants, that of empowerment of others and/or self; teaching was a tool to facilitate others' learning, but also potentially represented an opportunity or method to spur their own learning.

Beyond these broad, yet important, functions of teaching to help people to learn and to empower or to have an impact on them, what teaching emphasizes and how it looks may be quite different from student to student. Teaching might be akin to leading, as it was for Rachel, perhaps an understanding drawn from an image of teaching in the context of her Christian meetings and those who led them each week. For Alex and Ezequiel, teaching played a key role in preparing people for the *real world*, sometimes down to the particular and routine, like completing tax returns. Marie saw teaching as helping prepare people for life, but rather than the particular and routine, she saw these preparations as helping young people to solve the complex, *open-ended* problems and challenges of adult life. Elsie viewed *generous heart* and *compassion* as central to teaching, emphasizing an understanding of students and what was best for them as learners and people. Some of these basic understandings are similar, or at least overlap

exists between them, yet they are not identical, and drilling into the experiences and beliefs undergirding these understandings will produce many more differences in terms of who teaches, what they teach, and how they teach it.

### **Every Day Experiences with Teaching as the Terrain of Teacher Preparation**

These differences make up the terrain teacher educators must explore and navigate, should they meet these students in the context of formal teacher preparation, an argument I take up in greater detail in the final chapter of this study. Teacher preparation represents a point of intersection, where prospective teachers' experience-based understandings of teaching meet with understandings of teacher educators, who likely derive their own understandings from an agglomeration of their own prior experiences with teaching as well as theory, teaching and teacher education practice, and perhaps other sources. Exploring prospective teachers' experiences presents a significant challenge, as these students come to teacher preparation with unique experiences and understandings of teaching. Some of these understandings may not be internally consistent for the student. Others may clash with classmates' understandings, as well as those of the teacher educator. There may be disagreement between students in a given class over what teaching is or what it can be, the images or memories that are most important to how they understand teaching, whether teaching is an intentional act, and/or whether they evaluate it quite the same way when they see someone else teach versus when they themselves are the ones teaching. Examining and challenging students' understandings and assumptions of teaching is work teacher educators may well be immersed in, yet cannot do independent of—or on behalf of—their students.

Traveling the terrain of students' experiences and guiding them along the trajectory such travels take are certainly possible for teacher educators, yet both minimally require students' assent and cooperation. It would be easy to say that since students' experiences are invariably personal and unique, so too are their understandings of teaching, and therefore there is no reason to really understand them. On the contrary, this variability, between both prospective teachers' and teacher educators' understandings of teaching, constitutes what I see as part of the essence of teacher preparation. No matter what happens as part of observation hours, courses, practicum experiences, teaching portfolios, or other pedagogies of teacher preparation, students' experiences with teaching, and their understandings of them, remain their own. Interrogating these experiences, for both student and teacher educator, requires both to better understand them, as these experiences have the potential to contribute to understandings of teaching more complicated than a construct like the apprenticeship of observation can explain.

The data above point to the near ubiquity of teaching in the lives of high school students interested in teaching careers, but this in and of itself is not an important takeaway of the study, though it does offer some affirmation of teaching's presence and influence. While teacher preparation represents an intersection, as I wrote above, the reality is that young people have already experienced countless intersections between *their* understandings of teaching and the teaching of others, be it the enactment of teaching, and/or others' understandings of teaching. It is the convergence of understandings, rather than mere personal opinion or taste, that leads to assessments of teaching as *good* or *bad*, or anywhere in between. In other words, students have already conducted any number of informal assessments of teaching throughout their lives,

including teachers' intentions, their practices, their energy, and many other variables or factors, and they will likely undertake similar efforts when they encounter teacher educators and their teaching, as Lortie (1975/2002) speculated they might since "the mind of the education student is not a blank awaiting inscription" (p. 66).

Teaching's seeming ubiquity in young people's lives potentially promotes the cultivation of more principled understandings of teaching than Lortie described. The assessments of teaching Lortie referred to may, to some extent, "reflect personality differences, varieties of social experience, and the different contexts within which...assessments are made" (p. 66), yet these differences and experiences occurred across students' lives, never confined to classrooms and school teaching. They reflect not just preferences for teachers or approaches but a mixture of students' understanding of learning: their perceptions and analyses of learning, as well as the closeness they see between learning and teaching. Their experiences also include examples of their attempts to read the intentions of their teachers through their own learning and their observations of teachers' behavior, a capacity they consistently employ, one that may not always lead to inferences matching teachers' own intentions. Coming from so many different sources in their lives, students' understanding of teaching appears to be splintered as well, with a focus on learning when they perform their own teaching, while considering both learning and teacher intentions when discussing the teaching of others. This splintering of expectations for teaching, which may only exist because students have accrued their own experiences teaching in various contexts, bears important implications for their understandings of teaching.

### Teaching as *Discernible Approaches, Routines, and Patterns*

Although teaching may be observed or done by high school students interested in teaching careers across a variety of contexts, they do not understand teaching as formless, or as a set of actions they observe or undertake in their lives that exist entirely in the background or periphery of their day-to-day experiences. *Teaching myself* and *the experience teaching you* are examples of these students discerning certain situations in life where they see teaching taking place, situations inherently bound to learning. Out of teaching's seeming ubiquity, drawing from both their observations of teaching as well as their own experiences teaching others, participants identified certain approaches, routines, and patterns in teaching. Sometimes, the approaches they discussed were not bound to a single teacher or class, observed or carried out by participants in a number of different contexts in which teaching took place. There were, however, examples of approaches, routines, or patterns of teaching that were linked to particular contexts, with participants presenting certain criteria explaining why the approaches, routines, or patterns existed where they did. The discernible approaches, routines, and patterns these students identified help to demonstrate their ability to *read* the teaching of others, helping them to describe, critique, and even anticipate teaching approaches, routines, and patterns. Yet, as this section will explain, high school students interested in teaching careers may describe their own teaching in terms divergent from those they use to describe others' teaching, whereas the latter may be more focused on teacher actions at a single point in time, and how learners respond to these actions.

### **Discerning Approaches, Patterns, and Routines as Learners and Observers**

When participants described teaching in terms of approaches, routines, and patterns, they often focused on what *they* did in the midst of these episodes of teaching. For example, when Rachel described how a student's essay helped to spark an experience that taught people in the classroom, she focused on her central role in the experience, in which she read the essay to students in the class. As participants described episodes of teaching in which someone else taught, they frequently did so through the prism of their role as learners or students; teaching, then, took the form of activities teachers instigated, yet students found themselves having to *do* certain things within these activities. Homework, mentioned by Rachel, Marie, and Elsie, was one such activity. Marie described homework as something she had to do to prepare for her AP Biology classes, typically consisting of "taking notes from the textbook and filling out...guided notes" (Int 1, 295-297), the notes structured by a template provided by the teacher. Elsie also recalled homework assignments, like annotating Shakespeare texts or writing parts of her research report on spies who used knitting. In both of these examples, homework appeared to be positioned as a prerequisite to an episode of teaching, something that had to be done before in-class teaching in order for students to make the most out of teaching; Marie's failure to complete guided notes may have led to gaps in her learning, while Elsie found Marina's hastily drafted segments of her report meant she, Marina, and Ms. Pinkerton would spend time critiquing what might be a deeply flawed piece of writing.

Homework, as an activity teachers use, may offer a particular window into the understanding of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers, including views of their capacities to critique approaches. Not only did Rachel and Elsie



describe examples of homework, they also critiqued the use of homework. In Artifact L, Elsie appeared to critique homework from a student's view, writing that there is "a difference between doing a homework assignment, and actually understanding it"; in other words, homework could be done by "doing what your teacher asked you to do," and thus simply completing a task, and it could also be about "how much time and thought you put into it," which might lead to genuine understanding of the task or topic. Rachel's critique was not necessarily from a student's perspective, yet it did focus on student learning. She asserted that "research shows [homework is] counterproductive," particularly for younger students in elementary school (Int 1, 619), her link to research perhaps facilitated by her father, a professor of education. For at least some high school students who pursue teacher preparation, there is a capacity to critique certain activities, due to the challenges inherent in an activity, and/or an awareness of broader debates about these activities with regard to teaching and learning.

While critical of activities like homework, or other activities yielding products of learning like essays, dialogue translations, or many others, participants situated these activities as familiar components used to shape and/or structure interactions between teachers and learners. Despite the challenges Elsie identified in Artifact L, which Ms. Pinkerton may have been aware of when she asked Marina and Elsie about how much time they spent on homework, Ms. Pinkerton's writing class continued to include homework assignments so Elsie and Marina could "share [essays] with each other, and the teacher, and...give the other person feedback" in class (Art B). Without writing to read and to give feedback on, the class would cease to function, at least as it typically did. Alex saw teachers use homework and other assignments as an instructional lynchpin,

sometimes “walking around, making sure [the student] has it right” on homework or assignments, which Alex believed they did since the approach offered “another level of engagement” that required students to do more than “zone you out and just copy the board” (Int 3, 343). Thus, homework or other student products, while perhaps limited by how seriously students worked on them, potentially offered a medium through which teaching could occur. For high school students interested in teaching careers, teachers’ decisions to employ certain activities may come down to the types of interactions they desire to have with students, rather than the nature and/or challenges of a topic or skill learned in class.

Marie seemed to struggle to keep up with the volume of homework in her AP Biology class, and her critique of this activity revealed a capacity to discern patterns in the activities she was expected to complete as a student. The “cycle of taking notes from the textbook and filling out the guided notes” she described was something that repeated with each unit, an activity that was done as the class moved incrementally through the textbook, and the biology topics therein described. Though similar in that Marie described these activities as something assigned by her teacher, she started to see this approach across lessons, which was different from the way Alex described assignments and the way teachers provided feedback as something existing within a single class meeting. In Marie’s case, she was not only able to see what *she* was doing in this *repeating cycle*, but she also could see how her teacher was employing the same approach, and grafting it to the textbook in a similar way across each chapter and unit.

### **Critiquing, Reasoning about, and Anticipating Teaching**

Participants did not just see teaching through the activities they did as students; they also named, described, and even critiqued common teacher approaches they observed, and took part in, across different episodes of teaching. Teachers asked students to repeat different actions in episodes of teaching, as Ezequiel's City Music Group director did; as a teacher, the director was different from many other teachers described in the study, as he not only prompted students to play and to repeat sections of musical pieces, but he also played with them, and thus may have modeled successful performances for them. In other instances, teachers facilitated debates or argument-based assignments, both of which were described by Rachel when she recalled Mr. Jack's discussion of controversial topics like GMOs, which involved "argu[ing] your side of it" with classmates *and* Mr. Jack. Rachel also mentioned an activity or approach called POGILs, which seemed to standardize certain student and teacher interactions by requiring students to take on different roles within a group assignment, leaving the teacher to adopt a more facilitative role with the groups. The approaches participants described exhibited a range of structures applied to teaching, with Ms. North's use of POGILs demonstrating a highly structured approach, which Rachel "really like[d] to do" (Int 2, 476), whereas Ezequiel's theater teacher allowed students the freedom "[t]o make that script, like, our own, like, original work" (Int 3, 428), rather than stipulating how scenes were acted out, excluding the assigned character dialogue.

Some common approaches, like *lecture*, were mentioned by several participants, yet it seemed as though teachers did not see lecture in quite the same way. "[W]hen you think about like a stereotypical teacher," Rachel explained, "it's like fact, fact, fact,

lecture, fact” (Int 3, 652), something Rachel saw in person and found to be ineffective, which was also present in media representations of teaching like in *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* or *The Peanuts*. For Rachel, lecture appeared to represent an action, something a teacher did *to* students, which seemed to contrast Elsie’s depiction of lecture. Elsie may have seen lecture more as an event; she had seen her father lecture in his law school classes, during which he talked 75% of the time, with the remaining time spent asking students questions, yet she and her father also listened to history lectures produced at Yale University for her history studies. Though lecture, to Elsie, may well have involved “tell[ing students] the information” (Int 2, 587), it also seemed like a resource that could be accessed and attended, a supplement in her history courses rather than the dominant pedagogy. The difference between Rachel’s and Elsie’s descriptions of lecture, though subtle, suggests that high school students interested in teaching careers may view common approaches differently, perhaps due in part to the contexts or manners in which they were observed (e.g., a public school classroom vs. an audio recorded lecture as part of homeschooling).

High school students interested in teaching careers may view other approaches to teaching as appropriate within certain contexts. In her teaching internship, Rachel found a lesson on the nuclear bombing of Japan during the second World War “super-fun to teach, just because it turns into a debate” (Int 3, 510), with ethical questions like *Should we have bombed Japan?* described as though they organically came up within this particular social studies lesson. Marie viewed debate as necessary in classes like English since “you don’t have the author [of a story] in the room” and therefore “you don’t have the right answer in front of you” (Int 3, 442); the epistemological challenges of English

were different than those of science classes, though, in which Marie believed debate was necessary given that scientists and researchers could arrive at conflicting findings, “and they do have to debate about what’s right and what’s not” (Int 3, 382). Rather than tie teaching approaches to academic disciplines or school classes, Alex and Elsie found debate, or at least discussion, important to “constant[ly] exchange” and “refine” ideas for essays (Alex, Int 2, 421-424), or to see “new ideas” or “how what I write is interpreted” by others (Elsie, Art B). For high school students interested in teaching careers, there may be a constellation of factors affecting their beliefs about the appropriateness and/or effectiveness of certain teaching approaches in certain contexts. While personal interest (e.g., something being *super-fun*) is at times the driving force behind these beliefs, on other occasions students surface concerns about what can be known and how teaching approaches should reflect certainty about a given topic, text, or otherwise; students’ concerns are, at times, more pragmatic, with approaches that further students’ thinking and/or assist them in completing assignments or tasks favored.

Not only do high school students interested in teaching careers demonstrate capacities to discern approaches and patterns, along with linkages between approaches and certain contextual factors they see, but they also identify single lessons or activities as distinct episodes of teaching. For example, Rachel enthusiastically recalled the *marshmallow lesson*, an activity fifth graders at her Montessori school did each year, one with so great a reputation that she and her classmates “waited for the area lesson in geometry” because it was such “a big deal” (Int 1, 638). During the lesson, students used sticks and marshmallows, both big and small, to measure area and volume; later, they constructed cubes to measure the sides and find the volume of a cube. “It was just so

much fun,” Rachel recalled (Int 1, 647). Ezequiel described a more recent example, which he referred to as a *mock trial* in his Legal Studies class, a multi-day class activity. At first, students reviewed with the teacher a packet, perhaps “a case of a guy who, like, he went to jail for...murder” (Int 2, 263). Students then broke into a *defense* and a *prosecution* team, and they decided within their groups how they would defend or prosecute the case, which was argued using a courtroom layout and rules, with the teacher presiding as judge. According to Ezequiel, the teacher used this role to “show us what to do, [and] what not to do, if you’re in the court room” (Int 2, 275). Both of these examples, the marshmallow lesson and the mock trial, appeared to feature multiple teaching approaches and/or patterns.

As was the case with approaches used within an episode of teaching, Rachel and Ezequiel, in the cases mentioned in the previous paragraph, articulated lines of reasoning regarding the appropriateness of each lesson or activity. In Rachel’s case, *fun* was clearly a key characteristic of the marshmallow lesson, which was likely related to the level of student engagement she saw. But Rachel also contrasted how geometry was taught at the Montessori school with how it was taught at Bell Heights, where teachers taught the same lesson using a worksheet with a picture of a cube on it, the kind of approach that “totally makes you hate learning” (Int 1, 592). With the mock trial, Ezequiel saw an effort to engage students in *real world learning*, providing opportunities for students interested in law or government to step into courtrooms and legal roles; throughout the year, the class also attended field trips at the court house and other locations to see actual trials. The vividness in memory of episodes of teaching like the ones described by Rachel and Ezequiel may be difficult to explain; while Rachel described an episode that occurred six

or seven years before her participation in this study, Ezequiel detailed mock trials that were ongoing events in his Legal Studies class, perhaps making certain parts of his experiences easier to recall. The rationales they offered with the activities—teaching for fun and for real world learning—may also play a role. What seems more certain is that some high school students interested in teaching careers may exhibit capacities to discern teaching approaches, sometimes across several days of teaching, and to reason about the usage of these approaches within the lesson or activity.

Such discernment and reasoning seem substantively different than capacities to read teachers' intentions; as these students read intent, discern approaches and patterns, and reason about teachers' pedagogical decisions, they may further develop evaluative abilities with regards to teaching. At times, these evaluations assessed the degree of routine or repetition in teaching. Throughout the interviews, participants identified a number of interactions with teachers as repetitive or even predictable. In her Shakespeare class, Elsie found many of the same activities done as part of each class, including reading and discussing an assigned play, discussing a related assignment like a film clip or article on the play, then reciting a memorized passage. Marie also saw certain episodes of teaching as "very predictable," like her AP Biology teacher's frequent use of PowerPoint, creating situations in classes in which "nothing really changes" except the topic they discussed (Int 3, 39). Elsie seemed to describe a routine in teaching, while Marie appeared to evaluate her AP Biology teacher's teaching through her own expectations; teaching *should*, in her view, consist of something more than reviewing PowerPoints each day. The presence—or overuse—of certain approaches or patterns may be one factor high school students interested in teaching careers use to evaluate teaching.

These students may also be able to anticipate or predict activities or patterns within teaching. In some cases, anticipation or prediction was not necessary when interacting with teachers and teaching; Ms. North alerted Rachel and her peers to the day's schedule by "having the list [of activities and assignments] on the board" (Int 2, 681), while Marie had, over time, recognized that the typical volleyball practice consisted of a warm-up, a six-versus-six game, skill work and drills, and then a return to six-versus-six. Ezequiel used words like *jumping* and *random* to describe instances when teaching activities appeared disjointed from one another. When teaching was perceived as lacking a degree of predictability, or at least when students struggled to see connections across activities or episodes of teaching, there was a feeling for students like Ezequiel that the teacher might be "jumping from like point A to like point C, and then point C to like point F" (Int 3, 278). By developing a lesson plan, teachers provided themselves with a *blueprint* for teaching, which they used to ensure that activities, field trips, and other teaching components "related" to what was being taught in class did not appear to students as "random," a perception leading Ezequiel to characterize certain episodes of teaching as flawed, as students were "not really learning" (Int 3, 289) due to the lack of coherence across lesson components. Teaching, then, had a certain logic to it, a pattern that teachers had to be able to develop in planning, and one that students had to be able to discern in order for learning to take place.

### **Teaching and Choosing Between or Ignoring What Is Observed**

Although high school students interested in teaching careers may develop capacities to discern approaches, routines, and patterns from the teaching of others, these capacities may be less pronounced, if not absent, from their own teaching. As mentioned



in the previous section, participants in this study, when engaged in different forms of teaching with others, tended to focus on learners' understanding of what was taught, with unintended learning and/or teacher intentions seemingly not the factor that they were for participants when they were observing the teaching of others. When specific approaches of and patterns in/across teaching are considered, participants' actions and words reflected a cause and effect relationship between learning and the approaches, routines, and patterns of teaching; in other words, within an episode of teaching they engaged in certain approaches or patterns, and learners learned, or they did not and a change was necessary.

A few examples may help to illustrate this relationship, as well as the crossover between participants' observations of teaching and their own teaching. Marie and Ezequiel both drew explicitly on the teaching of their own teachers as they helped their peers to learn; Marie tutored a chemistry student in a class she had completed the year before, while Ezequiel tried to help seniors in his math class on an informal basis. In both cases, they recognized that the teachers' approaches did not help them to teach others, leading them to alter their own approaches: Marie realized that reading off the teacher's slides was not helping her tutee, so she taught a mini-lesson on her own and tried to answer the student's questions, and Ezequiel slowed his pace and offered his own explanations of algebra problems. Another example may have been Elsie's trip to the homeless shelter, where initial attempts to teach casting in knitting were unsuccessful, leading Elsie and her mother to adopt "four finger knitting," a simpler option that may have been more appropriate for the students (Art F). In each case, participants employed an approach they had observed before, not anticipating or predicting challenges in

teaching, and ultimately finding themselves reacting to learners' performance within the same episode of teaching, though it should be noted that in these three examples participants' reactions and changes were successful, at least as each participant viewed their own teaching, in fostering learning. Elsie even noted that "not being able to predict other factors...present in any lesson" was a challenge she observed in her episode of teaching, one she started to consider more when she returned to the shelter to teach fiber arts.

In examples from Rachel's and Alex's participation in the study, observations of teaching again may have crossed over into participants' own teaching, but instead of replicating approaches they observed Rachel and Alex appeared to *avoid* certain approaches. Mr. Arnold, Rachel's supervising teacher in her teaching internship, was a teacher who "[has] got his routine, and he's got what he does," yet Rachel found that his routine "wasn't really helping me plan out, like, a new lesson" (Int 3, 531). After Ms. Cruz, another history teacher at Bell Heights, showed her a number of tools, games, and web sites she used in her own teaching, Rachel developed her own idea for a game, which she ultimately felt "would have been a little more effective if I had a little more time to plan it"; she walked away thinking students were "having fun competing, but...don't know the answers" (Int 3, 562-566). Describing his own teaching, Alex also recalled an activity that afforded him choice—"we had to pretty much teach [an AP exam topic] from scratch" (Int 1, 144)—and he recounted how he used a slideshow and included "an interactive [component] with questions" (Int 1, 144), yet his teaching was a departure from his classroom teacher's approach; this particular teacher went to great lengths to teach so that "the entire class [is] involved" (Int 1, 157). Like Rachel, Alex

regarded his lesson as successful up to a point, but found he was “lecturing too much” (Int 1, 147), something his teacher suggested to him as well. In both episodes of teaching, Rachel and Alex taught in a way that was different from what they observed, with an approach that was fixed, only afterwards considering changes that could have been made to improve their teaching.

There is clearly a connection between the teaching observed and the teaching done by the high school student interested in teaching careers, but the connection might better be understood as a series of intricate interchanges than as a simple ramp permitting but one choice of path. Marie, Ezequiel, and Elsie may have drawn explicitly on approaches they observed, yet what they ended with in their teaching was different from what they observed and thus borrowed from other teachers. In each of these examples, participants may have taken the same ramp as their teachers, but they were left with other possible paths, some of which they ended up following. Put another way, they replicated teaching they saw, though not mindlessly; when approaches were not successful, they exhibited capacities to make changes, which—in these three examples—they found to be more successful than continuing to repeat what they had observed their teachers doing. Rachel and Alex, on the other hand, had chosen different routes from the start, maintaining their choice as they veered away from the approaches their teachers, at least in these respective classes, tended to use. A common thread across these very different examples is participants’ focus *on* teaching *within* an episode of teaching. While teaching, they were not anticipating or predicting next steps for their teaching, which might be attributed to the structure of their teaching experiences. If they were only teaching for a class period, a tutoring session, or an afternoon at the shelter, they likely

would have little reason to consider what would happen the next day, week, or unit of instruction.

Perhaps this extension of understanding of teaching for participants is the next step, a way of describing how they might continue and grow in their pedagogical thinking. Rather than fixating on how teaching that has previously been observed is inevitably repeated by each generation of teachers, teacher educators might do well to consider with prospective teachers the factors these students consider as they draw on, avoid, or alter the approaches and patterns they have observed in the past. Do these approaches or patterns become more engrained as prospective teachers move ever closer to the classroom? Are some forgotten or ignored, while other priorities, like managing classrooms and children, among many other possibilities, are more intensely considered? These changes in factors that are considered as high school students interested in teaching careers move from primarily observer roles in teaching to primarily teaching roles, be they changes in how intention is read or how approaches, routines, or patterns are discerned, may be at the heart of learning to teach. And yet, teaching—for these participants, and perhaps other high school students interested in teaching careers—likely cannot be reduced to intentions, approaches, routines, and patterns, either.

### **Teaching as *Relational***

Teaching could not be reduced to particular intentions, approaches, routines, and patterns, as participants identified other major influences on the conduct of teaching, such as the relational characteristics of teaching. Whether encountered in every day happenings or discerned as particular approaches, routines, or patterns, teaching was always portrayed by participants as inherently relational, an interaction between

participants and some thing or person, even in particular cases like *teaching myself*, in which participants like Rachel and Marie engaged in actions involving an external stimulus—assignments, textbooks, or topics—instigated at some earlier point in time by their interactions with a subject to be learned and/or a person engaged in teaching. At times, participants moved beyond discussing interactions as part of chance encounters or intentional teaching approaches, presenting the cultivation of certain types of relationships between teachers and learners as essential to teaching.

As they highlighted the relational elements of teaching, participants appeared to articulate a core capacity for teaching: learning how to *position* or *balance* one's self with regards to learners, in effect finding a medium between being *friends* and cultivating an environment in which learning takes place. Failure to properly position or balance one's self, or mistakes made while searching for or ignoring the medium between *friends* and learning, potentially led to dire consequences for teachers and their teaching. As they characterized teaching as relational work, participants may have revealed that for at least some high school students interested in teaching careers, teaching's relational qualities held an instrumental purpose for teaching, relations teachers were said to engage in largely for the purposes of spurring student learning using their teaching. This instrumental use of relationships potentially yields a particular tension in teaching between cultivating relationships and driving learning.

### **Tendencies Potentially Influential to the Relational Side of Teaching**

Referencing media depictions of teachers, participants in this study discussed several stereotypical views of how teachers and other educators interacted with students in classrooms. Both Rachel and Alex referenced the Roald Dahl story *Matilda*, or its

movie adaptation, which featured two characters who were dichotomous in terms of how they interacted with students; while Ms. Honey, Matilda's teacher, was "soft and mushy" and someone "everyone love[s]" (Rachel, Int 1, 730-733; Alex, Int 3, 381), the school's principal was "[m]ean" and "awful," "carr[ying] a ruler around with her" to hit students (Int 1, 730-733). Marie, on the other hand, may have described the consequence of teachers and educators failing to position themselves as either loved or feared by students; though she did not name a specific representation, she found that classroom depictions in movies were "just a bunch of, like, kids going crazy," with teachers unable to "control the kids...from like eight to three [o'clock]" (Int 1, 588-589). As I analyzed these media depictions of teaching with participants' own descriptions of the interactions they witnessed and took part in as students or while teaching themselves, I observed three tendencies exhibited by these participants—and I suspect some other high school students interested in teaching careers—that may constitute important underlying factors for these students as they described what it is to *position* or *balance* one's self as a teacher with regard to students.

First, participants regularly expressed individual feelings with regards to their own teachers, just as Rachel characterized Ms. Honey as *soft* and *mushy*. For example, in Artifact G, Marie recalled an encounter with a former volleyball coach of hers, Ricky Matthews, who she went to great lengths to avoid. In her previous dealings with him, Matthews had "never coached with a greater purpose" (Art G, 15), instead resorting to any method he could to coax effort, and more importantly wins, out of his teams, including cursing at players and acting in a generally angry manner. Marie saw Matthews as a person who "need[ed] to get as far away from children as possible" (Art G, 9), so

negative was his influence on young people. Another example of an individual feeling, another that was intensely negative for the participant, was Rachel and her reaction to Mr. Walters after his remark about foreign women. “I just couldn’t even look at him” (Int 1, 397), Rachel said of Mr. Walters, during a moment she would describe as a turning point in her relationship with him, in which she came to believe she had to “[find] a way to like someone as a person, and disagree with them morally, and find a way to tolerate that” (Int 1, 396). Of course, not all of these individual feelings were intensely negative; on the contrary, some were quite positive. Alex told me that he “really liked” his recent math teacher, a fourth-year teacher who he felt he had “a good relationship with” (Int 3, 207-209).

Second, Rachel’s and Alex’s assertions that *everyone* loved Ms. Honey suggest high school students interested in teaching careers may engage in, or at least reference, a form of collective feeling when it comes to teachers and their teaching. In her Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching, Rachel provided what may have been an example of such a collective feeling. She described an episode of teaching in which a substitute teacher lost control of a class she was trying to teach, reacting angrily and raising her voice when students would not focus their attention on her. In the caption to her drawing, Rachel wrote, “With that action, she certainly lost my respect, *along with many students in the room*” (Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching, emphasis added). Rachel’s caption yielded little in the way of clues concerning how she became aware of other students’ feelings towards the substitute teacher, yet, as I interviewed Alex, he seemed to illustrate how a student like Rachel may have become aware of these feelings. He recalled how he and his friends sometimes engaged in casual conversations about teachers that sometimes

coalesced into or revealed a collective feeling directed towards particular teachers by students, identifying some of them as “just like a bad teacher,” particularly when students did poorly on tests or activities, and there was something students held in common “where our anger’s directed towards that teacher” (Int 3, 270). Such feelings, of anger in this particular case, seemed to offer students a common bond, perhaps even a sense of empowerment since their individual feelings concerning a teacher and/or teaching were reinforced by their peers.

Third, *kids going crazy* might be better understood as the diametric opposite of what Alex meant when he said Ms. Honey made concerted efforts to “kind of [like] spice it up a bit and mak[e] it interesting for the kids,” all without sacrificing “what she’s *supposed to [do] as a teacher*” (Int 3, 381, emphasis added). Ms. Honey may have been expected to “[do] everything this boring way,” yet she made efforts to “[pull] down these things and all these colorful things” as she taught students (Int 3, 381). Put differently, interactions between teachers and students were expected—perhaps by *both* teachers and students—to occur within a context of teaching and learning, which may have been carried out in the *boring way*, as when Rachel was taught geometry at Bell Heights using nothing but worksheets, or the *spiced up way*, like when Ezequiel and his classmates were given the freedom to act out a play in their own way. Though there were many differences in the approaches teachers used, the expectation or belief that they were *supposed to do* something as teachers existed across teaching contexts, and helped to shape interactions between students and teachers.

The three tendencies I just shared help to form the backdrop of teaching’s relational elements or characteristics, as participants described this backdrop. The



examples shared above show how these tendencies seldom operate in complete isolation. For example, Rachel shared the dilemma she faced when Mr. Walters made his bigoted remarks to the band, one where she felt forced to confront what Mr. Walters had said and her clear offense and objection to his remarks. Yet the offense and objection she shared were not products of a strictly visceral affective reaction, but instead a reaction likely borne out of, or influenced in crucial ways by, her expectation for how a public school teacher should speak and act. When she told me she and her classmates said to Mr. Walters in response to this remark, “[Y]ou are a public school teacher,” they not only offered an emotional response, but one that was collectively shared, to some extent, and that appeared to be grounded in their belief that teachers were “adults that [students] respect” and “should never say that about anyone” (Int 1, 410-411). As a result of the coexistence of these tendencies, it seems prudent to analyze these relational tendencies not on an item-by-item basis but instead together, as it appears at least two of the three tendencies are present when high school students interested in teaching careers discuss relational elements of teaching.

### **A Case of Relational Tendencies: *Liking* Teachers**

What high school students interested in teaching careers mean when they say that they *like* teachers or teaching is a prime example demonstrating two of the relational tendencies students exhibited with regard to teaching, and the challenges these tendencies may present for both students and those trying to understand how these students view teaching. At a number of points across interviews, each participant talked about *liking* a teacher, which reflected a view of the teacher as a person, yet the word also seemed to connote a practical or pedagogical preference as well, similar to Siann, Lightbody,

Stocks, and Walsh's (1996) findings that secondary students' statements about liking teachers often related to the quality of teaching they perceived. Alex "really liked" his math teacher, and felt he had "a good relationship" with her (Int 3, 207-209), both of which he attributed to the teacher's willingness to "help a lot" by "going over tests and quizzes" after school (Int 3, 209). Elsie would also tell me that she "ended up liking" some of her teachers at her Waldorf school, her German teacher and a side tutor among those who offered her a positive influence and good experiences while she was a student at the school. Rachel thought Ms. North was "exactly who I want to be in life," due to how Ms. North was "very relaxed and...funny" (Int 2, 329), yet also able to exert "authority to be able to kind of, like, keep us in line" as she taught the class (Int 2, 375). *Liking* a teacher seldom seemed to be used by participants in strictly personal terms, instead employed to describe a blend of personal affection and pedagogical effectiveness or quality.

*Disliking* a teacher, on the other hand, seemed to be a more personal feeling and less about preferences for or the perceived quality of teaching. Rachel recalled feeling differently about Mr. Walters after the remark he made to the band, though she would later describe ways in which his personality or behavior affected his teaching, like how Mr. Walters "just kind of talked through" drum lessons instead of actually teaching her (Int 2, 517). As Elsie described Marina's feelings about Ms. Pinkerton, she identified Marina's dislike as "more personal" (Int 3, 493), particularly Marina's comments about Ms. Pinkerton's make-up and appearance, which Elsie viewed as a product of Marina's cultural background; Marina expressed to Elsie "strong ideas about how people should be, or how they should look" (Int 1, 546), ideas Elsie believed were influenced by

Marina's parents and certain expectations they, and apparently Marina, held for how people should look and act. For her own part, Elsie appeared to differentiate between disliking teachers as people and liking the way they taught; of her new piano teacher, she told me that while she "wouldn't want to spend the afternoon with this guy," she believed that she was "definitely learning from him" and that "his technique works" (Int 3, 503-505). Though mapping this tendency to all high school students interested in teaching careers just based on these two examples may not be warranted, it does appear to be the case amongst some students that *liking* a teacher is not strictly a personal and individual feeling about the teacher, and that some students can and do differentiate between liking teachers as people and liking the way they teach.

While participants' comments about liking teachers were largely consistent with Siann et al.'s (1996) findings linking liking teachers to perceived teacher quality, participants offered few obvious clues to help discern trends explaining who they liked or disliked as teachers. All five participants identified teachers they liked and disliked, indicating they found slightly more male teachers they disliked than female teachers. However, the harshest comments made about teachers, stemming from Elsie's account of how Marina talked about Ms. Pinkerton, involved a female teacher. Alex's and Rachel's comments about teachers they liked may have stemmed from stereotypical images of teachers, though. Alex portrayed his math teacher as always willing to help, even after school when called upon, reflecting the supportive, selfless, self-sacrificing stereotype of women teachers (e.g., Britzman, 1991; Katz, 2017; Weber, Mitchell, & Nicolai, 1995). In Rachel's case, the stereotype may have been one of women rather than women teachers. Ms. North's desirable qualities of *relaxed* and *funny* have been identified as prescriptive

stereotypes of typical men (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), qualities that set her apart from Rachel's other female teachers, who she indicated she typically did not like. From the data in this study, factors like gender cannot be ruled out as influential in how high school students interested in teaching careers view relational components of teaching, but it seems the quality or effectiveness of teaching, for many, may be the most influential factor in their likes and dislikes related to teaching.

Feelings about teaching such as liking or disliking teachers or teaching may appear to be little more than the emotional reactions of students and learners to their teachers and their teaching, yet high school students interested in teaching careers are aware, to varying degrees, that as teachers they, too, will encounter their own students' feelings. On some occasions, participants reported on their efforts to make teachers aware of their feelings about certain interactions within teaching. For example, Alex said he and his mother emailed Ms. Marti, expressing confusion when Ms. Marti "react[ed]...on her emotions" by throwing Alex out of class when he asked about discrepancies between expected and actual casualty numbers during the Holocaust (Int 2, 339). Ezequiel also noted his frustration with a situation involving a teacher, recalling how he quit orchestra after his teacher told him his job "isn't an excuse" for failing to attend weekend fundraising efforts for the orchestra program (Int 1, 273); when he spoke with the school's counselors about the situation, Ezequiel noted that they were already aware that students were unhappy with the situation, which Ezequiel had already surmised after several classmates quit the class. In other examples, it was unclear how much, or how little, a teacher knew about students' feelings towards them and their teaching. Elsie and her mother spoke to Ms. Pinkerton about Marina's effort in class, though Elsie did not

reveal whether she and her mother discussed Marina's apparent hatred of the class or her personal criticisms of Ms. Pinkerton. Whether teachers were aware of these feelings on their own was an open question, as was the extent to which they acted upon, or attempted to engage with, these feelings.

### **Consequences of Relational Tendencies on Teaching**

This uncertainty as to what teachers know, or do not know, regarding their students' feelings towards them does not appear to preclude high school students interested in teaching careers from seeing these feelings as consequential in episodes of teaching. Alex's interactions with Ms. Marti, and Rachel's with Mr. Walters, certainly demonstrate the ramifications of a damaged relationship; Alex continued to struggle with Ms. Marti in the weeks following his ejection from class, and Rachel also noted lasting effects from several of the episodes of teaching she described, losing respect for the substitute teacher after her blow-up and struggling to come to terms with her conflicting feelings towards Mr. Walters after he revealed what Rachel considered to be inexcusable, and *disgusting*, prejudice to the entire band. Feelings about a teacher could change over time, though; Rachel found that when she saw "the efforts that [teachers] are putting in to teach this class and how much they want you to succeed" (Int 1, 764)—again appearing to demonstrate some commitment to do what they were *supposed* to do—Rachel sometimes noted "change[s in] my own attitudes" about the teacher (Int 1, 765).

Students' feelings for and interactions with teachers matter, as they, like Montalvo and Roedel (1995), see students' feelings and interactions with teachers as ultimately beneficial for them as learners, or at least for students attempting to successfully complete classes. The personal nature of these feelings makes it difficult, if

not impossible, for teachers to access them, and to change the way they interacted with students as a result of their awareness of how students felt about their teaching. In Rachel's case, she seemed to struggle to make meaning from certain patterns she saw in teaching, indicating that she "like[s] male teachers more" and that she "will do better" in classes taught by men, particularly math classes" (Int 3, 343-344), illustrating the connection Corey and Beery (1938) found between liking teachers and liking academic subjects. Rachel's success in these classes had little to do with "how great" her male teachers were, but instead the way she "[didn't] usually get along with female teachers very well," who often seemed to Rachel as though they "don't tell you what they're thinking" (Int 3, 353, 359), yet another reference that seemed to originate in a broader undesirable stereotype of women as *complicated* (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Relational tendencies or qualities shaped by factors like gender—or even stereotypes, as Rachel suggested this factor might be—or even the extent to which teachers were aware of certain factors thus shaped not just particular episodes of teaching, but teaching across an entire class or series of interactions, perhaps from the moment a teacher's gender was identified from the student's schedule.

Throughout the study, participants characterized relational tendencies as central to teaching, particularly given the way they saw teachers—and the ways participants as teachers—appeared to frame or structure their interactions with students. Rachel and Alex both discussed advantages in being *friends* with their students, which included being personable and interesting as Ms. North was to Rachel, or even helping to build Alex's confidence to participate across his various classes. Referencing an interview by Kellaway (2018, May 18), Elsie talked about how important it was to have a *generous*

*heart* as a teacher, rather than fixating—as she felt Kellaway did—on teaching as the passage of knowledge regarding an academic subject. Ezequiel believed it important for teachers to know about students’ home lives and cultures, especially for immigrants and refugees, who might be adapting to school and living situations markedly different from where they hailed. Marie believed, as Mr. Turner had apparently told her and her classmates, that teaching was about knowing students as a *whole*, not just as students of mathematics, or art, or some other subject or interest. Their language and particular concerns varied, but participants all seemed to agree that teaching’s interactive nature required them to concern themselves with how they might interact with their own students, and what might be important within those interactions.

However, in each case, these interactions were characterized as instrumental: they served a purpose for teachers beyond cultivating a close, personal relationship with their students. Such interactions and relationships may have been important to teachers, even a priority for them as they conceptualized teaching and/or themselves as teachers, but they were, at the very least, simultaneously means to an end. This may sound a cynical rendering of what participants said in interviews, one that once again propagates an idea that could be regarded as simple and obvious, concisely—though hopefully not glibly—restated as *teaching has much to do with learning*. Instead, it reflects not a singular but a paramount focus amongst high school students interested in teaching careers on learning, much in the same way Wilson and Corbett (2007) found their secondary respondents described teaching in “remarkably consistent and elegantly simple” ways (p. 283), equating what the authors called *care* with *teaching* (p. 310). Participants in this study did not invoke the word *care* in their descriptions, but they did at times depict teaching as

supportive and nurturing work. Perhaps for high school students interested in teaching careers like these five participants, the instrumentality they sometimes see in teaching's relational tendencies and the structuring of interactions is an attempt, perhaps even an unconscious one, to give purpose to Ms. Honey's mushiness—to graft, or to reconcile, the often stereotypical images of teaching they have observed with an understanding of teaching as learning-centric work.

Yet the close association between teaching's relational elements and learning means that high school students interested in teaching careers may view teaching as something pulled in competing directions. Both participants' popular culture and media depictions or discussions, as well as their own descriptions, of teaching, surface tension between the relationships teachers cultivate and their focus on learning. The educators Dahl created in *Matilda*, briefly described by Rachel and Alex in their interviews, demonstrate this tension: Ms. Honey is someone everyone loves, while the principal is the person everyone fears since her focus appears to be on compliance to what students and teachers are *supposed* to do in class. In the Kellaway interview, Elsie described how two teachers argued about what was most important in teaching, *communicating* things to be learned or demonstrating *generous heart* with students. Participants likely did not need these depictions of teaching to describe a tension they observed in their own experiences with teachers and teaching, one described in different ways yet seeming to refer to the same sort of friction.

Participants did not appear to describe this tension or friction as a binary, though. Rachel saw Ms. North as *teacher enough*, someone who was a “friend as well as a teacher,” yet who at the same time “[was] not your friend *like that*” (Int 3, 32; Int 2, 326,



emphasis added). Elsie discussed how teachers *come across* to students, an ability to balance being “firm” and having “a degree of order during class” (Art I), which sounded similar to the way Alex talked about teachers *holding themselves* by taking their classes and students seriously. Thus, teaching to high school students interested in teaching careers may not be an either/or proposition between interactions and relationship-building and learning, but may instead be, in part, a matter of teachers positioning or balancing themselves between the two.

Teaching might even require the balancing of several different relational elements with learning, some of which had little to do with the teacher. For example, Marie depicted students as learners across a wide spectrum, who might learn math for 90 minutes but dedicated the majority of the day to other pursuits often outside of academic subjects or school altogether. Some teachers, like Mr. Turner, understood this, adjusting their interactions with, and perhaps even assignments for, students as a result of this understanding. Ezequiel also saw teachers who *knew the city* and their students make changes or provisions for students who might have possessed limited technological, or other, resources at home. For participants, teaching may not have been just about their personal like or dislike of a teacher, and the matter of learning at hand. Other relational factors may have been worth considering within episodes of teaching.

In their own teaching, participants were aware of these competing balancing acts, and at times struggled to achieve in their teaching a balance they viewed as successful. When confronting a student at the homeless shelter who had found, though was not permitted to possess, a pair of scissors, Elsie recognized that she needed to balance being “firm but kind,” which she was able to do by remaining calm as she spoke to the student

(Art I). Elsie's success was a contrast to Rachel's experience in her teaching internship, where students were overly conversational with her, and she struggled "to get them to understand that at this point I am more their teacher than their friend" (Art E). Her takeaway from the lesson was that it was important in teaching "to have strong relationships with your students," yet so, too, was the ability to "[maintain] a comfortable distance that allows for retention of control" (Art E). During the third interview, she described balance in terms of "treating [students] like an adult, and...also treating them like they're the student," which, to Rachel, required students to recognize that teachers "are in charge" (Int 3, 785-787). A common thread of compliance and control appears across Elsie's and Rachel's examples, appearing to reflect more of a concern for management than learning, though in Rachel's teaching internship such control seemed instrumental to learning, rather than an end unto itself.

High school students interested in teaching careers may not see teaching as primarily an affective activity or one based on interpersonal relationships, as scholars like Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, and Shaver (2005) have found with college-aged preservice teachers, yet this study strongly suggests they see teaching as inherently relational work. Relationships and interactions with students may be viewed as instrumental to learning, rather than intrinsically important or ends unto themselves, which may be an attempt to reconcile depictions of teaching they see with the emphasis they seem to place on learning. Once again, though, there may be differences in what high school students interested in teaching careers take away from their observations of others' teaching and their own teaching experiences. While participants appear to see teaching as a balancing act between teacher/student relations and learning, those actually

involved in different forms of teaching tended to focus more on compliance and control of students as they discussed the complex balancing acts they had to undertake in their teaching. This balancing act suggests a greater complexity, and difficulty, than simply classifying young people's views of teaching as primarily affective, emotional work or primarily efforts singularly focused upon learning. A large part of this complexity and difficulty comes from the view that teaching is about balancing these, as well as other, priorities teachers deem necessary or important.

### **Summary**

Directly observed and sometimes done by young people, and at other times something they inferred from episodes of learning, teaching sometimes appears to high school students like this study's five participants as something they are surrounded by throughout their lives. Yet teaching, despite its seeming ubiquity in their lives, takes definitive forms across certain episodes of teaching, leading young people to be able to discern teaching approaches, routines, and patterns, as well as a range of relations that often appear in episodes of teaching they observe. The structure of this chapter may leave the impression that these three categories are mutually exclusive, yet for young people this is rarely the case. Young people's capacities to discern approaches, routines, and patterns, and to identify relations, are cultivated across many hours of experience, culminating in greater clarity of certain facets of teaching. There are certainly examples of overlap between the categories, too. For example, Mr. Walters may have had trouble realizing "there's a time and a place" to talk socially, appearing to Rachel as though he "really wants to tell you about his life," conversations that often came at the expense of discernible approaches related to drum instruction (Int 2, 532-533). His comments about

foreign women may reflect a different relationship across categories: by making his bigoted remarks, he positioned himself with students in a very different way. Experienced across various contexts in their lives, approaches, routines, and patterns could influence relations between teachers and learners, and vice-versa.

A common thread running across each of the three categories described in this chapter is the focus on the person observing or doing some form of teaching. The seemingly ubiquitous category included participants' descriptions of teaching across their lives, both in formal education settings, but also in non-educational settings, or even in every day events in which participants identified episodes of teaching. Due at least in part to the many places they saw teaching taking place, participants viewed teaching and learning as intimately related, perhaps in some instances even conflating or confusing the two. Teaching was not always, or even often, a random event; in most of their descriptions, participants exhibited capacities to discern between different approaches, patterns, and routines in teaching, beginning to articulate a certain logic to teaching that they felt teachers needed to enact, and a logic that students had to recognize or read to some extent in order to learn. Teaching's interactive nature, through interactions with different people, subject-matter, and/or skills, led participants to see teaching as fundamentally relational work. Yet, despite this nature, as well as the different depictions or representations of teaching they had witnessed in their lives and in pop culture, participants may have attempted to reconcile the necessity of interaction with their consistently expressed focus upon learning as the core purpose of teaching.

Out of these categories, and the tension they sometimes demonstrated, came certain capacities and tendencies, which these participants possessed to different extents,

and which other high school students interested in teaching careers may also begin to develop during their pre-collegiate years. They may see teaching as unintentional, or as products of events around them consisting of what young people see as overt, though unintended, teaching acts. Within more typical episodes of teaching, they may exhibit capacities to read their teachers' various intentions in their teaching, or at least to believe that they can read these intentions. From these episodes, they can discern specific approaches in teaching, or routines and patterns within teaching, which they typically see as instigators of, or attempts to instigate, learning, unlike every day examples of teaching, which seem to be interpreted from their own learning in these situations. They may also exhibit different relational tendencies related to teaching, verbalizing feelings about teaching, accessing a collective set of feelings about episodes of teaching or specific teachers, and/or situating these feelings within the context in which they occur by evaluating the episodes based on what they have come to regard as contextually appropriate expectations. Greater exposure to or aptitude with these capacities and tendencies does not necessarily yield increased proficiency in teaching. Instead, exposure or aptitude may yield greater tension and uncertainty.

When such tension and uncertainty is encountered, high school students interested in teaching careers and their understandings of teaching could be seen as similar to professional teachers' understandings of teaching, specifically the chronic uncertainty attributed to the work (McDonald, 1992). In the relational category, participants in the study demonstrated some awareness of possible tensions teachers encounter between cultivating relationships with students and their responsibilities to/for learning, indicated by their references to *positioning*, *balancing*, and *holding themselves*. Much of this

tension resides within the teaching relationships teachers have with students; that is, they encounter the tension through their own practice, and in large part it is shaped by their actions. Professional teachers, coaches, and other individuals involved in teaching would likely admit that their work is powerfully shaped—and sometimes constrained—by forces beyond themselves and the context in which they teach. These forces represent additional layers of intersection, and sometimes tension, combining with those already mentioned to form an intricate web that must be navigated as one teaches. My analysis indicates that high school students interested in teaching careers may also be aware of these additional intersecting layers, which certainly warrants greater description than I can offer in this summary. In Chapter VI, I present two other categories that help to illustrate these layers, and how high school students interested in teaching careers may be aware of and/or navigating them.

## Chapter VI

TEACHING AS *PRIORITIZING* AND *DEPENDENT*

Though participants may have seen teaching in everyday situations around themselves, and within teaching they also discerned relational tendencies and qualities and particular approaches, routines, and patterns, they often times described the goal of teaching, at least in part, as more than the learning of subject-matter and/or skills. Teachers and coaches, in particular, were in many descriptions and artifacts characterized as interested, if not invested, in whatever it was they were teaching to other people, yet they may have used teaching to work toward multiple pursuits or goals. Some of these pursuits or goals dealt with learning, perhaps learning about life or learning how to interact with other people; other examples dealt with preparing young people for life, including tackling real world problems as adults. Despite these personal *priorities* held by teachers, as I will refer to them in the pages below, teachers were also bound by priorities, requirements, and obligations established, or heavily influenced, by others, perhaps hinted at in participant statements in which teachers were described as “doing what [they’re] supposed to [do] as a teacher” (Alex, Int 3, 381). Teaching, as participants described it, sometimes came down to decisions about what teachers were *supposed to do*

versus what they *wanted to do* with their teaching. In this chapter, I share a category including descriptions of the former, teaching as *prioritizing*, as well as a category describing the latter, teaching as *dependent*, again drawing attention to the tension found in teaching when priorities and dependencies clash, and the extent to which high school students interested in teaching careers may be aware of such tension.

### **Teaching as *Prioritizing***

By priorities, I mean to describe different purposes or emphases high school students interested in teaching careers find in or for teaching. Students become aware of these priorities primarily through their observations of teaching, from their readings of their teachers' teaching, specifically the intentions they see within their teachers' work. However, teachers' priorities are not always simply a product of students' readings of intent; in some instances, teachers made direct assertions to students regarding their purposes or emphases in teaching, which students could then corroborate with teachers' actions in the classroom. Teachers' priorities were typically elective, chosen as a result of their own experiences as students, or even products of single or various events within their own teaching over the years, while other times they might choose to take up the priorities or emphases *students* had for learning and teaching. Teaching, then, became an intersection point of various priorities or emphases of teachers and students, which, in some cases, were not compatible with one another. For students, teaching consisted of, or at least entailed, the balancing of students' and teachers' various priorities. Failure to do so—and particularly the ignoring of certain priorities—might result in clashes or tension within episodes of teaching.



### **Enacting a Priority: Meeting Learners' Needs**

Perhaps the best example of teachers enacting a priority might be the attempts participants recalled their teachers making to *meet learners' needs*, a priority participants seemed to portray as elective, rather than an inherent part of teaching, or a particular approach or administrative requirement. For participants, meeting learners' needs appeared to pit different elements of teaching against one another. One element of teaching surfaced by participants was the importance of certain types of knowledge, or knowing, in teaching. The movement of knowledge from teacher to student might even be considered a priority of its own for teachers, a way they conceptualized their subject and/or how the subject was taught to others, perhaps forming a sine qua non for the approaches, routines, and/or patterns teachers utilized in their teaching.

For example, Rachel and Marie both discussed the movement of knowledge, with both participants depicting movement from teacher to student. Teachers, according to Rachel, must have “knowledge about what they are teaching you” (Int 3, 279), a knowledge that, in Marie’s mind, included an awareness of “what you do need to know and what you don’t [need to know]” in a given topic or subject-matter (Int 2, 362). These characterizations of knowledge in teaching might suggest that participants viewed knowledge as a static, unchanging body, but knowledge appeared to participants in other forms as well; Ezequiel classified *being yourself* as a type of knowledge, something his sister made a point to “really [pass] down” to him, and that he admitted he “still use[s]” (Int 1, 470), though he animated this knowledge in his life in different ways than his sister, or Mr. Hunt, another proponent of *being yourself*, did in their lives. These different conceptualizations of knowledge and its movement influenced the conduct of different

episodes of teaching, sometimes requiring not just student assimilation of what participants considered to be knowledge, but its use or application as well, albeit in many cases in a formulaic or procedural manner.

The approaches participants believed teachers used in their teaching also suggest that teachers were balancing what was to be learned with their learners' needs, thus revealing a range of different teacher behaviors that constituted teaching. Teaching, in at least one case, involved almost no interpersonal interaction between teacher and student; Rachel recalled how Ms. North would sometimes use online platforms like Canvas to “[make resources] available to you, and then you can pick it up from there with the learning” (Int 2, 763). If problems were encountered Rachel and her peers only had to “ask her for [her help]” and she provided it, leaving “no way you won’t understand” what you needed to learn (Int 2, 333). Thus, online resources were used by teachers like Ms. North as a medium for teacher-student interactions, in the same way Google Classroom helped Marie’s teachers to provide feedback on essays, ranging from brief comments like “Good job on that” to more substantive, personalized remarks identifying “a piece of structure that maybe was there that I didn’t point out” (Int 2, 206). Teaching could also take the form of discussions on strategies used to engage source material, as when Mr. Terry polled Elsie and her online classmates on their approaches to reading challenging language in Shakespearean works. Another example was the *pushes* Ms. Pinkerton delivered, encouraging Elsie to interview and to learn from possible informants to supplement her research paper. These examples were more than mere technical moves teachers made; they appeared to demonstrate teachers’ attempts to enact their own

priorities to meet their learners' various needs, which not every episode of teaching or teacher attempted to do, in participants' views.

Other examples given by participants discussed prioritizing learners and their needs, even naming specific teaching approaches. Alex and Marie both asserted that teaching should start from the basic or the introductory and then progressively move towards the more complex, though the experiences with teaching they had that may have influenced their views were very different. While Alex had worked with a swim coach who had *segmented* his breaststroke into basic movements and encouraged him to “[work] on things and [perfect] each one” rather than engaging his stroke as a whole (Int 3, 25), Marie found Ms. Young, her AP Biology teacher, seldom situated her lessons within a bigger picture, leading Marie to believe that Ms. Young would be more effective if she had “introduced [students] to the information for the first time” instead of presenting so much of it at one time (Int 2, 355). By situating lessons within a bigger picture, teachers offered themselves opportunities to “elaborate, or, like, connect” students' questions and learning across lessons, helping them to “relate to what we're doing right now,” another approach Marie found important in teaching (Int 3, 205-206). Rachel and Alex also discussed “personal connections” (Rachel, Int 1, 132) and connecting basic information “to what you have” (Alex, Int 1, 285). These examples may not exemplify a singular focus on the manner in which teaching was carried out, instead reflecting certain orientations towards teaching, perhaps representing the kinds of *lay theories* Holt-Reynolds (1992) described as characteristic amongst students of teaching.

Though Holt-Reynolds (1992) also characterized lay theories as “beliefs developed naturally over time without the influence of instruction” (p. 326), participants'

descriptions of their experiences with teaching, particularly when they recall episodes of teaching in which they or others learned how to do something, suggest this definition is perhaps only partially correct. Participants recalled a number of episodes of teaching in which they were the learner and someone else was teaching them, including Ezequiel's father helping him learn to drive, Mr. Hunt teaching Ezequiel and his peers to be themselves, Marie's recollections of remedial instruction in communication while part of an IEP program, and Alex's descriptions of swim coaches who knew their athletes well and tailored lap sets and feedback to both individuals and the team as a whole. Whether orienting principles or lay theories, these episodes of teaching were not the kinds of gross generalizations Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) typically found amongst preservice teachers. Instead, they reflected concerns for both learning and learners' particular needs, and were thus grounded in particular episodes of teaching and learning, requiring different teaching tools across situations, rather than employing identical teaching approaches across episodes, as though they were a single hammer that could be used to effectively strike every nail.

Just by looking at conceptualizations of knowledge and meeting learners' needs as two priorities in teaching present across participants' descriptions of teaching, a range of possibilities begins to come into focus. For high school students interested in teaching careers, teaching may involve a wide array of teacher actions, from making resources available to providing feedback on assignments to changing certain activities or approaches because of trends they notice in individual learners or small groups within a larger class or team. When learning centers on how to perform a particular operation or skill, some students may see a need for teaching to be more personalized or tailored,

views of teaching that, for participants in this study, were often influenced by one-on-one or small group interactions with different types of teachers, though this was not always the case. Teaching, at times, also could appear in forms that led participants to conclude teachers were not prioritizing learners' needs; Alex estimated that "a good 60%" of his teachers were ineffective primarily because they had gotten "lazy" and "stop[ped] to care" about their students and what they may have needed (Int 2, 379-380), perhaps inferred from the *distribution* mold of teaching he observed, or, for Rachel, the *fact, fact, lecture, fact* approach she sometimes observed teachers using. Experiencing such *ineffective* teaching, described at one time or another by all five participants, did not necessarily prevent participants from cultivating normative views of teaching very much at odds with what they observed from own teachers and their teaching, a realistic possibility for other high school students interested in teaching careers who pursue formal study in teaching and education.

The focus on meeting learners' needs was not only witnessed by participants as they interacted with their own teachers, but something considered within their own teaching. In the previous section, I described how Marie changed her approach with her chemistry tutee, offering her own descriptions instead of continuing to use the teacher's approach, which had been unsuccessful. Elsie taught knitting to her father and friends, and ultimately to a group of young people at a homeless shelter. Their successes appear to contrast Rachel's teaching in her history internship, in which she sometimes had trouble balancing learning within the class and her relationships with students, most of whom were just a few years younger than her, as opposed to the greater age differential between most teachers and learners. Within these episodes of teaching conducted by high

school students interested in teaching careers lie successes or failures to examine, as well as the particular contexts in which successes or failures occur; in the above examples, participants appear to find more success personalizing or tailoring their teaching within one-on-one or small group teaching contexts. By grounding teaching in particular priorities, high school students interested in teaching careers can describe and begin to analyze their own episodes of teaching, while also examining teaching they have observed that is similar or different to their efforts.

### **Other Priorities in Teaching: The Real World, Fun, and Engagement**

Teaching is described and analyzed through the priorities described above, as well as other priorities, some of which are shared through students' perspectives on learning, or the kinds of learning teachers endeavor to bring about with their students through teaching. For example, Marie and Ezequiel discussed teaching and education as essential to preparing people for something more important than mastery of a given class, content area, or set of skills. Teaching played a part in preparing young people for *life*, including the various challenges they might one day confront as adults and citizens. Some of these challenges required academic knowledge and skills in order to complete everyday tasks, like "doing the taxes" instead of being taught things "you could just learn...and then just throw it away" (Ezequiel, Int 2, 165-171). For high school students interested in teaching careers like Ezequiel, and perhaps for others, classes like Business Math, and even Legal Studies, necessitated teaching focused on real world needs and happenings, as the classes appeared to be intended to provide direct understanding of tasks or challenges students would encounter as adults. Marie described teaching as providing more indirect support for future challenges, ideally offering students opportunities "to be able to solve problems

on their own” without a list of choices (Int 3, 105), something they would have to do as adults. Teaching and learning activities in school, then, should involve identified content and skills, yet should, above all else, develop the ability to think and to solve problems. The influence of the *real world*, as a priority in teaching identified by Ezequiel and Marie, demonstrates one clear example of how high school students interested in teaching careers appear to reference a similar priority, yet see its enactment in teaching in dramatically different ways.

In other instances, preparing people for life entailed non-academic skills, and dealt with problems much different than the societal issues Marie vaguely referenced in her interviews. In both her Snapshot of Learning, as well as across her interviews, Marie recalled how Mr. Turner made concerted efforts to prompt students to look beyond mathematics, the class he taught them, telling students to “kind of just like focus on the bigger picture” rather than “stupid mistakes” in classes that might lead to “bad grade[s] on quiz[z]es” (Int 2, 381-382). Marie offered another example of a teacher focused on the bigger picture, a Physical Education teacher who made what Marie regarded as intentional efforts to help students develop “certain skills of, like, not just running away from problems but, like, how to confront them head on and, like, in an appropriate manner” (Int 1, 353). A third example was her volleyball coaches, who worked with Marie and her teammates to overcome obstacles both inside and outside of volleyball and the team. Although Marie’s examples may weave real world problem solving into a complicated web of priorities and possible influences on teaching, she also appeared to use her observations of teaching to disentangle and unpack this priority and the different ways she saw it enacted in teaching, illustrating approaches a high school student

interested in teaching careers could employ to read teachers' intentions, assess their teaching, and reference different episodes of teaching to begin to articulate a particular priority's influence on their views of teaching.

Another priority, making teaching *fun* or *engaging*, offered a window into how high school students interested in teaching careers might assess teaching as Marie did. Fun was mentioned multiple times by participants in the study. For example, Rachel described her father's university teaching as "fun and energetic" (Int 3, 731-732), an energy she sought to emulate in her own teaching by "com[ing] up with fun ways to learn things and do stuff" (Int 1, 79). Marie also found it important for teachers to try and "[make] the lesson fun for students" (Int 1, 147), something Alex believed he had to improve on following his teaching assignment in his Environmental Science class. For participants, *fun* was often paired with *engagement*; teaching potentially yielded fun in the classroom when "different lessons [were taught] in various ways" (Marie, Int 3, 233) and "the entire class [was] involved" (Alex, Int 1, 156-158). For Alex, engagement became a greater priority after his teaching assignment, and the feedback his teacher gave him. As his teacher encouraged him to avoid lecturing by involving students more in the class's activities, Alex came to see the teacher's feedback as originating from a comparison of her own teaching and several priorities he inferred from her teaching, like being "energetic," "get[ting] the entire class involved," and making the class "fun" (Int 1, 156-158). Priorities in teaching may not only influence, if not drive, the way teaching is carried out by practitioners, but they also appear to offer a tool for experienced teachers and high school students interested in teaching careers to discuss teaching and how it might be improved in the future.



### **Teachers' and Students' Priorities Intersecting in Teaching**

Alex's teaching in Environmental Science not only shows how high school students interested in teaching careers can employ priorities to discuss and assess teaching, but it also shows how these priorities may shift over time. Even before his teaching experience in Environmental Science, Alex had witnessed such shifts, seemingly within a single class period. Alex described Ms. Kluivert, his eighth grade algebra teacher, as a "really interactive" teacher, one who would never "just [drone] on and, like, lecture" (Int 2, 238). On one memorable occasion, she had set up a graphing activity for students to individually complete. When students clamored for group work, Alex recalled how Ms. Kluivert "would never just shake it off" (Int 2, 258), and on this particular occasion she evaluated students' request by "looking at her computer, and...writing it down and...actually check[ing] by herself if [the assignment] was doable in groups" (Int 2, 261). While her initial priorities beyond students learning about graphing algebraic equations were apparently not revealed to Alex, or at least *by* him in interviews, Ms. Kluivert did appear to Alex to weigh different priorities, undertaking an effort that seemed similar to Alex's reflections on his own teaching in Environmental Science and his teacher's feedback on the episode of teaching. High school students interested in teaching careers do not necessarily see teaching as completely restrained by, or excessively dogmatic concerning, their teaching priorities, which may be malleable, in teachers' reflections on what they had done, or even in the midst of an episode of teaching.

Ms. Kluivert's on-the-spot assessment of group work within her teaching suggests that high school students interested in teaching careers may observe episodes of teaching

reflecting both teachers' priorities as well as those of their students. In the case of the graphing activity, Ms. Kluivert may have initially sought to have students learn how to graph certain algebraic equations, with the problems in the activity perhaps intended as an efficient approach allowing students to practice reading and graphing equations. However, when students shared something important to at least a few students in the class—working collaboratively—Ms. Kluivert re-evaluated the activity; as she did this, Alex believed she considered at least two factors, including how a group of students might negotiate the assignment together, and how the exchange of ideas between students might aid them (and be “a good skill to have” and continue developing through the activity) (Int 2, 293). Through this interaction with students, Ms. Kluivert became aware of at least one of students', or a subset of the class's students', priorities, and the interaction seemed to lead her to reconsider some of her own priorities, and ultimately contributed to a change in her teaching approach within this episode of teaching.

Having had experiences like the one Alex detailed with Ms. Kluivert, or perhaps Ezequiel's recollections of Ms. Dyer offering the theater class the freedom to act out a play almost entirely on its own, high school students interested in teaching careers may see teaching as a point of intersection between their personal priorities and the priorities of their teachers. The extent to which teachers are aware of students' priorities, as well as the extent to which students believe they are, or are in fact made, aware of their teachers' priorities in teaching, appears to be highly variable. In at least a percentage of episodes of teaching—and perhaps a much larger percentage for students like Alex, given his assertion that 60% of his teachers were ineffective—teachers either may not be aware of students' priorities or expectations for learning, or they may feel apathetic towards these

priorities or expectations. At other times, like Alex's experiences with Ms. Kluivert, priorities of teachers and students may be strategically weighed, and from this evaluation teaching may be changed within an episode of teaching. The classroom, the athletic field or court, and countless other settings where teaching takes place are, minimally, points of intersection, where the priorities of teachers and students at least inhabit the same space, and in at least some cases are revealed, discussed, combined, and/or amended.

### **Framing Assessments of Teaching**

There are also clashes between competing priorities and expectations, which high school students interested in teaching careers sometimes use to frame their evaluations of teaching, including assessments of episodes of teaching as *good* or *bad* teaching. Marie offered two examples of these clashes between priorities, one involving her former volleyball coach Ricky Matthews. To Marie, coaching should be centered around "a greater purpose" than "racking up more wins" (Art G, 11), a purpose coinciding with Marie's view that teaching should prepare learners for life, rather than specific academic classes or sports matches. In Ricky Matthews, Marie saw a coach completely fixated on winning, and the tension between her priorities for coaching and the priorities she saw in Matthews' coaching likely contributed to her belief that Matthews should not be coaching given how he treated young athletes in his pursuit of wins. Another example can be seen in Marie's descriptions of her AP Biology teacher, Ms. Young. In a class where Marie believed acceptable performance required students to successfully interpret data and apply skills, rather than repeat information from a textbook, she found she was "not taught to do [interpreting and application]" (Int 2, 260), with textbook readings, guided notes, and teacher PowerPoints focused more on static information, which was "very

frustrating” to Marie since teaching in the class did not appear to prepare learners for the class’s challenges (Int 2, 242). Marie’s frustration was not exclusively, or even predominately, concerned with learning; she sought to perform better on the Advanced Placement exam at the end of the year to further her college ambitions, and Ms. Young’s teaching, as Marie described much of it during the study, appeared to be a roadblock, or at least a formidable challenge.

These clashes or tensions obviously create fundamental challenges in teaching for both the teacher and the taught. Marie’s examples above illustrate how differences in priorities for teaching lead not just to tension but failures, challenges, or fears related to accomplishing one’s goals; although Marie sought out Ms. Young in tutorial periods to supplement her in-class teaching, and to help develop Marie’s negotiation of interpreting and application questions, other high school students, whether interested in teaching careers or otherwise, might not be so willing to exert extra effort, or to sacrifice what is important to them, thus prolonging and/or exacerbating the initial clash or tension. Priorities are potentially problematic in teaching given that they may often contain agentive, if not radical, aims; yet if these agentive or radical priorities are at odds with the priorities of other teachers and/or students, they may lead to tension, conflict, and significant hurdles for all parties to pursue the priorities they may hold, be they agentive, radical, or otherwise.

I do not mean to suggest that teachers—or teacher educators, for that matter—should resist desires or orientations towards their respective priorities out of fear for how students might respond. However, an unwillingness to ascertain students’ own priorities, and how these might be similar to or different from a teacher’s own priorities, might

damn the teacher's efforts to failure before they begin. It is also worth repeating that high school students interested in teaching careers often read intentions and priorities on their own, which suggests that it is important for teachers to make statements about priorities, and how and why they might be enacted in teaching and learning, in order to surface and subsequently negotiate possible clashes.

Through the reading of their teachers' priorities in their actions, as well as direct statements made by teachers about what is important to them in teaching, high school students interested in teaching careers can see teaching as an intersection point of various priorities. Most often—perhaps even always—these priorities involve learning, including the choice of what is learned or emphasized in teaching and how teaching is carried out. Yet students may also see other priorities in teaching, like a focus on real world problems, preparing students for adult lives, providing a fun and engaging environment, and perhaps others. Episodes of teaching thus serve as a meeting point of priorities, but the extent to which these priorities interact depends on how they are discussed and negotiated by teachers and learners. Although this section may suggest that teachers and learners are ultimately in sole control of these negotiations over priorities, high school students interested in teaching careers also seem to be aware of other factors shaping, constraining, and/or preventing these negotiations, and how teaching is often impacted by a series of dependencies external to the day-to-day interactions of teachers and learners within episodes of teaching.

### **Teaching as *Dependent***

When high school students interested in teaching careers interact with teachers, they encounter not just an intersection of priorities in and for teaching and learning, but

the various actors and organizations that shape the context(s) in which teaching takes place. Up to this point, I have shared many examples of teachers' influence over teaching, yet teaching was not described by these young people as something entirely in teachers' control, either. Throughout interviews, participants discussed how learners helped to shape the forms teaching took and the quality of experience they had within episodes of teaching, influences that went beyond the acknowledgement and/or pursuit of student priorities identified at the end of the previous section. Students could impact teaching through their presence in the classroom, and the extent to which they participated within episodes of teaching.

Whether immersed in or resisting teaching and learning, or even participating with a level of interest and commitment somewhere in between these extremes, participants saw teaching indelibly affected by rules, policies, trends, and even ongoing or recent events, many of which originated or occurred far away from the site where participants experienced teaching on a regular, if not daily, basis. Though these external factors created or facilitated certain dependencies on teaching that were sometimes useful to teaching, more often they seemed to constrain teaching, particularly priorities teachers, and even students, sought to pursue within episodes of teaching. Such dependencies could turn the intersections high school students interested in teaching careers may see in teaching to adversarial situations, in which teachers appear compelled to adopt undesirable forms or practices, and/or teachers are placed in situations in which they must sacrifice, or at least make concessions involving, their own priorities for teaching.

### Experiences and Biographies as Dependencies

The person teaching, of course, played a fundamental role in episodes of teaching, yet the teacher may have drawn from, or even been bound by, people, communities, or even biographical factors beyond the classroom. In his third interview, Ezequiel said that Ms. Dyer “goes to conferences,” where she “gets...idea[s] from different teachers”; in fact, the idea of conferences for teachers, as Ezequiel understood it, was so “different teachers can help each other out a lot” (Int 3, 490). While not a dependency in the strictest sense, in that the conference itself directly shaped episodes of teaching, Ezequiel’s descriptions of conferences help to show an awareness of a broader community of teachers, who could affect what happened in episodes of teaching Ezequiel experienced, as he believed was the case in the activity contrasting *The Wizard of Oz* with *The Wiz*, an idea he claimed Ms. Dyer brought back from a conference. In a very different example, Elsie identified what may have been an unconscious influence from outside of teaching. She recalled how Kellaway, in her interview piece, identified herself as a former journalist, a job that required her to “find faults in the system” (Int 3, 286), something Elsie seemed to think Kellaway carried forward into her teaching work, in which she seemed to Elsie to be more fixated on students’ flaws. In Elsie’s example, the dependency seems to be biographical, not necessarily something Kellaway was bound to but, in her case, an experience that may have made Kellaway successful in one job yet less successful in teaching, at least in Elsie’s view.

Students’ own biographies, as well as their interests and/or aspirations for the future, also helped to define certain episodes of teaching. In the mock trial simulations in his Legal Studies class, Ezequiel recalled how “a couple of students didn’t really care,” as

they had been assigned the class and had little to no interest in it, and spent the entire simulation talking to each other and virtually ignoring the simulation itself, prompting the teacher to serve a role as arbiter of appropriate behavior and on occasion asking uninterested students to leave the classroom. As with teachers, biographical factors amongst students may have had more unconscious or subtle effects on episodes of teaching. Alex recalled on several occasions his parents' admonitions to "build good habits" and "get these good scores so we can set up for a good life" (Int 1, 124), similar to Ezequiel's parents, who encouraged him to "finish school, finish strong" in order to pursue college and work opportunities he desired (Int 3, 510-513). At least due in part to parents serving as a sort of biographical influence, Alex and Ezequiel concentrated on their studies, portraying themselves as cooperative with their teachers, at a minimum.

Alex even attributed parental influence to a cultural or societal "pressure" (Int 3, 182). During his interviews, he shared how he had noticed over the years that the parents of his Asian friends "have strict expectations for them" and "push harder" when it came to school (Int 3, 168-172). In many cases, Alex believed this pressure resulted in Asian children "work[ing] harder for school" and "focus[ing] a lot" (Int 3, 176-180). Characterizing Asian students as hardworking, high achieving, and overcontrolled—in effect exemplifying what Chang and Demyan (2007), and others, have referred to as the "model minority stereotype of Asian Americans" (pp. 92-93)—Alex's comments, along with Ezequiel's, depicted teaching as influenced, at least indirectly, by student interest and biography.

Student and teacher biographies, including racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds, were not always cast in such stereotypical terms. Rachel described Bell



Heights and the surrounding Midway Village community as “a very white town,” perhaps even “one of the whitest areas in history” (Int 3, 454, 416); though she made this last comment with a laugh, Rachel asserted that teaching and learning were limited at Bell Heights since students interacted with so few teachers of color, or teachers from different communities, which, when Rachel had encountered such teachers, had sometimes led to “really deep conversations about race, and about whatever was going on in the government and the world” (Int 3, 487). Rachel lamented that, at Bell Heights, “you don’t get that from anybody else” (Int 3, 490), save for the few foreign language teachers who were raised outside Midway Village. Teaching was constrained for students of color at Bell Heights as well, as these students were “surrounded by white people, white teachers, [and] white peers,” including the public display of racialized images like “six or seven Confederate flags on cars in the parking lot” (Int 3, 480-481). In Rachel’s descriptions, there was evidence of a burgeoning ability to “[build] empathy and new understandings” with/for students and teachers of color, and an absence of what Picower (2009) referred to as the *tools of Whiteness*, approaches employed “to protect and maintain dominant and stereotypical understandings of race” (p. 197).

### **Cultural and Structural Dependencies**

Race represents a complex and challenging dependency on teaching for high school students interested in teaching careers. Part of the challenge scholars like Chang and Demyan (2007), Picower (2009), and others have found in confronting race and racism with prospective teachers surely is its distance from prospective teachers’ lives and its relevance to learning. Alex framed Asians as a homogenized group, which had developed expectations for schooling, working, and their children elsewhere, something

that Alex “[did not] think...goes away when they come here” to the United States (Int 3, 184). As the child of immigrants, Alex appeared to see similarities in his parents’ attitudes about school, which may have helped to normalize a stereotypical view of Asians. In Rachel’s case, there was a belief, as Wenger and Dinsmore (2005) found amongst many preservice teachers, that students—and also teachers—of color brought important perspectives to school, perspectives Rachel found absent on a day-to-day basis at Bell Heights that could contribute valuable teaching and learning experiences. It was also troubling to Rachel how students of color rarely encountered teachers of color, as she admitted it was “uncomfortable” to be the only white person in a room, and could not imagine encountering that phenomenon “my whole life” and the anger it might produce (Int 3, 477-478). The key difference between the two may be the empathy and learning focus in Rachel’s descriptions versus Alex’s emphasis on *doing school*. This difference suggests that discussions of race and racism in teacher education may benefit by framing race as a dependency on teaching, effectively an inhibitor on learning for all students, and thus a dependency students of teaching may find more difficult to defend with the kinds of *tools of Whiteness* Picower (2009) described.

In addition to appearing to high school students interested in teaching careers as a biographical or cultural factor, race may be presented by students as a structural component of schools and communities, a description that might categorize another series of dependencies on teaching. Rachel’s framing of race as an individual characteristic was mentioned above; it was individual white students who affixed Confederate flags on their cars. Yet the student body and teaching faculty were overwhelmingly white because Midway Village was “highly concentrated with white people,” which Rachel believed

was the case because white people were “far more comfortable with staying concentrated” (Int 3, 461), creating the very racial demography and challenges she described.

Marie connected the racial composition of “mostly white” Wakefield County to the fact that the county was “really...wealthy” (Int 3, 257-258). Whiteness and wealth, or perhaps what Marie may have seen as the intersection between the two, may have framed and powered expectations at Wakefield High School, namely parents’ expectations that their children succeed in school, score high on tests, and advance to college. Race and class did not appear as resources, or even constraints, to learning, as Marie seemed to strictly depict them as structural characteristics of the county and school, structures that were apparently not elements of the invisible hand evident in her descriptions, which pushed teaching and learning, among other functions and events, towards competition and college, and thus were not viewed as individual or personal characteristics to be surfaced and/or examined and from which students and teachers could learn.

Other structural dependencies, like the type of school a teacher taught in, were seen by certain participants as directly consequential to an individual teacher’s behavior. Rachel and Elsie attended Montessori and Waldorf schools, respectively, during their elementary school years; to Rachel, Montessori education was “an extension of your life” where students and teachers “have more freedom” and teaching activities were “super laid-back” (Int 1, 696-697, 618), whereas Elsie saw Waldorf schools as “centered around...not as much technology,” with a focus on what she described as “nature and, um...learning” (Int 1, 230-231). Teaching and learning activities seemed to hold a different significance to each participant. As demonstrated by the *marshmallow lesson*,

Rachel believed Montessori teachers were bound by dependencies tied to specific approaches, like homework—which “is not a thing in Montessori, because research shows it’s counterproductive” (Int 1, 619)—apparently leaving Montessori teachers with the freedom to devise their own approaches for lessons. In the case of Waldorf, it sometimes seemed to Elsie that “you weren’t quite sure if you were...learning” while engaging in activities like “singing songs and things,” though Elsie also pointed out that these kinds of activities “no doubt helped” (Int 1, 311-312). Though different in their approach and influence, Montessori and Waldorf seemed to yield a distinctive approach from teachers, something students could access and “get...back” by “spend[ing] more time in a Montessori school” (Rachel, Int 3, 824), or that teachers could “[try] to kind of...do” or replicate in their teaching (Elsie, Int 1, 425).

As one might expect, students who attended public schools throughout their academic careers—and perhaps lacked the point of comparison Rachel and Elsie had—attributed the characteristics of public schools to situations and events rather than the type of school. At Truman School, Ezequiel reported re-emphasis on rules, which he noticed when the principal was dismissed and a team of district level administrators managed the school while a replacement was sought; this re-emphasis trickled down to the classroom level as well, where Ezequiel saw his Communication Arts teacher having to “start being more strict because more rules are, like, applying to our school” (Int 2, 313). Rachel seemed to attribute the emphasis on rules at Bell Heights to its status as a public school. “It’s the bathroom,” she said, almost sounding incredulous that rules concerning hall passes and movement between parts of the school even existed. Discussing the bathroom

and pass regulations, she asked rhetorically, “What do you think I’m going to do? It’s right there” (Int 1, 658).

When students discuss rules in general, they seem to associate their enforcement as a characteristic of schools, or perhaps the product of administrative fiat, unlike the enforcement of rules by individual teachers, who are often portrayed as enforcing rules and consequences as a means towards learning. One exception was Elsie’s recollections of her conversations with Lilian on English schools, which Elsie found “kind of strict and intense” (Int 2, 69), with teaching sometimes done through shaming, as Lilian had experienced in her physical education class when demonstrating a particular movement. The *strictness* and *intensity* had prompted the *feelings class*, “where everyone sits in a circle and they’re supposed to discuss their feelings” (Int 2, 75), an effort Elsie and Lilian viewed as fatally flawed, given teachers’ responses to student-offered feelings, like “that’s not a good feeling” (Int 2, 78). The class, as Elsie described it, was the school’s response to a situation the school itself had created and teachers continued to exacerbate.

### **Structural Dependencies, Learning to Teach, and Teaching Approaches**

Rachel clearly believed the issue with public schools was not simply the emphasis on rules and control, but a form of teaching she believed was woven into the fabric of public schools, and their teachers, over time. She contrasted how volume was taught at her Montessori school and how it was taught in the public school, the latter, according to Rachel, using worksheets exclusively, rather than a more interactive approach like measuring marshmallows. Public school teachers taught through worksheets, Rachel asserted, “[c]ause that’s how they do it” in public schools, a reality existing in public schools “[b]ecause that public school teacher grew up in a public school” (Int 1, 655-

656). Her comments about public school teachers could easily be framed as direct testimony of Lortie's (1975/2002) finding that teachers hold "a preference for doing things as they have been done in the past" (p. 209), which Hargreaves (2009) later clarified as "the retention of traditional and familiar practices in the face of...innovation" (p. 150). What is most significant in Rachel's remarks is not their similar framing of teachers and teaching to Lortie's (1975/2002) findings, but instead the possibilities they suggest concerning high school students interested in teaching careers and their beliefs about teaching. For Rachel and other students, teacher education, should they pursue it, may not be just an intersection point between their conceptions of teaching and teacher educators' conceptions of teaching, but also a meeting of different conceptions of how teachers learn to teach, or at least how they come to do the things they do as teachers.

Teachers' lack of preparation to teach certain classes or subjects was addressed in Ezequiel's comments about his teachers and the school district, reflecting additional layers of dependency teachers faced. In his second interview, he asserted that school districts "choose everything we learn" (Int 2, 185), stipulating what would be taught in schools, part of which appeared to be done through the choice of textbooks for teachers. Ezequiel touched on several instances at Truman School in which teachers were teaching a class or subject they "had no idea how to teach in because they weren't, like, certified in that certain topic," yet found themselves "put in those, like, positions to, like, teach kids these things" (Int 2, 187-189). For these teachers, who Ezequiel learned about through newspaper articles based on anonymous informants at the school, textbooks became an essential crutch for developing lesson plans and teaching, "because [the teachers in these positions] didn't really have anything else to use" (Int 2, 187). Thus, the

school and district shaped teaching by assigning teachers to certain classes—even those they were not prepared to teach—and by choosing subjects, classes, and apparently textbooks as well.

Within his descriptions, Ezequiel, like Rachel, suggested teachers learned something about teaching at some point before these out-of-certification assignments. The nature of the components of this learning, perhaps consisting of subject-matter knowledge and/or awareness of resources, given how Ezequiel portrayed textbooks as a necessary resource for these teachers, was unclear. Alex, though, warned that textbook dependency could be harmful to teaching, as teachers might exhibit a tendency to simply “tell you what pages to do” (Int 310-312), teaching by essentially distributing textbook pages and activities. For Ezequiel and Alex, the textbook was not a substitute for preparation to teach academic subjects, but instead one too often used as a crutch or easily accessible instructional resource.

### **Dependences from Outside Schools: Technology and Testing**

Dependencies brought into schools from the broader society also affected teaching, yielding results participants found to be positive and negative in teaching. “[W]e’re finding more ways to use technology for, like, significant reasons,” Ezequiel explained, referring to society in general (Int 3, 234), with applications in schools as well as the broader society. Laptops, for example, allowed schools to supplement students’ and their families’ resources, “cause not every kid has, like, internet at home” (Int 3, 234). At Truman School, computer access was crucial. According to Ezequiel, some teachers believed that “when [students] see [assignments] on the screen, they’re gonna do it” (Int 3, 263), which was less likely, in their view, to happen when using paper-based

assignments. Many teachers consistently used online platforms like AcademicsOnline to share resources and work, and to grade assignments, which Marie and Alex encountered in their school contexts as well, which made heavy use of Google Classroom. “[I]f I don’t have my ChromeBook I’m screwed throughout the day,” Marie told me with a laugh, also referencing a major shift that had occurred at the school from the Moodle platform to Google Classroom (Int 2, 219). Alex linked technology as a dependency to teacher learning, finding younger teachers were, by and large, the ones “trying to apply Google Classroom to their teaching,” something that “just...came up in teaching these past couple of years, which some teachers had first encountered in college (Int 3, 211). The technology’s newness meant teachers had to “figur[e] it out as they go,” something Alex appreciated since these teachers were “trying to, like, you know, open new doors for teaching” (Int 3, 213-214).

Testing was another major dependency on teaching, one focused on its results. Alex feared, to some degree, living in a society “that’s so focused around these tests,” and among the consequences he saw from testing’s prevalence in schools was that “teaching’s become less of a...giving knowledge, and it’s more like just preparing kids for these tests” (Int 3, 290). He explained what might be considered a theory of change in schools, at least as he saw it, where tests existed “so [students] can do good,” and also so “[teachers] can keep their jobs, and then they make their school better just because they have better test scores” (Int 3, 290). In Pennsylvania’s Keystone Exams, Ezequiel saw similar motivations, with all of students’ hard work in school “get[ting] ruined by a standardized test that tries to define, like, our intelligence” (Int 3, 333), while also



allowing teachers to “make them[selves] look good” based on the results of the tests (Int 3, 347).

Yet, for at least one participant, testing also impacted teaching on a day-to-day basis. As Ezequiel saw it, the Keystone Exams, and whoever created them, helped teachers to “know what they wanna teach,” which included establishing goals for teachers and students (Int 3, 348). Teachers integrated these goals into their teaching by “hav[ing] their lesson plan set up for that” goal or content (Int 3, 349). When test scores did not meet expectations, Ezequiel believed that the reason for failure “goes back to your teaching,” which he explained by telling me that “*they* go back and try to change the way you teach I guess, and they try to change what you’re teaching” (Int 3, 351, emphasis added). It was unclear in the interview who Ezequiel meant by *they*, yet the negative outcomes he saw for teachers teaching classes with unsatisfactory test scores was clearly stated: “it will backlash you if your class does bad on it” (Int 3, 352).

### **Navigating Dependencies and Loss in Teaching**

Testing may not only impact how teachers carry out teaching, but high school students interested in teaching careers also are likely to see its influence on them as students. Ezequiel’s reference to tests as a metric of student intelligence would certainly be one example of this influence. Although she was also critical of testing’s effects on teaching, though like Ezequiel without necessarily identifying a particular arbiter or enforcer of consequences, Rachel stood alone among the study’s participants in the way she talked about testing’s effect on *her* thoughts related to teaching. The blame for her seemed to rest at a systemic level, on “this one structure and all the teachers kind of forget anything that they were gonna do because they have to be focused on all the

testing” (Int 3, 827). Her experiences in public schools created for Rachel a sense of loss when it came to teaching. “Like, when I was younger,” she started to explain, “I would have thought of a million ways you could remedy using a test.” Yet, in recent years, “after being in the public school system,” Rachel found that she “literally had trouble thinking of a different way to teach” (Int 1, 674). One approach she thought might help her to “[set] up a course...without having tests there in place” was to “spend some time in a Montessori school again *to get that back*” (Int 3, 824, emphasis added), an apparent reference to teaching that was centered on students’ interest, and much less reliant on testing and the *structure* Rachel found so pervasive and unpalatable in public schools.

Across these examples of dependencies, participants consistently seemed to cast teaching as something that was not entirely within the power of a particular teacher, and the factors influencing a given episode of teaching were seldom, if ever, exactly the same. Teachers came to the classroom with their own backgrounds and experiences, some of which might include accessing broader communities and networks of teachers, possibly bringing others’ ideas and influence into episodes of teaching. Teaching typically involved groups of learners and students, who brought their own experiences and priorities as well, and whose cooperation could help or hinder teaching. But there were factors that shaped teaching, some produced geographically close to the site where teaching took place, like school administrators or curriculum choices and rules, while others might have occurred many miles away and found or forced their way into schools, like testing. High school students interested in teaching careers may view different dependencies as more consequential to teaching than others, but if they are like this study’s participants, they may see teaching as a process of navigating and negotiating

particular dependencies, done in light of teachers' own priorities and sometimes even those of students as well.

Out of these dependencies comes not just a process of navigating and negotiating in teaching, but also depictions or portrayals of what it is to learn to teach. High school students interested in teaching careers certainly hold conceptions of teaching, though these understandings may vary considerably from person to person, yet they also appear to develop certain understandings of what it is to learn to teach, which are also very different across individuals. A common thread across Rachel's characterization of public school teachers as purveyors of a *generational transmission* of approaches like workbook-based teaching, Ezequiel's descriptions of instructional changes in light of poor test scores, and Alex's discussion of learning to make productive use of Google Classroom is the presence and role of some other individual in learning; at some point, whether as K-12 students, college/university students, or practicing teachers, some other individual stepped in and provided a model, data and feedback, and/or instruction related to teaching. Each example also reflects a continuous view of experience from student to teacher, as students may, in part, continue to hold such views should they become teachers, a continuity contrary to the discontinuous framework characteristic of many other professions (Hughes, 1958; Lortie, 1975/2002).

The characterizations above do not reflect a unitary or complete understanding of what it is to learn to teach, but they do suggest that high school students interested in teaching careers—from their awareness of dependencies in/on teaching, or their teachers adapting to these dependencies—believe they are aware of when, and sometimes how, their own teachers learn to teach, or learn parts of teaching. They may demonstrate, as

Rachel did, an awareness of their *own* learning as teachers, and how this learning shifts—or even is *lost*—over time. Rachel’s case even illustrates how this awareness may lead students to formulate approaches to continue, or perhaps to remediate, their own learning as teachers.

### Summary

For high school students interested in teaching careers, episodes of teaching typically seem to be regarded as an intersection point between what teachers want to do, or their priorities in teaching, and what they must do, represented by the various dependencies of teaching. These categories of description help to reveal other capacities young people may develop in their pre-collegiate years. The priorities they infer from their teachers’ teaching, and/or those that teachers explicitly name, combine with students’ own priorities, intersections that help to form the basis for assessments of teaching performance. Within their experiences with teaching, participants also see how, or if, teachers navigate various dependencies that shape or constrain teaching, from students’ behavior to the testing regime that dictates so much of what happens in schools. While these experiences may help to situate tension or conflict between priorities and dependencies as normal, everyday features of teaching, they also help to reveal participants’ beliefs about how teachers learn to teach.

As with the categories presented in the previous chapter, teaching as *dependent* and teaching as *prioritizing* should not be understood as mutually exclusive.

Dependencies can potentially shape priorities, at least as young people infer them from teacher behavior. For example, Alex mentioned that several younger teachers at his school had adopted Google Classroom, something he claimed the teachers were required

to use during their college/university studies, and perhaps in teacher preparation programs. From their continued use of such technologies, Alex appeared to infer that the use of technology in their teaching was prioritized by these younger teachers, even describing them as part of a group of pedagogical pioneers who were *figuring out* how to develop specific teaching approaches that incorporated (or were compatible with) Google Classroom. While dependencies might shape priorities, the latter, as conceptualized in this study, could not shape the former, since dependencies were mandates or structures with which teachers had to contend. However, for young people, both dependencies and priorities related to teaching can appear influential to teaching approaches, routines, and patterns, as well as relations between teachers and learners.

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to conceptions of learning to teach as something distinct from conceptions of teaching. In a strict phenomenographic sense, perhaps this was an accurate rendering; my analysis did not reveal a category of description related specifically to *learning to teach*. Yet it is clear in the two categories of description presented in this chapter that high school students interested in teaching careers may hold particular beliefs or ideas about how teachers learn: by repeating what they have seen, by *figuring out* teaching with certain resources, by following textbooks, and perhaps others. Rachel's notion of *loss* is particularly provocative; if one's understanding of teaching can be lost, this leads me to believe, or at least to explore the possibility, that teaching can be *found* again—as Rachel also hinted at—or perhaps developed in some way. These students may not be aware of, or understand, the way(s) their own teachers learned to teach, but their conceptions of teaching may well contain important beliefs or ideas

related to learning to teach, which may have a significant bearing on their receptivity to certain components of or activities within formal teacher preparation.

These categories help to demonstrate the rockiness of the terrain of teacher preparation I referenced in Chapter V. Having been in schools and other places in which teaching occurs, prospective teachers likely know something of teachers' various priorities, as well as the dependencies that frame or constrain their work. However, their awareness of both is likely incomplete, based on inferences they have made, statements they have heard, and their observations of teachers and teaching. For teacher educators, examining priorities and dependencies is never straight-forward, as prospective teachers not only hold certain understandings of teaching, but they may hold priorities or expectations for learning to teach as well. In the midst of observations, classroom instruction, and practicum experiences, prospective teachers might resist not just the examination of their understandings of teaching, but the manner in which this examination is conducted. Teacher education, like teaching, might be fundamentally similar, as well as unique from other professional learning, perhaps best understood as multifaceted intersections between teacher educators and prospective teachers where the *what* and *how* of instruction—maybe constantly—are scrutinized by prospective teachers. It is this notion of *intersection* that I keep repeating that I turn to next, as I believe it helps to illustrate an important conception of teaching amongst high school students interested in teaching careers.

## Chapter VII

### TEACHING AS *CONVERGENCE*

As the categories of description presented up to this point had started to coalesce during my analysis, I encountered a predicament: instead of a series of stable categories of description, which I could easily describe the contours of, my analysis produced categories, as well as combinations of categories. In other words, while I believed I had identified five categories of description that started to uncover the cohort's pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, I also had identified categories of transcripts where more than one of these categories appeared to describe the cohort's conceptions of teaching. To avoid a reductive decision to fold the combination categories into the five I was able to clearly demarcate, I continued to read the transcripts and reference the audit trail I had produced throughout my analysis, ultimately returning to memoing to explore these categories and what they might reveal about participants' conceptions of teaching.

Throughout this continued examination, I found references in the transcripts that reflected one or more of the five stable categories I had found. In addition, there were also a number of references to teaching as *style*, *pulling things together*, or *exchanging ideas*; across these terms, there appeared to me to be a common theme of coming

together, or convergence, something I was also seeing in the categories of description that were best described by combinations of stable categories. Increasingly, as I reviewed transcripts, audit trails, and memos, it seemed that this idea of convergence was too important to dismiss, and might be obscured if the remaining combination categories were folded into the stable ones. The more I read the transcripts, the more I saw how participants described teaching as the convergence of different everyday events; approaches, routines, and patterns; priorities; and dependencies, leaving the possibility that teaching, for a number of high school students interested in teaching careers, may not be understood in a static and unchanging manner, but instead as a series of convergences they encounter as they interact with teachers and teaching, with tensions between such convergences helping to shape not just understandings in the moment but the very priorities, principles, and even potential these students see in or hold for teaching.

### **Examples of Convergence: *Merging, Style, Pulling It Together, and Making Up***

Convergence, as it is used in this chapter, is not simply an analytical construct, or product of this study; some participants characterized teaching as a central point, in which teachers drew certain factors together and/or found themselves at the intersection of in teaching work. Ezequiel asserted that “every teacher has his own way,” an approach with two levels: they “have their own way of, like, teaching,” while they also “have their own way of, like, being, like around kids” (Int 2, 549). His teachers, like Ms. Roya, a student teacher he observed who later joined the faculty at Truman School, “took, like, all the advice from all the other teachers and made it into one” by “merg[ing] them all together” (Int 2, 555). Describing his ninth grade math teacher, Ezequiel employed a similar idea, only what was drawn together was not advice from other teachers. Ezequiel



found that his teacher “pulled in everything” and helped several years of math courses to “[click] together...to form just, like, this easy thing” (Int 1, 254-256). In this second example, teaching was not only an intersection between Ezequiel as learner and his teacher as an instructor of mathematics, but also a convergence with previous classes and learning, which the teacher seemed to help Ezequiel better understand and make use of across subsequent episodes of teaching.

Alex described a teaching or coaching *style* as a convergence. Style, for teachers and coaches, was “just made up of all these experiences you’ve had” (Int 2, 225), something deeply personal that had to be *found* as teachers “get a feel for teaching” (Int 3, 114). From one’s personal experiences came ideas, which an individual could then “form...into something, and then whatever you want to do with what you just formed” is your style (Int 2, 226), a description that depicted teaching as at least partially subject to the autonomy of the person carrying it out. As different types of teachers interacted with learners, Alex claimed they “pass down their style to other people in the form of ideas” (Int 2, 227), apparently continuing a cycle of passing and receiving. Learners on the end of this movement—at least until they taught someone else—would then “make up [their] own style from this movement of ideas (Int 2, 228). Classroom teachers apparently demonstrated certain styles Alex was familiar with, like those who “drone on and, like, lecture” as well as “really interactive” teachers like Ms. Kluivert (Int 2, 237-238).

While *passing* a style sounds like the movement of a static or stable set of ideas or approaches, the use of expressions like *pulling it together* and *making up* portray teaching as something teachers create or enact from an array of different sources or influences, a characterization with which Elsie would have agreed. She wrote in Artifact H that the

second artifact prompt had stumped her, as her thoughts about teaching in the future “are both slightly vague and specific.” At least at the time of her writing of Artifact H, she was unable to state a *teaching philosophy*, or “things that I think every teacher should or should not do.” Instead, Elsie found teaching depended “on the students, the teacher, and the subject being taught,” a description quite similar to the “wild triangle of relations” McDonald (1992) found in teaching “among teacher, students, [and] subject” (p. 1). Since the first and the third could very easily change—and she hinted that her attitude could change in the future as well—Elsie, like McDonald, felt that teaching was frequently changing, which she admitted might lead to her “attitude towards how [something] might be taught best chang[ing].” Teaching, for some high school students interested in teaching careers, was in a state of flux, with teachers having to navigate a certain degree of continuous shifting and uncertainty as they taught others, shifting and uncertainty brought on at least in part by the factors converging in episodes of teaching.

### **Congruence, Clashes, and Critiques in Teaching**

When conceptualized as *pulling together* or *making up*, with separate and sometimes variable or varied factors like students, teachers, and subjects, episodes of teaching brought these different factors, or even views of teaching, into close proximity, where participants sometimes found congruence between priorities or expectations for teaching in a particular setting and how teaching was carried out. For example, Rachel saw Ms. North as “exactly who I want to be in life” (Int 2, 329). Initially, she cited a number of personality characteristics she admired, like how Ms. North was “very relaxed and...very funny,” as well as “smart, and quick” when quipping with students (Int 2, 329). But she saw more in Ms. North than personality characteristics, surfacing examples

of congruence between the teaching she saw and what she enjoyed in or expected from the class, including Ms. North's abilities to "keep us in line" when needed, the way she organized her class and how this aided "the kids who take AP Bio [who] are very organized," the ways she was able to produce or to cull resources to help students engage in "self-propelled learning" based on their interests, and even specific teaching approaches she used like POGILs (Int 2, 332, 338-341). This congruence may have even helped to shape Rachel's own teaching in her teaching internship, in which she focused on "being relaxed" and encouraging students to engage in discussions and "kind of reach outside of what you literally got taught" (Int 3, 626; Int 2, 482), just as students were often asked to do in Ms. North's POGIL activities. For high school students interested in teaching careers like Rachel, congruence with teachers in terms of priorities or expectations for episodes of teaching and classes may help to directly shape students' own teaching, though this influence does not necessarily lead to replication.

As teachers and learners came together, convergence could also yield clashes, demonstrated by the personal remarks and criticisms levied at teachers. When Rachel watched her mother teach, she admitted she felt "frustrated," though it was not clear what she saw and/or heard that frustrated her, short of her admission that "we don't always see eye-to-eye" (Int 3, 680). According to Elsie, Ms. Pinkerton's teaching was unsuccessful with Marina due to Marina's "strong ideas about how people should be, or how they should look," which included strong ideas about teachers and teaching (Int 1, 546). Alex guessed that "a good 60%" of teachers were ineffective since they had gotten "lazy and stopp[ed] to care" (Int 2, 380). Embedded in these remarks from interviews, and even stated in Elsie's depiction of Marina, are personality clashes, cultural biases, and personal

criticisms of teachers, expressing personal opinions about people rather than the teaching they did, and, in Alex's case, even attributing teachers' actions, or inaction, to "differences in personality or mood" (p. 63), which Lortie (1975/2002) identified as one of the likely bases for students' critiques of teaching.

Though these personality or mood-based critiques cannot be dismissed, the tension present in the different types of convergence that characterize teaching help to surface more substantive discussions of teaching, suggesting high school students interested in teaching careers are capable of describing and even critiquing teachers' approaches based on criteria beyond teacher personality or mood. Marie recalled how one of her volleyball coaches showed Marie and her peers video of themselves on the court in order to show them various technical or tactical components of the game, but after several team members told the coach they did not understand his point, he "changed up his teaching style," instead fielding questions from players and using video less frequently (Int 3, 340-341). In a one-on-one example of teaching, Elsie recalled how Marina tried to teach her to ice skate, yet her teaching was "thwarted" by Marina's "dislike of inactivity," suggesting that Marina taught "to keep herself engaged" and was less focused on "teach[ing] me, in this example, to skate" (Art E). As mentioned earlier, high school students interested in teaching careers may evaluate teaching in terms of learning, even viewing certain approaches as a product of cause-and-effect (e.g., a coach changing his teaching because players did not understand; Marina teaching by keeping herself active). Their evaluations, rather than the product of a fixed standard of teaching, reflect combinations of ideas on approaches, priorities, dependencies, and other factors they see salient to the episode of teaching they are experiencing.

Convergence, along with the tension it sometimes created within teaching, seemed to help participants articulate their own priorities for teaching, such as the importance of meeting students' needs. Tutoring and teaching, to Marie, both depended on "what each person is struggling with, and, like, how they learn the best" (Int 3, 334), something teachers and coaches had to be aware of in order to address the needs of individuals and groups. The ability to find what learners were struggling with was something Alex saw his own swim coaches do as they engaged in segmenting and targeted progression, yet he also found that certain approaches like laboratory experiments could be "intimidating" since students could "start to not get it," their attempts at the experiment could "go wrong," and teachers' invariably were forced to split their attention between students, all of which teachers had to consider as they selected their approaches (Int 3, 351-357). Part of this consideration may have come down to how *students* or *learners* made sense of an activity, rather than whether it made sense to teachers, which Elsie believed should be a central priority and commitment in teaching. Priorities for teaching held by high school students interested in teaching careers like meeting students' needs, whether they are theorized as *beliefs*, elements of a philosophy of teaching, or otherwise, are in many cases forged, or at least influenced, by the tension and clashes they see within and across episodes of teaching.

### **Grappling with How to Teach, and Concerns for Teaching**

What I have referred to as priorities for teaching throughout this chapter, such as *meeting students' needs*, may well be, or be the product of, beliefs concerning teaching. Beliefs in teaching have been defined as "propositions that are accepted as true by the individual holding the belief" yet lack an "epistemic warrant" (Richardson, 2003, p. 3).

Statements like the one Elsie made describing teaching as “depending on the students, the teacher, and the subject being taught” (Art H) likely would be categorized by Richardson as beliefs about teaching. Elsie’s proposition begins to articulate an abstract relationship between different elements in teaching relationships without putting forward a specific approach that might follow from teaching as an intersection between student, teacher, and subject. Although Elsie’s statement might be “deep-seated” and/or “tacit,” as Richardson (2003) described some beliefs related to teaching, high school students interested in teaching careers are, at least at times, capable of identifying and tracing relationships between beliefs and specific teaching approaches.

Young people also appear capable of transcending belief when it comes to teaching, perhaps beginning to articulate what Richardson (2003) described as propositional knowledge. Alex may have done this when he told me he thought it was “really important when you teach someone that you describe the basic, basic part of it, and then you connect it to what you have” (Int 1, 185). The difference between Alex’s statement and Elsie’s in the previous paragraph is the epistemic warrant Alex offered. In Alex’s case, the importance of beginning teaching with instruction in basic parts and then connecting to other elements was accomplished in approaches he named and described; teachers or coaches *segmented* learning activities into smaller, more basic parts, then moved in a systematic manner across these parts and what learners already knew using what Alex called *targeted progression*. This particular proposition may not have been tacit for Alex, but it was deeply personal, a product of Alex’s own learning in swimming, with a backstory he essentially offered as evidence during interviews and visually depicted in his Snapshot of Learning to explain and to reinforce the proposition.

Whether understood as beliefs or propositional knowledge, high school students interested in teaching careers recounted situations in which their beliefs or propositional knowledge about teaching were enacted, and perhaps grappled with, in *their* teaching, as they appeared to consider the perspectives of their learners rather than just themselves as learners. Rachel admitted she had trouble “setting up a course in [her] head without having tests there in place” (Int 3, 824), yet she attempted in her teaching internship to “[plan] lots of things and [create] sources...so that students with different learning styles could understand” (Art D), such as the timeline resources she developed to aid students in their learning about court cases. In a very different example, Elsie and her mother implemented four finger knitting when youth at the homeless shelter they were teaching at struggled to grasp their initial attempt at teaching knitting. Marie, working one-on-one with a tutee, recognized that the student was not understanding her initial effort, which prompted Marie to deviate from the teacher’s lesson by answering questions and explaining subject-matter in her own words, just as her coach had shifted from film to other approaches. Across each of these episodes of teaching were attempts to gauge the learning of *others*, and to teach, or to make changes to teaching, based on these assessments, suggesting that Marie, Rachel, and Elsie, and perhaps other high school students interested in teaching careers, do not view teaching exclusively from “the standpoint of an individual student—that student being themselves” (Richardson, 2003, p. 2).

Whether considering others’ teaching, or their own episodes of teaching, the approaches, priorities, and dependencies participants discussed, and sometimes characterized as in tension or conflict as a result of their convergence in episodes of

teaching, clearly seemed to reveal concerns they had for teaching, or for themselves as teachers in the future. Several examples already used in this section may have successfully surfaced, in part, participants' concerns: Elsie found it difficult in teaching at the homeless shelter to meet the needs of all learners; Alex feared failure and lamented what had to be sacrificed when a teacher used an experiment; and Rachel planned activities for various learning styles, yet she sometimes struggled to find an appropriate *distance* between herself and students in her teaching internship. Across the study, there were certainly other examples of such tension as well: Ezequiel found that "there's always that one student" in class who "need[s] help for everything" (Int 2, 456), which was a challenge for teachers; Marie found that adhering to an established curriculum was "really only, like, half the job" in teaching (Int 1, 620); and in another example from Alex, he doubted whether he would use group work as a teacher out of his concerns that "some people...won't get the stuff delivered" and/or they might engage in "sloppy work" (Int 2, 311), despite seeing teachers successfully use the approach. From their various experiences, participants had observed a number of challenges in teaching, which, when in contact with participants' own thoughts on or understandings of teaching, may have even coalesced into fears, or a reluctance to employ certain approaches.

Even when the tension created by teaching appeared to manifest itself as fears or reluctance to use certain approaches, it often seemed to be accompanied by uncertainty as well. Alex may have been reluctant to use group work because of the challenges he saw in teaching in this manner, but he had not ruled out the approach, through his beliefs or his limited teaching practice; in fact, he desired to conceptualize or to adopt an interactive teaching style similar to his Environmental Science teacher's style, who had offered



feedback on Alex's teaching assignment and urged him to move away from presentations and lectures. Elsie and Rachel had both struggled with their respective challenges within their own teaching, and their engagements with challenges like meeting learners' needs and establishing a productive relationship with students seemed to be works in progress, which had not been settled by previous episodes of teaching, and seemed unlikely to be resolved by the next episode, either. Since subsequent teaching encounters were, in some respects, a new point of convergence for participants, their progress on existing challenges might be incremental, or affected by subsequent convergences and the tensions they might also bring. At the same time, each participant appeared at least open to the prospect of engaging with these challenges, and the fears that may have followed or formed around them.

For participants—and, I suspect, for other high school students interested in teaching careers—the nature of teaching appears to be one of convergence—of intersections between events or contexts, approaches, priorities, and/or dependencies. These intersections are multifaceted, given that teachers and learners bring their own constellations or awareness of approaches and dependencies, as well as their own priorities for teaching and learning. While congruence between certain factors or elements in teaching is certainly possible, tension or disagreement is also a reality within many episodes of teaching. Episodes of teaching can even be sites of simultaneous congruence and conflict or tension, with teachers and learners forced to make sense of the existence of the two within a given setting, with teaching and learning perhaps even succumbing to tension and conflict.

The conflict and tension brought about by convergence in teaching may lead to growth as well, though. The examples discussed above demonstrate degrees of openness or uncertainty appearing alongside tension and conflict, suggesting that tension and conflict, for high school students interested in teaching careers, may be fruitful areas for shifts or changes in beliefs and/or practice. While prospective teachers' beliefs and understandings of teaching have consistently been described as resistant to direct confrontation and change (Cuban, 1993; Knapp, 2012; Lortie, 1975/2002), other scholars like Smylie (1988) have found that "teachers' perceptions and beliefs are the most significant predictors of individual change" (p. 23). The key difference between these studies involving teachers' beliefs appears to be the presence of teaching practice: much like Smylie's (1988) teacher-practitioner participants, the participants of this study all engaged in some form of teaching practice, through which they often articulated the events, approaches, priorities, and/or dependencies they considered, felt influenced or impacted by, or regarded as beneficial or constraining to their teaching. Though this statement does not alleviate the question Richardson (2003) saw in whether beliefs guide actions or actions guide beliefs, it does suggest that for high school students interested in teaching careers the conduct of teaching may represent a particularly influential factor in their understandings of teaching, one influenced by, yet not synonymous or identical to, the products of their observations of others' teaching.

### **Summary**

Teaching, for high school students interested in teaching careers, may be regarded more as a convergence of various factors than as a stable set of understandings that are carried out in one's teaching. The highly personalized, or even idiosyncratic, portrayal of

young people's understandings of teaching in the academic literature can be reframed as factors that converge within episodes of teaching, whether they are everyday events, discernible approaches, routines, or patterns, relations, priorities, and/or dependencies. While these factors converge in episodes of teaching for young people, teaching also represents convergence between the constellation of factors affecting students as well as the factors influencing, and/or perhaps promoted by, teachers. Across these categories, high school students interested in teaching careers may encounter convergence both as observers of other people's teaching as well as in some of the teaching they do in school or other contexts. The variation present across the six categories of description suggests young people's views of teaching are complex, and perhaps in some cases even in a state of flux across their pre-collegiate years. This complexity, and the possibility of flux or shifts in understandings, are possibilities I will return to in the final chapter of this dissertation as I discuss the study's findings and implications.

## Chapter VIII

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the conceptions of teaching held by high school students interested in teaching careers, and thus to come closer to understanding the kinds of assets these students might hold by the time they reach formal teacher preparation. In this study's final chapter, I offer a discussion of the study, as well as implications I see from the study for practice, policy, and research. The discussion begins with a return to some of the literature reviewed in Chapter II, and how this literature and its characterizations of prior experiences with and conceptions of teaching compare to the conceptions of teaching of the cohort of participants for this study, and the assets I have identified in their descriptions of their experiences. Following a discussion of the specific implications for practice, policy, and research based on the study's findings, I also share a critique of the study, as well as a closing statement.

#### **Reframing Critiques of Pre-Collegiate Conceptions of Teaching**

Within the data of this study, there exist certain remarks by participants that seem to demonstrate some the findings and claims found in the academic literature concerning

the influence of prior experiences and pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching. A few examples might illustrate the overlap between the literature and this study's data. Rachel made concerted efforts to "be very present" with Mr. Walters, attempting to access his expertise and the opportunities he provided because he "[made] his favorites really good" (Int 2, 611, 618), a comment reminding me of Lortie's (1975/2002) assertion that students access the power of teachers by "learn[ing] the significance of good grades and the value of teacher favor" (p. 62). Marie initially conducted her tutoring session by replicating the teacher's approach, reviewing PowerPoint slides, perhaps employing teacher approaches most memorable to her, and falling victim in this episode of teaching to what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) called the familiarity pitfall. As he discussed the use of student group work in teaching, Alex appeared reluctant to use the approach in his own teaching, describing it as "risky" since students might "[blow] things off" (Int 2, 300), perhaps revealing through his descriptions a reluctance to use a more student-centered teaching approach, a reluctance that could be overcome by approaches such as overcorrection to break through any resistance he might hold towards certain teaching approaches (e.g., Grossman, 1991). At different points across the data set, participants certainly demonstrated or animated research findings related to prior experiences and conceptions of teaching.

However, participants' descriptions of their own experiences, as well as the categories of description discovered from the cohort, should not be labeled simply based on the existence of data points reflecting, or even demonstrating, allegedly harmful understandings of teaching. Rachel does not see teaching solely as a catapult towards greater opportunities and musical improvement just because she feels obligated to be

around Mr. Walters to pursue such opportunities and improvement. Marie does not necessarily adopt the most memorable approach with a tutee, even though she did use her teacher's approach and resources during her first teaching experience as a tutor. Alex may be reluctant to use group work as a teacher, yet he also expressed interest in student engagement and the use of technology, appearing reluctant to use group work in particular rather than advocating for the use of traditional teaching approaches.

Homogenizing the influences on, or conceptions of, teaching of young people interested in teaching careers—or fixating on alleged deficits these young people bring to teacher preparation—effectively dismisses the existence, or diminishes the influence, of assets they also may bring, some of which may be deeply tangled with deficits and, consequently, difficult to recognize.

### **Pre-Collegiate Conceptions: Simplistic or Intricate?**

Pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching have effectively been homogenized using constructs like Lortie's (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation. Observation as a student has been framed as a mechanism in teacher learning, one leading to distinctly negative consequences for teachers and schools. By spending thousands of hours in schools interacting with teachers and teaching as students, young people have been said to develop deeply personal and extremely narrow views of what teaching is, which inhibit their capacities to envision teaching in different ways in the future (Lortie, 1975/2002). Having seen so much teaching from a student vantage point, Lortie (1975/2002) argued K-12 students, and later preservice teachers, continue to assess teaching using personal preference rather than pedagogical principles, resulting in a continuous form of learning in which a sharp break between understandings of teaching as a student and

understandings as a professional teacher was never made. Despite these findings, the individual profiles for each participant in this study as well as the categories of description shared in Chapters V, VI, and VII highlight a complex web of potential strengths and weaknesses spun by prospective teachers' experiences during their apprenticeships of observation, at times exemplifying findings from the academic literature, yet also seeming to defy singular categorizations or labels.

Participants' observations of teaching, falling within the 13,000 hours of observation Lortie's (1975/2002) apprenticeship of observation described, have yielded a wide array of actors and events related to teachers and teaching. In describing their experiences, participants shared a great many fragments of their experiences with teachers and teaching, including, though not limited to, teachers making bigoted remarks, helping students to overcome issues with their peers, emphasizing real world learning and/or problem solving, devising activities for learners to have fun, among many others. The descriptions included instances in which teachers structured classes using simulations, experiments, group work, the sharing of resources for teaching with students, as well as more traditional, teacher-centered approaches. While Lortie, who once questioned the influence of "role models outside the school" on the development of physical education teachers (Schempp, 1987, p. 5), has since called for research on "pre-training" influences from teachers, research on such influences or conceptions of teaching has continued to focus on school experiences. Yet participants in this study identified and discussed teaching as occurring in various athletic contexts, online classes and tutoring sessions, driving lessons with parents, and across a number of other events in their lives. The issue with constructs like the apprenticeship of observation, or other research

findings regarding the influence of prior experiences or conceptions of teaching, is their tendency toward reductive characterizations of these influences and conceptions.

Perhaps the most compelling example of a reductive characterization of pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching can be seen in the ways pre-collegiate students and preservice teachers have been found to assess episodes of teaching. Students, Lortie (1975/2002) argued, “have no reliable basis for assessing the difficulty or demands of various teaching acts,” leading them to “attribute teachers’ actions to differences in personality or mood,” or to engage in “affective responses of liking and disliking” teaching (p. 63). Though participants in this study surely identified episodes of teaching they liked or disliked, they typically articulated particular lines of reasoning for their assessments of teaching, often grounded in the priorities they held for teaching. It was seldom the case that participants identified *bad teaching* as the result of a teacher’s personality or mood, but instead something they identified because of a gap they perceived between what the teacher did (or sought to do) and what participants themselves believed should be happening within a particular episode of teaching. Clashes in what I have called priorities might be seen as little more than differences in personal preferences, yet the basis for these priorities generally does not seem to be the capriciousness or whimsicalness of personality or mood, but instead the beginnings (or, for professional teachers, perhaps the continuation) of commitments towards particular ends in/for teaching.

What high school students bring with them to teacher preparation programs may be far more complicated—perhaps even more intricate—than how their conceptions of teaching, and the influences of the experiences that helped them to form these



conceptions, are often portrayed in the literature. Part of this complexity can be attributed to the blending in students' descriptions of *the act of teaching* as well as their ideas about what *the role of teacher* is and/or should be. For participants, and perhaps many other high school students interested in teaching careers, the act of teaching and the role of the teacher may exist side-by-side, or perhaps are intertwined in a way that is rather challenging for student, teacher educator, and/or researcher to parse and to better understand. As I analyzed participant data from the study, I came to realize that participants' conceptions of teaching could hardly be characterized as simplistic and relatively uniform. Moreover, scholarly findings concerning pre-collegiate students' and preservice teachers' conceptions of teaching seemed to overlook what was for my participants two major influences on their understandings of teaching: their own teaching experiences, and their developing views of how teachers learn to teach.

### **The Influence of Teaching Experiences and Views of Learning to Teach**

Observations of teaching play a prominent role in scholarship on the influences of prior experiences and conceptions of teaching (e.g., Knapp, 2012; Lortie, 1975/2002), but the influence of actually engaging in the act of teaching itself—which participants in this study recounted their own involvement in—is rarely addressed in the academic literature. Participants' accounts of their own teaching during the study were fewer in number than their descriptions of other people's teaching, yet their own teaching occurred in a number of different teaching contexts, including teaching internships and assignments in school, tutoring academic subjects as part of honor society memberships, and even teaching at home and in homeless shelters. Though some of these examples of teaching have taken place in schools, they of course differ from the daily work of a classroom teacher,

including the demands and responsibilities such work typically require of professional teachers. However, participants' accounts of their own teaching were not so radically different from their descriptions of their participation as students in other people's teaching that their own teaching was unrecognizable or otherwise incapable of being compared with the many episodes of teaching they had observed as learners.

As they chose topics to teach, formulated activities for learners, modified activities as they saw a need for different approaches, and/or reflected back on their teaching and suggested alternative approaches or improvements, participants appeared to engage in the kind of *explicit* and *analytical* analysis of teaching scholars have found pre-collegiate students, and even some prospective teachers, incapable of doing. Lortie (1975/2002) wrote that young people were unlikely "to view the differences [between teachers' actions] in a pedagogical, explanatory way" (p. 62), yet these five participants were able to examine their teaching and the teaching of others. It is true that their explanations of teaching they observed and themselves conducted may not have reflected the adoption of what Lortie referred to as *pedagogical principles*, but they seldom discussed teaching as something exclusively dominated by personality, mood, or emotion. As I pointed out in Chapter V, participants did tend to focus on their actions and learners' understanding of what was taught, without considering the kinds of unintentional learning they discussed when they recounted their observations of teaching.

Thus, teaching, at this stage of participants' lives, brought a narrowing of perspective. This narrowing of perspective could be considered a deficit, or a tendency that could in time yield a deficit. Yet participants' perspectives also included immersive experiences in teaching and several of its important elements. Consequently, these

participants, and presumably some of their high school-aged peers, did not have to *imagine* how a teacher felt, or what it was to *play the role of a teacher*, as they had *done* teaching, which is to say they had accrued experiences engaging in the kinds of teaching choices and decision-making rarely found as significant elements in prospective teachers' backgrounds, albeit occurring in short-term, temporary episodes of teaching.

Through their observations and their own teaching experiences, high school students interested in teaching careers not only begin to develop capacities to analyze teaching and tackle some of the choices and decisions teachers must negotiate as they teach, but they also begin to formulate perspectives on what it is to learn to teach. Ezequiel saw Ms. Roya as both a student and professional teacher at Truman School, telling me how she had worked to develop her “own way of doing things” as a teacher, which she had done by taking “advice from all teachers and, like, [making] it into one” way of teaching (Int 2, 545), or “merg[ing] them all together” (Int 2, 555); a specific example Ezequiel offered was Ms. Roya’s use of *Class Dojo*, a classroom management app she saw other teachers using and eventually integrated into her own teaching. Alex, through his descriptions of teacher style, also depicted learning to teach as a coming together, something that had to be *found* through experiences that provided ideas, which teachers “form...into something, and then whatever you want to do with what you just formed [is your style]” (Int 2, 226). He also suggested that developing a style and learning to teach were “kind of just trial-and-error” (Int 2, 225), the way he saw younger teachers “figuring it out as they go” when using classroom technologies like Google Classroom. Through their observations, Ezequiel and Alex seemed to view learning to teach and the act of teaching itself as bringing different ideas together and learning from

their experiences teaching, which was essentially what Marie had tried to do through her tutoring work.

Rachel's descriptions of her experiences offer a very different, and more complicated, picture of learning to teach. While a Montessori student between kindergarten and the sixth grade, Rachel had developed an image of teaching, one in which the interests of learners helped to power life in the classroom, with teaching surfacing and expanding these interests through interactive activities like the marshmallow lesson. However, she believed much of what she had, in effect, learned about teaching from her early years had been lost as a result of her more recent experiences, a loss caused in large part by the heavy emphasis on testing she encountered as a public school student.

Though Rachel seemed to indict a process of socialization in the loss of some of her capacities to conceptualize teaching, she did not see the loss as necessarily permanent or inevitable, and made, or suggested, intentional efforts to continue learning to teach. She described her teaching internship as a class in which “the material is *learning to teach*,” something she found fun “because you get to watch [the teacher] teach,” while also engaging in independent—though supervised—teaching on her own (Int 3, p. 44, emphasis added). In addition, Rachel expressed a desire to return in some form to her Montessori school to “get...back” what she had lost as a public school student (Int 1, 673-674). Rachel's background may have heavily influenced her capacity to see the tension between types of schooling she observed, and the influence this tension had for her while observing and teaching—her father was a professor of education, and she had access to a

teaching internship as part of her high school studies—yet she was not alone in expressing ideas, or even beliefs, concerning how people learn to teach.

These ideas or beliefs about how people learn to teach are expressed in part through participants' uses of words or phrases like *forming*, *trial-and-error*, and *figuring it out as they go*. In some cases, these ideas or beliefs might be regarded as potential hindrances in learning to teach; for example, phrases like *trial-and-error* and *figuring it out as they go* could be products of what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) called the “common belief in the educative value of firsthand experience,” a belief “most people are inclined to think” (p. 85), and one that could very well lead prospective teachers to be less open to alternative approaches to learning to teach. However, young people's ideas or beliefs related to learning to teach may also serve as assets in their learning, perhaps in the form of an awareness of their own learning as teachers as well as possible avenues to explore to further this learning. Marie and Rachel expressed concerns about the influence of schooling on their respective ideas of teaching and learning. In addition, Rachel made a vague reference to returning to her Montessori school, suggesting that she could *get back* her former understanding of teaching as a Montessori school student. When high school students interested in teaching careers discuss learning to teach, they may do so in speculative or generalized terms, yet even speculative or generalized statements may encapsulate an awareness of learning to teach, as well as steps these students might be able to take to continue or to spark their development to teach in certain ways.

### **Implications**

The presence of assets related to observations and assessments of teaching, as well as certain notions about learning to teach, alongside deficits in the understandings of

teaching of some high school students interested in teaching careers leads me to posit that such ideas potentially affect prospective teachers in powerful ways. At times, the precise impact these ideas have, or the influence they may have on early teacher learning, may be largely unknown by teacher educators, or, if known, may be undernourished. Awareness and development of assets in learning to teach seem tremendously important; as Lortie (1975/2002) wrote, once students come into contact with teacher educators, they “may simply classify education professors as new members of a category (teachers) with which they are already most familiar” (p. 66). What Lortie meant by *classify* may entail the kinds of assessments of episodes of teaching in which participants in this study routinely engaged. If young people see teaching as a convergence and frame *good* and *bad teaching* in terms of teaching’s alignment with some of their own ideas about the approaches, routines, patterns, priorities, and dependencies of teaching, then teacher educators must acknowledge congruence or divergence in terms of how they, and their prospective teacher students, view learning to teach, as well as how this congruence or divergence impacts prospective teachers’ receptivity to the kinds of learning teacher educators seek to facilitate in teacher preparation programs. The likely coexistence of assets and deficits within the conceptions of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers leads me to a number of implications related to teacher education practice and structure, policy, and research.

### **Implications of the Study for Teacher Education Practice and Structure**

As a social endeavor, learning to teach necessarily involves the presence of others. In teacher preparation programs, prospective teachers interact with faculty and staff, workshop leaders, and fellow prospective teachers, not to mention cooperating

teachers, principals, and K-12 students, once they arrive at a placement site or a full-time teaching assignment. While learning through experience certainly takes place in various forms across the spectrum of teacher preparation pathways available today, learning is likely to take place through dialogue or discussion as well. However, learning to teach also takes place within the overarching structure of teacher preparation programs, a structure that may emphasize certain activities or pedagogies of teacher preparation while marginalizing others. From the implications I have found from this study, I will present several recommendations for both the practice and structure of teacher preparation.

**Changing, or shifting the emphasis of, the conversation.** A prominent concern of teacher educators is the beliefs of prospective teachers, which have long been regarded as strongly held by prospective teachers and highly resistant to change (Richardson, 2003). Beliefs regarding teaching and schooling are a challenging construct, as they are not just propositions regarded as true, but propositions that are often held by prospective teachers as *very personal*. A challenge to beliefs might be mistaken as a challenge to the individual, due to the flawed nature of the beliefs they hold and/or the supremacy of other people's—often teacher educators'—beliefs on teaching. To hear that one's beliefs about teaching, which have been developed over the course of a lifetime, are limited or problematic could be distressing, not just because of the personal nature of beliefs but also because of the lack of a framework for examining and changing these beliefs. The personal nature of beliefs, and prospective teachers' possible sensitivities towards their critique, are not grounds to avoid these beliefs, or to consider them impenetrable and thus unworthy of teacher educators' time and effort, but these concerns do underscore the

challenge in negotiating prospective teachers' beliefs, challenges significant enough to consider, in light of this study's findings, other constructs and/or approaches.

The results of this study suggest that a promising tact for teacher educators to take would be to examine the assets prospective teachers bring to teacher preparation. Instead of focusing on what prospective teachers lack, as evidenced by their stated beliefs about teaching and schooling or their accounts of their experiences while in school, teacher educators should allocate more energy to exploring and engaging the assets prospective teachers bring with them to their preparation to teach. Teaching experiences stand as the most obvious asset some prospective teachers bring; though these experiences are highly likely to be different than the teaching a professional teacher does, in terms of responsibilities and duration, they may offer a number of instances in which the prospective teacher engaged in decision-making, adaptation, sensitivity to learners' needs, and other acts or events that could be examined and possibly serve as a springboard for learning. Assets would not always be uncovered in experiences involving teaching groups of students, either; Rachel's comments about the absence of teachers of color at Bell Heights, the perspectives students did not have access to because of this absence, and her developing empathy towards the few students of color at the school all present opportunities to discuss teaching and schooling and to continue to contemplate the ways *all* students and teachers could benefit from a diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and teaching capacities. The assets Rachel holds regarding race allow her to be framed as a capable learner, and an example of divergent thinking for students dismissive of the legitimacy and influence of race, or other important facets of teaching, schooling, and experience.



A construct like *critical incidents*, used by some teachers and teacher educators to explore how people learn to teach (e.g., Badia & Becerril, 2016; Berry & Loughran, 2000; Newman, 1990), may offer an additional avenue to explore prospective teachers' assets while focusing on episodes of teaching and not just personal beliefs. Newman (1990) described critical incidents as collections of stories that contributed to understandings of teaching, which could be used to "[explore] assumptions about language, about learning, and about teaching" (p. 727), yet the exploration of critical incidents revealed what Newman called "a surprising gap" between "'espoused' beliefs" of learning and teaching and the teaching that was carried out. By the time they reach the end of high school, young people interested in teaching careers may have the experiential pieces necessary to interrogate teaching as a collection of critical incidents: they certainly have come to hold conceptions of teaching after observing many hours of teaching, and, in many cases, they may have accrued teaching experiences of their own, though typically experiences substantively different than teaching in a K-12 classroom. Framing explorations of prior experiences as *incidents* rather than personal beliefs allows the emphasis to be shifted from the individual to the episode of teaching, while still leaving room to explore prospective teachers' assumptions and beliefs alongside what was observed and/or done in teaching.

**Awareness of, and changes in, learning, and program continuity.** By examining different episodes of teaching across prospective teachers' lives, whether these episodes are conceptualized as critical incidents or otherwise, teacher educators and prospective teachers can trace influences on their conceptions of teaching, as well as how these influences might change over time. Lortie (1998/2005) suggested that the

influences of prior experience may be *malleable*, leading him to call for observations and interviews with beginning teachers “to track probable influences from the past” and subsequently “to ascertain which behaviors persisted and which did not” (p. 139). In my own study, I have found indications of this malleability, *of which participants themselves were even aware*. Rachel discussed the distinctly negative influence of public schooling, and how she found the emphasis on testing in these schools had led her to lose the ability to contemplate teaching that did not involve—or was at the very least less reliant upon—testing. Attributing changes in her peers to testing, Marie found teachers and students were often fixated on “pick[ing] out the right answer” (Art I, 14-15), which had led to episodes of teaching where she found her peers “[could not] produce an original thought” (Int 3, 86-87). Though prospective teachers may not always be aware of shifts or losses in their own learning as teachers, they are certainly capable of articulating concerns they may have for teaching, as well as the proximate influences on some of these concerns.

The distance between participants’ articulated awareness of their own learning, as well as the challenges they saw in teaching, and those challenges identified by preservice teacher education scholars amongst prospective teachers, leads me to strenuously advocate for the sharing of concerns and the mapping of how, or if, these concerns may shift over time. Participants in this study expressed awareness—and alarm—at how changes in schooling affected teaching and learning, demonstrating at least some concept of how their experiences had influenced how they viewed teaching and schooling. Their concerns at this stage in their development as teachers reflected a combination of more abstract reflections about the influence of their own experiences as well as more pragmatic concerns, such as balancing or positioning themselves with regards to students.

As participants discussed interacting with learners, I was reminded of research on prospective teachers noting their significant concerns related to student behavior, and how they as teachers can encourage appropriate behavior (e.g., Stoughton, 2007). Though the participants of this study did not seem preoccupied with student behavior, I found myself wondering whether their conceptions of teaching might shift between their high school years and professional teaching to concerns similar to those identified by Stoughton (2007) and other scholars, and what (kinds of) experiences might induce or influence, or even prevent, such a shift.

Shifts in understandings of, and/or concerns for, teaching, particularly those occurring across teacher preparation programs, lead me to advocate for the continuous and intensive examination of prior experiences with teachers and teaching. Such a continuous and intensive examination requires at least two programmatic features. First, prospective teachers and teacher educators must cultivate close relationships. They must be students of teaching, first and foremost, and given the personal nature of learning to teach, they must be students of *themselves*. The curriculum of teacher education is not just something experienced *through* the lens of prospective teachers' experiences and their influence; it is, in part, a curriculum *of* examinations of the ongoing influence of prospective teachers' experiences. Therefore, teacher educators and prospective teachers must be students of one another, so they can assist in each other's explorations and growth. The second feature is in support of the cultivation of these relationships. Teacher preparation programs must reimagine their role in and potential for teacher learning; rather than a summer workshop, a series of courses, field experiences, or internships, these programs must represent a bridge between the high school student considering

teaching as a career, equipped with a unique and powerful mixture of assets and deficits related to teacher learning, and the teacher-practitioner, who must navigate their own assets and deficits within the dependencies and challenges of a particular teaching context.

The present teacher learning continuum includes examples of the kinds of structure necessary to reframe teacher learning as a continuous and intensive examination of self. Induction programs might stand out as an example of an attempt to construct a bridge from teacher preparation to work as a professional teacher; operated by school districts for new hires to the district, these programs attempt to acculturate new teachers to “the educational goals, mission, and beliefs of the district” (Wong, 2004, p. 54). Certain teacher preparation programs also operate across the separate structures teacher preparation typically comprises of, namely colleges/universities and K-12 schools. For instance, teacher residency programs sometimes consist of university-based and/or K-12 school based workshops and coursework, with residents placed into classroom contexts and involved in teaching throughout the program; these programs even include induction support, with coaches working with resident-graduates when they are hired as teachers within a given school district that was likely a partner in the residency program. Other programs like New York City Teaching Fellows and Relay Graduate School of Education offer similar coaching support, bridging coursework and teaching practice. Though these, and other, teacher preparation programs hold different priorities and approaches, the effectiveness and impact of which is perhaps worthy of debate, they do stand as examples of a structure connecting college/university-based teacher preparation programs with K-12 schools, in which faculty and staff from the former support teachers in the latter.

What I am advocating for is not a matter of changing *programs* or *structures* but rather the fundamental focus of teacher preparation. In other words, while teacher residency programs offer greater continuity between the college/university and K-12 teaching assignments, this continuity, in and of itself, does not lead to a greater examination of one's own experiences among prospective and practicing teachers. Cultivating an ethos of this sort of examination requires a commitment among teacher educators, not just to the examination but to the notion that learning to teach is inherently personal work, requiring deep reflection on one's self and the influences of experiences, as well as careful contemplation of the teaching one desires to do, and how this teaching can be enacted in a given setting, with its resources, limitations, challenges, and so on. The fundamental focus should be individual teachers and their learning as teachers, a type of learning deeply embedded in, or at least connected to, teaching practice, and one that may not be as linear and time-efficient as leaders of six week workshops, cooperating teachers during a semester-long practicum, or other teacher educators expect or hope it to be.

**Teaching, transparency, and choice.** In the preceding pages, I have argued for more conversations in teacher preparation centered upon prior experiences, and while my study has offered examples of the great potential that lies within prospective teachers' descriptions of their experiences with teachers and teaching, it has also highlighted the need for a closer relationship between *teaching* and *learning to teach*. Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserted that new teachers actually have two jobs: "they have to teach and they have to learn to teach" (p. 1026). Learning as a prospective teacher is necessarily and qualitatively different from the learning the beginning professional teacher does, as the

prospective teacher is not faced with the everyday demands of directing classroom instruction. If the goal of teacher preparation is—as its name suggests—to prepare people to teach, then preservice teachers must also *teach*, or teach *more*, while *learning to teach*. Teaching must be a more central component of teacher preparation, rather than a capstone activity, as observations of or discussions on teaching are simply not the same as teaching itself, a finding among those I have already discussed.

Throughout this study, participants' descriptions of teaching differed in important ways when they discussed their observations of teaching, including the time they spent as learners within another person's teaching, and the teaching they did as teaching interns, tutors, volunteers, co-workers, and as students in class assignments. When they described the teaching they observed as learners or on a day-to-day basis, participants did so through what I referred to in Chapter V as the prism of learning (see p. 214); teachers engaged in certain activities, or asked learners to engage in tasks, yet participants typically saw the focus of these activities and tasks as efforts to help them to learn. Yet they also saw teaching as something that could produce unintended forms of learning, leading participants to appear as though they were reading teachers' intentions from the unintended learning they did. However, when participants themselves were engaged in various forms of teaching, they typically only described the intended acts they engaged in while teaching, and what effect, if any, these acts may have had on learning. Unintended learning, or the other priorities or dependencies participants may have identified or heard about within the teaching of others, seemed almost absent from their own teaching. This absence may have been created, or perhaps exacerbated, by the differences in participants' teaching contexts from the contexts they observed teaching in, but I believe

their absence helps to illuminate at least a portion of the borderlands between observing teaching and teaching itself.

Although teaching may not be regarded by high school students interested in teaching careers as a rigidly defined technical act, it does have basic purposes and parameters, which for this study's participants were mostly related to learning. Teaching consisted, in part, of practices participants themselves used, like the game Rachel developed for her teaching internship, Marie's and Ezequiel's adlibbed attempts to explain lesson concepts to their peers, Alex's presentation-centric lecture to his science class, and Elsie's simplified approach to and song-reminders for knitting. In these, and other examples, of teaching done by participants, teaching was largely portrayed as a cause-and-effect relationship; participants taught, and other people learned, or they did not learn. The priorities and dependencies participants often described, sometimes even *forcefully* critiqued as they recounted experiences with teaching, were not factors in their own teaching. What they observed and *read* from the teaching of others was substantively different than what they enacted themselves in their own teaching.

Among the goals of teacher preparation is to broaden prospective teachers' views of teaching and schooling, but these efforts must start with prospective teachers' own views of what teaching is and/or should be, meaning workshops, coursework, field observations, and other activities initially should be linked back to prospective teachers' views of teaching. Teacher educators must find ways to place prospective teachers into classrooms *as teachers*, or to find other ways for prospective teachers to *teach* others, not only to practice teaching but so they can see in *their own teaching* teacher educators' critiques of teaching and schooling, their orientations towards various forms of social

justice, and their lectures related to the history, philosophy, and politics of schools. Cultivating such awareness is essential for teacher educators, as prospective teachers have been found in the past to engage in impression management (e.g., Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991), and in this study appeared to evaluate teaching they observed in different ways than teaching they did themselves. By closely coupling the content of coursework and workshops with episodes of teaching throughout programs, and not just during periods of field experience or student teaching, teacher educators can illustrate their arguments and content through prospective teachers' teaching. Teacher educators may sidestep or mitigate prospective teachers' resistance to changes in beliefs or innovative practices by employing two additional measures.

First, teacher educators should be transparent about their intentions and the salience of different assignments, activities, and/or programmatic features utilized in teacher preparation programs. With prospective teachers possibly holding their own ideas about what it is to learn to teach, teacher educators could describe what they are asking, or what prospective teachers are required, to do, and how these assignments, activities, or programmatic features contribute to teacher learning. Although such transparency about intentions and the importance of assignments, activities, and programmatic features may surface divergent, if not opposing, views of learning to teach between prospective teachers and teacher educators, transparency offers prospective teachers access to the logic and reasoning behind certain segments of their studies as teachers, the same kind of reasoning some students may have wished they were provided by teachers in the past. Failure to surface these intentions and views may allow divergence between prospective teachers' and teacher educators' views to fester, leading some prospective teachers to rely



on their own views of learning to teach rather than potentially broadening their views as they come into contact with the views of others.

To be clear, *divergence* of views about teaching or learning to teach is not something I see as a thorn in prospective teachers' or teacher educators' sides. In fact, divergence of views may lead to dynamic discussions, and perhaps even earnest efforts to reflect on one's experiences and to see them anew. That said, when divergence, or a lack of transparency about why prospective teachers are being asked to undertake certain efforts as part of their teacher preparation, results in resistance against fully examining what teaching is, has meant, and can be, learning to teach and teacher preparation may fall well short of their potential for teacher learning and development.

Second, teacher educators should offer options for how prospective teachers take up certain assignments, activities, and/or programmatic features in teacher preparation. Recall that Rachel expressed a belief that she could *get back* what she had lost in public schools by returning, in some capacity, to her Montessori school. Reflected in this particular description is a type of teaching Rachel wanted to enact in the future, as well as the initial steps in pursuing this image or form of teaching. Even though it may be rare for high school students interested in teaching careers to suggest approaches to continue their own learning as teachers, such capacities to recognize shifts in learning and to put forth measures to realize particular changes in teaching should be cultivated and supported, as these capacities could hold tremendous value across a teaching career and the challenges it brings.

## **Implications of the Study for Policy**

Agencies awarding teacher certification—typically state departments or boards of education—have historically tended to view teacher preparation strictly in terms of a formal program of study in a college or university; in other words, teacher preparation, in the eyes of policymakers, has a more or less defined time frame for prospective teachers: it begins when teacher education coursework starts, and ends when prospective teachers complete student teaching and their university studies, as well as other certification requirements like examinations and/or teaching portfolios. If anything, policymakers and reformers have attempted to push teacher preparation in a very different direction, advocating for flexibility in or the streamlining of teacher certification requirements, contributing to the development of alternative pathways or certificates for teaching, as well as less stringent requirements for licensure reciprocity across state lines (Antonetti, 2018; Sentell, 2011, August 17; Shuls & Trivitt, 2015; see also Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). In effect, some policymakers, reformers, and/or legislators suggest, if they do not explicitly assert, that teacher learning takes place within a time-bounded period, if they believe prospective teachers concern themselves with teacher learning at all.

The results of this study suggest that high school students interested in teaching careers are indeed in the midst of some form of teacher learning. This form may be distinctly nascent, perhaps characterized by a limited perspective on the full scope of teachers' work and teaching, and certainly in need of guidance and support to enter and to thrive in future work with K-12 students, but the experiences these students have with teachers and teaching influence conceptions of teaching, which can hold great potential in shaping the teachers these students become. Characterizing teacher learning as something

only done in university teacher preparation programs, or as something to ignore in favor of subject-matter competency or discrete classroom management strategies, only serves to limit the time spent negotiating the biographical elements that heavily influence learning to teach, exchanging this arduous work for a bare-bones set of tools or tricks for novice teachers to attempt to use wherever they end up teaching. In a period marked by teacher shortages, alternative teacher certification is sometimes billed as a mechanism to recruit and retain teachers (Woods, 2016), yet the drastic reduction, or even elimination, of teacher preparation requirements is arguably the most distressing policy emphasis when it comes to negotiating the personal influences that impact teaching, which are left for novice, alternative certified teachers to interrogate on their own, while meeting the demands of students, families, colleagues, and other stakeholders in the school community. Though I was at least minimally successful in interrogating my own experiences after completing an alternative certification program, the process was so challenging for me as a novice teacher that I could easily have quit teaching within my first three years as a teacher.

Rather than limiting or removing teacher preparation, I see this study's results suggestive of the potential of a broader, longer view of teacher learning, with an investment reflective of such breadth and length. There already exist mentorship and recruitment programs that work to draw young people into teaching and education careers. Earlier in this dissertation, I mentioned *Teachers To Be*, a university-sponsored program that sought to recruit high school students of color into education studies, as well as to support them in their university studies and preparations to become teachers. *Teachers To Be* is certainly not alone in these efforts; Simmons (2018, February 12)

observed that across the United States, a number of high schools have started to “tackle the issue” of declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs by creating teacher academies to “give high schoolers experience in the classroom in hopes of identifying, inspiring, and preparing great teachers.” Other schools offer classes in teaching and education careers, such as the Tomorrow’s Teachers class, billed in part as a program to offer juniors and seniors in high school “valuable insight into the nature of teaching” (*Tomorrow’s Teachers Fact Sheet*, n.d.), as well as supervised internships in specific classes, like the one Rachel participated in with Mr. Arnold, one of her former social studies teachers.

While these programs have the potential to serve as an important learning experience for high school students considering teaching careers, they could be characterized as frontier work in teacher education. The programs appear to have broader aims than personal reflection on one’s own experiences, yet the beginning investments they appear to make in *preparing teachers* and discussing *the nature of teaching* have the potential to provide an excellent forum to interrogate prior experiences with teachers and teaching, along with considerations by students of the kinds of teachers they hope to be or types of teaching they desire to do. However, conceptualizing learning to teach as something students may undertake, at least to a degree, in high schools helps to highlight implications I see for research coming from this study.

### **Implications of the Study for Research**

First, scholarship on pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, the experiences informing these conceptions, or learning to teach prior to college/university matriculation is exceedingly rare, and there remains much to learn about the nature and power of early

experiences with teachers and teaching and their influence on learning to teach. Teacher education scholars have previously highlighted the absence of scholarship on early life experiences and their influence on teacher learning or educational beliefs. Feiman-Nemser wrote in 1983 that there was “little empirical research on the role of early experiences on learning to teach” (p. 9). By 1992, Pajares, in his review of literature on teacher beliefs, noted how teacher education researchers were aware of the power of prospective teachers’ vivid experiences with and images of teaching, yet, up to that point, “they [had] failed to explore” these experiences and images (p. 324). Since Pajares (1992) highlighted the absence of such scholarship, teacher educators and researchers have studied conceptions of teaching and the influence of early life or pre-collegiate experiences with prospective teachers, though never as these experiences were still unfolding. Although my study was intended to shed some light on the power of *early experiences* for high school students interested in teaching careers, it is but one, small-scale effort. With high school teachers in the programs mentioned above stepping into pioneering teacher education work, they have little insight from the literature to conduct their work with high school students possibly interested in teaching careers. More scholarship is clearly needed to examine learning to teach in the pre-collegiate years, particularly for students participating in high school-based teaching induction programs.

Second, while increased and diverse scholarship on early life experiences could be quite useful for new high school-based teacher educators, their university counterparts may be more interested in how the influence of early life experiences on conceptions of teaching, and teacher learning in general, change or shift over time. Lortie (1998/2005) called for observations of and interviews with beginning teachers to track the impact of

past influences on teaching practice, and how these practices persisted or ended over time; he also suggested that teacher educators “expose different groups of students to different ‘treatments’” in their preparation as teachers to cultivate awareness of new approaches as well as those “to which they were previously exposed” (p. 139). While I see no reason to reject these suggestions—though the idea of framing teacher education pedagogy or work as *treatments* has the potential to be regarded as prescriptive or even unfair, if certain approaches are more useful than others—I see longitudinal work between the high school and university as a more promising next step.

Learning to teach, as part of a continuous experience, is never accurately portrayed as a snapshot, described *at* one point in time *for* all time. Wood’s (2000) study of shifts in prospective teachers’ conceptions of teaching over the course of a teacher preparation program revealed changes in some prospective teachers’ conceptions of teaching, yet the study did not examine shifts beyond the teacher preparation program, such as shifts or changes that may have occurred between students’ movement from high school to university studies to professional practice. Studying these three time periods, or shifts between periods, would be logistically challenging, yet scholars are already making efforts to trace the influence of early life experiences; Mensah (2019), as one example, employed a longitudinal case study, examining the early life, teacher preparation, and first year teaching experiences of an African American female science teacher.

Third, the importance of pre-collegiate experiences highlighted in this study leads me to suggest that teacher education researchers continue to study the pre-collegiate experiences and conceptions of teaching of students of color. In her study, Mensah (2019) recounted the sharp decrease in African American teachers following the *Brown v.*

*Board of Education of Topeka, KS* ruling, an ongoing decline so stark that black teachers would later be described as an “endangered species” in schools (Mensah, 2019; see also Rodman, 1985, November 20), a phenomenon observed in the US teaching faculty in an era when K-12 student of color enrollment in public schools has experienced a tremendous increase (Grant & Gibson, 2011; Mensah, 2019). Although the school experiences of different racial groups have been described in the literature as markedly different (Gay, 1993; Nieto, 2000), and these experiences are believed to influence the pedagogies of teachers of color (Sleeter & Milner, 2011; Villegas & Clewell, 1998), literature in this area is still emerging.

Additional research attempting to surface pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching of students of color, or perhaps students of particular racial and/or ethnic groups, would complement existing scholarship on the school experiences of students of color, studies like the one conducted by Wilson and Corbett (2001, 2007) in Philadelphia middle schools, by focusing on the influence of teachers and teaching on students of color and their decisions to teach, as well as their practice as teachers. Additionally, an orientation towards consummatory experience may be quite useful to researchers as they examine the prior experiences with teachers and teaching of students of color, as well as the desires or hopes these students might have for teaching if they become teachers. Both prior experiences with and hopes for teaching may be important influences on these students’ decisions to become and to remain teachers, and they may offer insights into how more teachers of color can be recruited and supported given the important roles and influences they can have on K-12 students, particularly students of color.

### Critique of the Study

The implications I see stemming from this dissertation study have helped me to develop certain critiques of the study, particularly in terms of participant demography. When I started recruitment, I intended to recruit the most diverse group of high school students interested in teaching careers I could. To this end, I partnered with mentorship programs like *Teachers To Be*, and also contacted other programs as well, from which I recruited one participant—Ezequiel—but I was unsuccessful recruiting others from the program. Though the cohort of participants included students in rural, suburban, and urban areas, as well as students with experiences in different types of schools—and even one who was a homeschooler—the cohort, at least in terms of participants’ racial identification, looks more like the current teaching faculty across the United States, with 80% of participants identifying as white. Though my difficulties recruiting participants of color do not eliminate the utility of this study or its findings, I must again note that I set out to explore pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, which, as a matter of phenomenographic methodology, required me to search for and to examine *variations in experiences with teaching as phenomenon*. Given the lack of high school students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds participating, the study should be regarded as a work in progress in terms of surfacing the conceptions of teaching of high school students interested in teaching careers, though one I would at the same time argue has surfaced what I consider to be important variations in experiences with teaching.

In addition to the racial and ethnic diversity of the cohort, the number of participants in the study may have also led to the discovery of less variation in experiences with teaching than actually exists amongst high school students interested in



teaching careers. Phenomenographers like Trigwell (2000) have recommended fifteen to twenty participants as a preferred number of participants for phenomenographic studies. Realizing early in recruitment that I might struggle to find participants, particularly given the fact that I had no regular connection as a teacher or in some other type of role to high school students interested in teaching careers, I expanded my recruitment methods while also following Trigwell's (2000) suggestion to include any participants who might describe "an interesting conception" or even "one which might be considered extreme" (p. 66). Trigwell's preferred range is, however, just a recommendation; there is no universally accepted minimum number of participants in phenomenographic studies. It stands to reason, though, that a larger number of participants has the potential to surface more of the "finite and relatively limited number of qualitatively different ways" a phenomenon like teaching can be experienced and understood (Richardson, 1999, pp. 61-62), though there is no guarantee of greater variation among a larger population, either.

While there were just five participants in the study, my interactions with each of them, through interviews and artifacts, often challenged my views of teaching and schooling, challenges I have not documented throughout this dissertation as I focused on participants' descriptions. At various points, I found myself questioning beliefs or identifying assumptions I held about high school students interested in teaching careers, and what they saw, heard, and understood from their descriptions of their experiences with teachers and teaching; an example that stands out in my memory is Rachel's assertion that public school teachers teach a certain way *because* they were public school students, suggesting a movement of ideas or practices related to teaching, yet one inconsistent with my own experiences as a former public school student and teacher, and

the understandings of teaching I have come to hold as a result. In between my interviews with each participant, I dedicated a substantial amount of time to memoing, including the bracketing of my presuppositions as well as the various aspects of my own positionality that I felt were challenged or shifting as a result of my interactions with these five participants. These challenges and shifts no doubt complicated my work as a researcher, as well as the positionalities I held towards it.

From the background of the study provided in Chapter I, I outlined the personal nature of the problem motivating this study, which, over the course of my experiences as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher has led me to hold a theoretical orientation centered on consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher. My deep professional and theoretical investments to consummatory experience, as intersections or transactions between past experiences, future-oriented hopes or dreams, and ongoing interactions with teachers and teaching, no doubt has influenced not just the structure of this study, but how I have conducted interviews, analyzed transcripts and artifacts, and ultimately produced the dissertation itself. Although my memoing was also used to consider my theoretical framework and to challenge my understandings of data and interpretations at different points during the study, the influence of my theoretical commitments remains in my work as a researcher during this study.

Perhaps the greatest consequence of this commitment to consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher has been my emphasis on *assets*, or more specifically the assets or resources high school students interested in teaching careers have come to hold before they pursue formal teacher preparation. This emphasis, at times, may have led to interpretations of data, particularly in the individual profiles, that

highlighted participants' assets while obscuring the deficits they may hold. To reiterate, I never undertook this study to suggest, or to find evidence of, the paramount importance of certain assets high school students interested in teaching careers hold over deficits they may possess. Rather, my goal was, to the best of my ability, to examine participants' descriptions of teaching, and to surface whatever assets and/or deficits I could from these descriptions. The drafting of each profile, with its emphasis on the individual's descriptions across different data sources, allowed me to deeply contemplate each participant's descriptions; memoing was again useful in examining both participants' critiques of themselves as teachers, as well as the critiques of them I developed over time. It is important to recognize that my commitments to consummatory experience of being and becoming a teacher, and the Deweyan view of experience as a potential asset in learning, may have led me to emphasize assets more than deficits throughout the study.

### **Concluding Remarks**

By the time young people reach high school, they have spent many hours around teaching, in different forms and settings, conducted by many different people. Since they are often *learning* as they see *teaching*, a muddled relationship can form between the two, helping to frame teaching in the future; in other words, by seeing teaching first as a learner, young people often find the act of teaching to be explicitly intended to inspire learning. Yet they observe and assess others' teaching through a highly personal constellation of approaches, routines, patterns, priorities, and dependencies they identify as present in and/or important to teaching. In the midst of their observations and the teaching they do, young people also may be developing conceptions of what it is to learn to teach. What young people bring to teacher preparation programs cannot be generalized

based on the data analyzed for this dissertation, but they likely carry an array of assets and deficits related to learning to teach, both of which may be greater in number and complexity than the literature sometimes portrays them, and could be consequential, in ways beneficial and/or detrimental, to the learning and teaching they will do as prospective and practicing teachers.

The study contributes a more nuanced depiction than socialization models of teacher learning provide regarding the ways young people interested in teaching careers may understand teaching. Teacher educators can use the study to further consider, and formulate pedagogical approaches drawing upon and/or developing, high school students' and prospective teachers' capacities to analyze teaching and schooling, particularly when considering the teaching as *prioritizing* and *dependent* categories. While the former may offer the seeds of prospective teachers' own agency in their teaching, the latter possibly demonstrates awareness of the bureaucratic, social, and/or political milieu that invariably shapes teaching in schools. For teacher educators and researchers, the study's results may be the impetus for additional research on the influence of pre-collegiate experiences on teaching practice, particularly studies that might explore shifts in conceptions of teaching, and the extent to which pre-collegiate or university/teacher education experiences are thought by prospective teachers to be influential to their conceptions of teaching and teaching practice. The study also includes descriptions of experiences young people found important to their interest(s) in teaching, as well as their notions of what teaching is and can be, which high school-based teacher educators' can use as they develop curriculum and instruction on teaching and schooling in teacher academies. Though the study's scale and methodology do not allow for sweeping, generalizable conclusions

regarding pre-collegiate conceptions of teaching, its results provide a much different view of early teacher learning, one with utility for both high school and university-based teacher educators.

My ambition, as a teacher educator and researcher, is to continue exploring the influence and power of pre-collegiate experiences and the conceptions of teaching they influence. There seems to be consensus amongst teacher educators that pre-collegiate experiences are influential, in some form or another or to greater or less degrees, to the teaching that educators will one day do. Therefore, exploring these influences, and how they may shift over time, is work I see as crucial to teacher preparation and the process of learning to teach, yet work that must be reconceptualized to engage both the assets prospective teachers hold, as well as the deficits that may constrain or limit their teaching. Such a reconceptualization seems particularly important given the early teaching experiences prospective teachers may have, and how these experiences combine with other experiences observing teaching to form conceptions of teaching. The combination of pre-collegiate teaching experiences and observations of teaching also may hold important clues as to why certain individuals, or groups, tend to avoid teaching as a career path. Most importantly, though, reconceptualizing and studying pre-collegiate experiences and conceptions of teaching allows teacher educators and researchers to position prospective teachers as capable learners, with capacities (or the potential to develop capacities) to author important aspects of their teacher learning, even if this requires re-reading, reconsidering, and even revising their understandings of the earliest chapters of this learning.

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## Appendix A

### Interview 1 Protocol

As detailed in the third chapter, this study will use a phenomenographic methodology, including a series of three interviews based on Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interview structure. The first interview will focus on participants' life histories, with greater emphasis on previous interactions with educators, as well as the teaching participants observed and/or participated in with these individuals. As mentioned in the third chapter of this proposal, the use of Seidman's (2006) interview structure, particularly the initial life history interview, is an intentional choice, meant to offer opportunities to examine a number of potential influences on conceptions of teaching; as well, the emphasis on past events will help to avoid exclusive focus on ongoing interactions with the phenomenon of teaching, an emphasis sometimes criticized in phenomenographic studies.

The first interview will have four components. First, there will be an opening greeting, which will include a concise overview of the study, a confidentiality statement, and an overview of the interview. During the opening segment, permission to audio record will be sought, and I will also develop a pseudonym with the participant should s/he desire to choose one. Second, there will be the creation of a timeline, or list of individuals who have helped participants learn. Although I will prompt participants to create this timeline during the question phase, I wanted to establish a specific protocol for this component as well. Third, a series of questions will be asked following the period of time given to draft the timeline. The question component will be listed in script form, but I do not intend to ask questions one-by-one from the list below. Finally, a fourth segment

will close the interview, during which participants will be thanked, a brief preview of the next interview will be offered, and I will also explain the use of blogs and artifacts.

### **Timeline of Educators and Teaching**

Earlier in the first interview—the exact order of this component will be listed in the script below—participants will be provided with a document called “Timeline of Educators and Teaching,” located in Appendix B, and prompted to create a timeline list using the following directions:

Directions: Starting from the earliest time you can remember, think about individuals you have met in your life who have helped you to learn or to do something that has been useful or significant to your life. List these individuals’ names above, at the approximate age you were when you encountered them and their instruction.

Participants will be given between five and seven minutes to identify and to list as many of these teachers as they can. As they do this, I will refrain from speaking, save from offering indications of how much time remains.

### **Script**

#### **Opening**

**Greeting:** Welcome participant and thank her or him for agreeing to participate in the study.

**Purpose of Study:** Quickly overview the nature of this study—namely, that it is a dissertation study, and that it aims to explore the pre-collegiate experiences high school students interested in teaching careers have with teachers and teaching prior to beginning formal teacher preparation.

**Confidentiality Statement:** Your identity, as well as the identities of other

individuals or schools that may be mentioned during this study, will remain confidential. Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used in transcripts and written reports to prevent all participants and schools from being identified.

**Prompt for Pseudonym:** See if participant would like to propose a name.

**Permission to Record:** Request permission to continue recording.

**Overview of Interview:** 60-75 minutes; Series of questions about participants' backgrounds—that is, an emphasis on past experiences, not necessarily ongoing experiences; List of individuals the participant identifies as teachers, from birth to the day of the interview

### **Interview Questions**

The following is a list of specific questions, or general lines of questioning, that may be used in the first interview. The actual order of usage of these questions may vary depending on participant responses.

#### **Warm-up questions.**

- Tell me a little about yourself—where you're from, where you live...?
- How did you come to be interested in teaching?
- What grade levels or subjects have you thought about teaching?
- What made you interested in these grade levels and/or subjects?

#### **Main interview questions.**

- Tell me about a time where you needed to learn to do something, and you worked it out yourself.
- What steps did you take to figure this out?
- What challenges did you encounter?

- How did you overcome these challenges?
  
- Think about a time you had to get help to learn how to do something, or to understand something better. [Brief Pause]
  
- Using as much detail as you can, tell me about what you wanted help learning, and what led to you asking for help.
  
- Ask the following if they do not come up organically in participants' responses.
  - ◆ Who did you go to for help? Why did this particular person come to mind?
  
  - ◆ In what ways did this individual (or these individuals) assist you in sorting things out?
  
  - ◆ How were their approaches to help you different from the ones you took to figure things out?
  
- Ask the following if several examples are presented.
  - ◆ How were these efforts to help you different?
  
  - ◆ Why do you think these approaches were taken to help you?
  
- Since you were younger, what kind of activities, sports, groups, or clubs have you been involved in outside of school?
  
- Let's talk a little more about these activities, sports, groups, or clubs. Think about your favorite or most memorable one, or maybe just choose one if none stand out. [Brief Pause]



- Tell me about a time in one of these activities where you had a really meaningful or powerful learning experience. By that I mean activities or events you participated in, where you walked away thinking, knowing, or doing something really significant or useful. Or perhaps you developed a new skill or ability you didn't have (or didn't do well) before?
- Ask the following if they do not come up organically in participants' responses.
  - ◆ What's an example of something you learned from your participation in one of these groups or events?
  - ◆ How were you taught this knowledge and/or skill?
  - ◆ How successful was this teaching? How do you know?
  - ◆ How was the teaching (or coaching?) here similar to what you experienced in your earlier example?
  - ◆ How was the teaching (or coaching?) different to what you experienced in your earlier example?
- When you've read in books about or watched on television and/or in movies where people are getting help to learn something, or help being taught, what has that looked like? Can you recall a specific scene or story that stands out?
- How does this compare to some of the experiences you've shared?

- How many teachers of color did you have in your school experiences? [If a limited number, why do you suppose that has been the case?]
- How have your experiences with these teachers compared to those you've had with other teachers?

**Closing.**

- Thank participant for taking the time to meet and talk about her or his experiences.
- Tell participant that the next interview will continue this conversation, focusing more on ongoing experiences with teachers and teaching.
- Review instructions for blog and artifacts (see Appendix C).

# Appendix B

## Timeline of Educators and Teaching

| <b>PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED ME TO THINK, TO KNOW, OR TO DO THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN USEFUL AND/OR SIGNIFICANT</b> |        |
|--|--------|
|  | 2017   |
|  | Age 14 |
|  | Age 12 |
|  | Age 10 |
|  | Age 8  |
|  | Age 6  |
|  | Birth  |

**Directions:** Starting from the earliest time you can remember, think about individuals you have met in your life who have helped you to learn or to do something that has been useful or significant to your life. List these individuals' names above, at the approximate age you were when you encountered

## Appendix C

### Initial Audio, Textual, and/or Visual Artifact Instructions

At the end of the first interview, participants will be provided with credentials for an online blog. The purpose of the blog is to offer participants an opportunity to record observations or thoughts related to episodes of teaching they observe, in spoken, textual, and/or visual form(s). These entries, either written or attached as uploads to the blog, will help to cast a net into participants' experiences, and these observations will form the basis of the second interview. Participants will be asked to produce 1-2 artifacts per week between the first and second interviews, including at least one visual entry using the "Snapshot of Learning" template. The blog will include the following directions:

Help! Your experiences are important!

You've been given access to this blog to help share some of your observations, thoughts, and feelings—or perhaps recent memories—of times when someone helps you to learn. Between now and the next time we meet, I'd like you to produce at least one visual using the "Snapshot of Learning" form found in the blog.

In addition, it would be really helpful if you could produce at least 1-2 entries per week in the blog about teachers and teaching, either writing about what you see and hear; the people, setting, and/or events of an activity; and any thoughts or feelings you have related to these observations.

Your entries can be in any form. You can write directly into the blog. You can also upload handwritten (scanned/photographed) notes, voice memos or audio clips, or drawings or visuals like classroom maps. You can even sketch additional entries using other “Snapshot of Learning” forms.

Our goal is to collect as much information related to your observations and your thoughts as we can by the time we next speak.

### **Snapshot of Learning**

Before the second interview, participants will be asked to produce a visual of a well-remembered interaction with a teacher and/or teaching. References to this visual will use the word *snapshot* to link the sketch to a picture. Instead of prompting participants to produce a visual of a specific strategy or idea, the snapshot is intended to see at least some of what the participant’s attention is drawn to in order to better understand how s/he understands these interactions. The “Snapshot of Learning” form, found in Appendix D, will be provided to participants, which includes the following prompt:

Directions: Think about a recent occasion—maybe even an episode or event that is ongoing—where someone has helped you to learn something useful or significant. If you had a phone or camera with you while you were observing or a part of this individual’s attempts to help you learn and you decided to take a picture, what might the picture show?

In the space below, sketch a visual of what your picture might show. What you decide to feature is up to you. For instance, you could create a visual showing just

a part of the activity, or you could try to represent what was going on throughout the area where the activity was taking place. Another suggestion would be to draw from your perspective in the activity, or from a specific point in the setting like the parking lot, a location on the perimeter of the activity, at the door, etc.

Beneath your visual, describe in a sentence or two what you have drawn. Where is this? What are we seeing?

Some interview questions will focus on the snapshot and how the participants describe the experiences they depicted.

## Appendix D

## Snapshot of Learning

**SNAPSHOT OF LEARNING**

**Directions:** Think about a recent occasion—maybe even an episode or event that is ongoing—where someone has helped you to learn something useful or significant. If you had a camera with you while you were observing or a part of this individual’s attempts to help you learn and you decided to take a picture, what might the picture show?

In the space below, sketch a visual of what your picture might show. What you decide to feature is up to you. For instance, you could create a visual showing just a part of the activity, or you could try to represent what was going on throughout the area where the activity was taking place. Another suggestion would be to draw from your perspective in the activity, or from a specific point in the setting like the parking lot, a location on the perimeter of the activity, at the door, etc.

Beneath your visual, describe in a sentence or two what you have drawn. Where is this? What are we seeing?



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## Appendix E

### Interview 2 Protocol

Following Seidman's (2006) interview structure, the second interview in this study will examine recent, and perhaps ongoing, experiences interacting with individuals identified as teachers and their teaching. Like the first interview, the second will have several components. An opening segment will re-introduce the study's purpose and confidentiality assurance, in addition to seeking permission to record and providing an overview of the second interview. A second component will include a brief review of the "Timeline of Educators and Teaching" created in the first interview. Third, participants will be asked to share a visual of at least one of their well-remembered interactions with teachers and/or teaching. The snapshot visual will be shared and discussed in the midst of the fourth component, a number of questions intended to surface details of participants' experiences. Finally, a closing segment will provide revised blog and artifact directions, and preview the final interview.

### Script

#### Opening

**Greeting:** Welcome participant and thank her or him for continuing to participate in the study.

**Purpose & Confidentiality Reminder:** Remind participants that this interview is part of a dissertation study exploring the pre-collegiate experiences high school students interested in teaching careers have with teachers and teaching prior to beginning formal teacher preparation. All participant identities and locations, in all sources, will be protected through pseudonyms.



**Permission to Record:** Request permission to continue recording.

**Overview of Interview:** 60-75 minutes; Series of questions about participants' ongoing experiences with teachers and teaching. The settings of the experiences described in this interview are less important than the fact that the participant feels like s/he is being taught something, or otherwise interacting with a person s/he identifies as a teacher; Recall of list of teachers generated in first interview; Review of snapshot visuals of a more vivid memory of an interaction with teachers and teaching.

## **Interview Questions**

### **Warm-up questions**

- How is school going so far this year?
- Do you have classes you're enjoying this year? Which ones?
- How about ones you're not enjoying? What don't you like about them?
- Do you think your enjoyment, or lack of enjoyment, is related in any way to the teachers/educators you've encountered? In what way(s)?
- [If enjoyment/lack of enjoyment response is animated, or participant seems like s/he wants to say more] Tell me about a recent day or two in this activity/class/etc. What was happening?

### **Timeline review prompt.**

- Produce a copy of the participant's timeline/list of individuals who helped her or him learn from the first interview. This should be saved

somewhere easily accessible so it does not have to be searched for in the middle of the interview.

- Tell participant that today's interview will at least start off looking at more recent experiences with individuals who have helped the participant to learn, as well as the assistance these individuals provided.
- Ask the participant to review the list, starting with individuals interacted with more recently (and perhaps, in an ongoing interaction). Direct participants to recall memorable activities, events, or lessons with some of these individuals, though certainly *not* all or even most of them.

**Main interview questions.**

- What events or episodes did you choose to capture in your snapshot drawing? Give me a little bit of context or description about what was going on before this scene.
- [If details do not come out from previous question/prompt] What did this activity/event/lesson look like? How would you describe the people, settings, and events?
- How did you come to choose this activity/event/lesson? Describe your process, or a little of what you were thinking as you made some decisions.

- Think about a leader, coach, or teacher, or an activity, event, or lesson, where the help or instruction you received wasn't very memorable—or maybe not very successful. [Brief Pause]
- Tell me about a particular story or event related to this unsuccessful example of teaching.
- How are these types of teaching different?
- What makes the one more memorable and/or successful, while the other isn't? [Consider asking separately about memorable and successful]
- If you think about some of these leaders, coaches, teachers that we've been talking about—what parts of their work do you think come down to their choice? Which parts do you think are mandated or required?
- Can you remember a time where you saw people being helped, taught, or coached on TV, in movies, etc.?
- What did this look like? Tell me a little bit about the plot, or maybe a scene you remember.
- What led to you watching a show or movie, or reading a book or novel, in which teaching or coaching was described?
- How are these examples different from some of the experiences you've already described? [Prompt participant with a specific example, based on previous responses] Why do you think they are different? (Or, how are they similar, and why?)

**Closing.**

- Thank participant for taking the time to meet and talk about her or his experiences.
- Tell participant that the next interview will examine how participants understand their various pre-collegiate experiences with teaching and teachers.
- Revised blog and artifact instructions.

## Appendix F

### Revised Audio, Textual, and/or Visual Artifact Instructions

Since the focus of the third interview will shift from a description of ongoing experiences to meaning-making derived across all experiences, the instructions for participant blogs and artifacts will be changed to reflect this shift in focus. While participants may continue to describe, in various forms, some of their experiences involving different forms of teaching, the prompt given to participants will ask them to consider why these activities or episodes look the way they do; in other words, participants will be asked to reflect on the reasons why the educator they have observed made some of the decisions s/he has made. Participants will also be asked to consider how their own teaching might look in the future. The blog will include the following instructions:

As we approach our final interview, I want you to continue thinking about different types of educators, and the various ways you see them help others and/or you to learn, but I am also very interested in how these experiences impact your beliefs about teaching, or how you see yourself as a teacher, or teaching, in the future.

Between now and our next meeting, I'd like you to produce at least one visual using the "Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching" form found in the blog.

In addition, it would be extremely helpful if you could continue to produce at least 1-2 blog entries per week where you collect some of your thoughts about teaching.

Your entries can be in any form. You can write directly into the blog. You can also upload handwritten (scanned/photographed) notes, voice memos or audio clips, or drawings or visuals like classroom maps. You can even sketch additional entries using other “Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching” forms.

## Appendix G

### Interview 3 Protocol

The final interview in this study will again draw from Seidman's (2006) interview structure. Seidman's (2006) third interview focused on meaning-making across experiences with a phenomenon. Part of this meaning-making could involve what Seidman (2006) referred to as "a future orientation" (p. 18), one in which participants not only reflected on the events of the distant and near past in order to make sense of them, but also anticipated future interactions with the phenomenon. In addition to another snapshot drawing—where the participant is asked to produce a snapshot view of how her or his teaching might look at some point in the future—the third interview will include a review of any blog entries and artifact uploads produced by the participant, as well as questions probing for evidence of participants' meaning-making. As was the case in the previous protocol, this appendix will outline the major components and possible questions related to the third and final interview.

### Script

#### Opening

**Greeting:** Welcome participant and again thank her or him for continuing to participate in the study.

**Purpose & Confidentiality Reminder:** Remind participants that this interview is part of a dissertation study exploring the pre-collegiate experiences high school students interested in teaching careers have with teachers and teaching prior to beginning formal teacher preparation. All participant identities and locations, in all sources, will be protected through pseudonyms.

**Permission to Record:** Request permission to continue recording.

**Overview of Interview:** 60-75 minutes; Series of questions asking participants to draw from their pre-collegiate experiences and explain their meaning; A review of blog entries and/or artifact uploads of interest for students and/or researcher.

## Interview Questions

### Warm-up questions.

- Prior to interview, review transcripts from previous interviews.
- Follow up with a question here about an individual, activity, event, or episode described before.

### Main interview questions.

- If you were talking to your friends about teaching, how would you describe what *good teaching* is?
- What kinds of activities occur when *good teaching* is happening?
- Tell me about a recent occasion where you saw *good teaching*. Who was doing this teaching, and what was being taught?
- How do you see yourself teaching others in the future? Have you produced any entries in your blog, or uploaded any artifacts, along these lines that you can share?
- Tell me about a specific activity/event/lesson/approach you would use to help someone else to learn.
- **Ask if answer to the above question is limited in its detail.**
  - ◆ What did this activity/event/lesson look like?



- ◆ How would you describe the people, settings, and events?
- ◆ Why did you choose this activity/event/lesson/approach? Where did this idea come from?
- Probe for different sources; perhaps inquire about media images or specific examples previously discussed in earlier interviews.
- What kind of preparations will you make to do this sort of teaching? What will you need to do, to know, etc.?
- How would you say this is similar to some of the experiences you've shared with me?
- How is it different from forms of teaching you've experienced?
- In the last interview I asked about parts of teaching that you thought were mandated or required. If you consider yourself as a teacher—[add in a specific issue brought up in participant's response in 2nd interview]—how will you balance or negotiate these requirements if they are not consistent with your ideas of *good teaching*?

**Closing.**

- Thank participant for taking the time to meet and talk about her or his experiences.
- Talk to participant about next steps—possibly looking at and providing feedback on individual profiles as a sort of validity check.

## Appendix H

## Snapshot of Anticipated Teaching

**SNAPSHOT OF ANTICIPATED TEACHING**

**Directions:** Think about yourself as a teacher—someone in a position to help another person learn something—or engaged in some form of teaching in the future. If you could take a picture of your own teaching, what might it look like?

In the space below, sketch a visual of what this person's picture might show. What you decide to feature is up to you. For instance, you could create a visual showing just a part of the activity, or you could try to represent what was going on throughout the area where the activity was taking place. Another suggestion would be to draw from your perspective in the activity, or from a specific point in the setting like the parking lot, a location on the perimeter of the activity, at the door, etc.

Beneath your visual, describe in a sentence or two what you have drawn. Where is this? What are we seeing?




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## Appendix I

### Individual Profile Review (Member Check) Instructions

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me, submit artifacts, and discuss your teachers and teaching. I wanted to invite you to check out a “profile” I wrote, based on all of our conversations and the other information you provided me.

Basically, I want to see if I got *you* and *your experiences* right—that is, I want to see if I have represented you and your experiences as you described yourself and your experiences with teachers and teaching.

If you log in to Slack, I have pasted a draft of this profile. I would really appreciate it if you would take the time to read the profile and give me a little feedback. What did I get right? What did I get wrong? Are there things you don’t understand? Or other things you wish I had included? You can leave feedback in Slack in any format, either typed, or through an uploaded file (e.g. voice memo).

Again, the purpose of this review is for you to help me to come as close as I possibly can to describing your experiences as accurately as possible.