

“Teaching is like taking a trip”: Two Cases of Pre-service Teachers’ Early Construction of Professional Identity with Disparate Outcomes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore two sophomore pre-service teachers’ processes of professional orientation in the same teacher education program in the US with emphasis on their identity construction. The pre-services teachers were asked to reflect on their “identity” and articulate “who they are” as becoming teachers in semi-structured interviews and narrative writing about their metaphors for teaching. Using a narrative inquiry approach, their identity construction process was first examined in light of their life experiences prior to entering the teacher education program, including childhood experiences, early teacher role models, previous teaching experiences, and important people or experiences that affected their choice of a teaching career. Initial findings reveal that the same pre-service teacher education program had a different impact on each student teacher. Their previous life experiences, their early beliefs about teaching, their initial motivations, and their experiences in their teacher education program all influenced their adaptation to the teaching profession.

Keywords: teacher identity, pre-service teachers, elementary, teacher preparation

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INTRODUCTION

In schools across the US, teachers are viewed the most important school-related factor influencing students' academic achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012) and social and emotional development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The qualities teachers bring into a classroom affect their teaching skills, practices, interactions with students, and directly influencing their students' performance (Santoro, 2011). Underlying the importance of teacher quality, Feimen-Nemser (2001) pointed out that:

After decades of school reform, a consensus is building that the qualities of our nation's schools depend on the quality of our nation's teachers. Policy makers and educators are coming to see that what students learn is directly related to what and how teachers teach; and what and how teachers teach depends on the knowledge, skills and commitments they bring to the their teaching. (p. 1013)

Due to the critical impact of teachers on the intellectual, emotional and social development of children, recruiting and retaining the most qualified teachers have become primary goals of school policies at local, state, and national levels in the US. (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Among the factors influencing teachers' quality is how they develop their professional identity, a process that begins at least as early as their entry into teacher education programs. Building upon insights of Pillen, Beijaard, and den brook (2013), Avraamidou (2014) emphasizes the importance of teachers' identity construction as it can serve as a resource for teachers in making sense of themselves as well as a useful analytic lens for gaining a better understanding of teacher learning and development. According to Sachs (2005):

Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be," "how to act" and "how to understand" their work and their place in society (p.15).

Accordingly, this study explores the professional adaptation process of two pre-service teachers' in a teacher education program in the US with emphasis on their identity construction. Research questions of this study are: (1) How do life histories of pre-service teachers impact their sense of identity? (2) To what extent experiences during teacher education program shape their sense of identity? In exploring these research questions a case study was conducted using narrative inquiry approach.

Framing Identity

Danielewicz (2001) refers to the notion of identity as "our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are" (p.10), which has been a subject of particular interest in the field of teacher education. Researchers examining identity construction must deal with its complex nature. Identity has been described by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) as "not a fixed attribute of a person but a relational phenomenon" (p. 108), by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) as "multifaceted and dynamic" (p.177), and by Rodgers and Scott (2008) as "dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts" (p.733). As these characterizations show, researchers conceptualize identity in different ways but agree that it is not static but always developing within particular contexts.

Thus, an important part of learning to become a teacher is the process of developing a professional identity development. Highlighting the importance of teachers' identity development, Carter and Doyle (1996) state that "the process of learning to teach, the act of teaching, and teachers' experiences and choices are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to their identity (p.120). As prospective teachers' point of entry into their profession, teacher education programs have the important of understanding and guiding their identity development (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019).

Prospective teachers' identity formation has both personal and contextual dimensions. Referring to its complexity, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) stated that "Beginning teachers must negotiate at least three teaching identities: those they bring with them into teacher education, those they develop while doing university course work and those they develop during student teaching practicums" (p.65). Thus, forming professional teacher identity actually begins before prospective teachers enter their teacher education programs. Referring to Britzman's (1986) idea of "natural teachers," (p.451), Sugrue (1997) argues that some prospective teachers have a "teaching personality," (p.217) meaning that they possess personal skills that are important for effective teaching and make them well suited to the profession. In addition to personality, identity formation of prospective teachers is significantly shaped by cultural contexts such as family, apprenticeship of observation, and atypical teaching episodes (Sugrue,1997). Prospective teachers therefore enter teacher education programs with pre-set beliefs about teaching and images of "good" and "bad" teachers based upon their own past schooling experiences (Riedler & Eryaman, 2019). They may also have had informal teaching experiences such as helping younger siblings with homework or guiding children while baby-sitting. Pre-service teachers' personal biographies (Britzman, 2003), especially their past school lives including past teachers, instill both positive and negative images (Richardson, 1996) that influence how they approach the teaching profession. As Britzman explains,

Prospective teachers, then, bring to their teacher education more than their desire to teach. They bring their implicit institutional biographies- the cumulative experience of school lives-which in turn inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum (Eryaman, 2007). All this contributes to well-worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work and serves as the frame of reference for prospective teachers' self-images (Britzman, 1986, p.443).

It is likely that their school experiences have had particular impact on pre-teachers' choice of teaching as a career. With these as their initial framework, their experiences in their teacher preparation programs are the next primary influences on the construct their professional teaching identity as they take courses, experience field placements, and form collegial relationship with peers, all of which constitute their socialization into teaching. As prospective teachers move through the stages of their teacher education programs, their teacher identities are under construction, shifting over time and open to renewal.

Beijaard et al. (2004) observes that this dynamic process involves continually revisiting two questions: "Who am I at this moment?" and "Who do I want to become?" (p.122) In other words, professional identity is an ongoing meaning- making and interpretive process that never ends throughout a teacher's career. Accordingly, researchers have used a variety of open-ended research methods to understand teacher identity, such as semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis of teachers' metaphors and narratives, which encourage teachers to reflect on themselves and their work as teachers.

Research Design

As an investigation of a particular phenomenon, the role of their cumulative life experiences on pre-service teachers' construction of their teaching identities, this study is framed as a case study using a narrative inquiry approach (Schaefer& Clandinin, 2019). Great emphasis has been placed on biographies and narratives and personal stories to understand teacher identity. Because biographies are histories of individuals, the terms biography and life history are used interchangeably (Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), both referring to how a participant tells his or her story. According to Knowles (1992) examining how pre-teachers share their story have reached their present position as becoming teachers is important for understanding their teaching identity formation because their cumulative life experiences up to the present filter what they learn in their teacher preparation programs and how they view teaching. In exploring life histories, it is important to evaluate early childhood experiences, images of past teachers, previous formal and informal teaching experiences, and important people and events (Knowles, 1992). Accordingly, in this study a full range of participants' life experiences prior

to entering their teacher education program was elicited focusing on all these factors, followed by exploration of their current beliefs and feelings about teaching.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) identify the following instruments for collecting data in life history research: (1) conducting conversational interviews; (2) conducting interactive group interviews; (3) having participants construct time-lines; (4) examining participants' journals, diaries and other personal writings; and (5) consulting other documents relevant to participants. The main purpose behind these approaches is to collect participants' personal stories and both their written and their oral reflections on their life experiences. As a popular instrument in life history research, interviewing offers the benefit of allowing researchers to document the voices of interviewees in their own words. According to Patton (2002), "nothing can substitute for these data: the actual things said by real people. That's the prize sought by the qualitative inquirer" (p. 380). Keeping all these claims in mind, I used open-ended interviews with participants, which enabled me to understand both their past and their current experiences, and to delve deeply into their lives. I conducted and audio-recorded two individual face-to-face interviews with each participant at a time and place of the interviewee's choosing. The average length of each interview was around one hour.

The second instrument was narrative writing about metaphors for teaching. Metaphors have been widely used to explore professional identity. Sugrue (1997) suggests that student teachers' metaphors for teaching emerge from both their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and the culture in which they grew up. In this regard, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) have explained metaphor as "another way of saying who you are, using an object or a role to represent the way you see yourself as a teacher" (p.764), which captures its value in teacher education research. Sugrue (1997) notes that "Student teachers' metaphors serve to illuminate their teaching identities and provide them with additional ballast when dealing with the vicissitudes of life in classroom" (p.218). In light of these claims, participants in this study were asked to write a narrative in which they explained their metaphors for teaching.

Context of the Study and Participants' Backgrounds

The setting for the study was a Midwestern university in the US. The two participants purposefully selected for this case study were both female pre-service teachers in their sophomore year of a four-year teacher education program, a critical juncture at which students decide whether to persist in teacher education. These particular individuals were chosen because they represented cases of contrasting identity construction in terms of their life histories and their approaches to teaching. To protect their privacy, they have been given the pseudonyms Kate and Nancy. At the time of the study, Nancy had decided to change her major and leave the teacher education program after finishing her sophomore year. Kate, on the other hand, was committed to completing the program and pursuing a teaching career. Each participant is briefly profiled below.

Table 1. Background of participants

| Name | Age | Family Background |
|-------|-----|--|
| Kate | 19 | Kate was born into a middle-class family in Chicago, the second of five children, and spent much of her childhood there. Kate's parents were college educated, and her mother was a homemaker. |
| Nancy | 20 | Nancy was born and spent her childhood years in China and had been in the US since she was in high school. She is the only child in her family. Her parents were college educated. |

Initially, Kate had decided not to go to college because she wanted to become a homemaker like her mother. However, her experiences while working in a boarding school for two years after graduating from high school influenced her, as she explained: "I saw there what a difference you can make in young students' lives by your attitudes of encouragement, motivation... that really inspired me." She started the teacher education program at the university shortly after her residence at boarding school, her greatest wish being to make a difference in children's lives.

Nancy's parents, and grandparents were all former teachers and she is the only child in her family. When she experienced difficulty in choosing a career after high school, her parents encouraged her to pursue teaching.

FINDINGS

School experiences

Kate had diverse learning experiences in various schooling contexts, including homeschooling, private Catholic schools, and a Catholic boarding school, so she had internalized Catholic values. She had no public school experiences. Kate's reflections on her various learning experiences reveal how they helped shape her teaching identity. When I asked her in which school she learned most, she said her homeschooling experiences influenced her learning more than those in other educational contexts because of the amount of support and encouragement her homeschool teachers gave her and her high levels of achievement, especially in math. Then, she went on to claim that each school added something to her personal life. For instance, in boarding school she learned to get along well with people and to be a disciplined person who managed her time efficiently. Overall, she identified herself as a student who was neither lazy nor zealous. As Kate reported in her interview, she also had some negative experiences in these different school settings, which also influenced her student identity, such as her fear of a teacher, which made her resent her student status:

When I was younger, I hated being a student and being at school. I do not know why, but one of my computer teachers in elementary school scared me a lot, so every Thursday, when I had computer class, I did not want to go school.

In addition to her student experiences at various schools, Kate's volunteering experiences also affected her professional identity. As a volunteer, she led a Catholic girls club and taught theology to the group; she also voluntarily worked in her siblings' schools. These experiences taught her that teachers can change children's lives.

Nancy was educated in private schools in China until she started high school in the US. According to her, she was quite relaxed as a student who did not care much about grades or learning lessons. After listening to Nancy's story of her student years, I inferred that her family had made a larger impact on her than her schools. In particular, her grandparents, who were former teachers, gave her much support and encouragement. In her words "[t]hey did not like acting like teachers but they acted as mentors." Her grandfather, about whom she said, "every time I asked questions over and over again he was very patient with me," influenced her in developing the idea that teachers should be very patient and kind to their students.

Nancy graduated from a private Catholic High school in the US. During her time there, she stayed with host families and got along with them quite well, which eased her transition from Chinese culture to American culture. Describing her experiences in high school, she said, "[i]n high school I learned to treat things more positively, and I also feel like I became a more open person. When I was in China, I would be very nervous even while answering one question".

Nancy's comments suggested how context mattered in the development of her personality. She compared Chinese and U.S. social contexts and their influence on her identity. "Before I came to America, I felt ... nervous about school, exams, and grades. Here, I regard them very peacefully instead of becoming angry". Factors influencing her optimism might be related to her teachers' attitudes. She believed that American teachers were more patient and positive than Chinese teachers:

The biggest difference between Chinese and American teachers is that teachers here are very patient. When students ask questions over and over again, they answer over and over again. But in China, some teachers do not have such patience. When students ask stupid questions, they could be really nervous.

It can be said that Nancy's experiences were more positive in US schools than in Chinese schools.

Images of “good” and “bad” teacher

Kate's image of a good teacher was based on her high school math teacher. When asked about the character of that teacher, she explained “She made us laugh, did like very comic, funny things. I enjoyed going to math. Even though she was a hard teacher her sense of humor made math fun.” Similarly, Nancy referred to her favorite teacher in middle school, also a math teacher, as her image of a good teacher, explaining that

[s]he gave me a lot of support, encouraged me a lot. She was funny, the way she taught ... she was always using like drama, jokes. She let us warm up to the class. I was really enjoying class instead of just wasting time and sitting there.

After this description, she added that “I think teachers need to be funny, be patient and should give support to students.”

Both Kate's and Nancy's comments about the salient characteristics of good teachers suggest that pre-service teachers have constructed their image of good teachers by observing their own teachers, and in particular their favorite teachers. For instance, Nancy's experiences with her grandfather teaching her math shaped her belief that teachers should be patient. Her relationship with her math teacher in the middle school adds the further value teachers should make learning fun.

Negative images of previous teachers also shaped the pre-service teachers' professional identity. Both Nancy and Kate talked about the personalities of teachers they had strongly disliked, such as Kate's technology teacher when she was in elementary school, who yelled at students and insulted them in class. She said the behavior of that teacher dampened her interest in learning about technology.

Nancy also entered her teacher education program with negative images of a particular teacher. When she was in China, one of her math teachers told her family that he would give up on Nancy due to her failures in math. After she shared this experience, she reported that “the first requirement to be a teacher is to learn patience. Instead of telling families that their children are failures, they should give more time to students in order to ensure their success”. Her experience with this math teacher confirmed her belief that teachers should be patient and more supportive.

After they had discussed their positive and negative images of past teachers, I asked them about their current beliefs about the characteristics of a good teacher. Kate replied that

[t]hey genuinely care about their students, they make learning interesting and have a good sense of humor; they use their own personality and you can tell who they are as persons.... They make children accountable for their work, so they are strict but loving at the same time.

Nancy considered a good teacher as one who “encourages students with patience and communicates well with parents”.

The characteristics of good teachers that Kate and Nancy shared were that teachers should be caring persons who make lessons fun. Their images of a good teacher, which were shaped by their previous experiences with teachers, were still under construction and changing continually. Every new experience might contribute to their image of a good teacher.

Different motivations for teaching

Pre-service teachers' motivation for entering their programs is an important factor in their retention in teacher education. Kate's and Nancy's statements revealed that their past experiences influenced their motivation to enter into the teaching profession. Kate's volunteer teaching experiences, especially those in a boarding school, influenced her profoundly when she saw that the teachers there were able to change the lives of children and to help them grow into conscientious citizens. She commented that:

I like to see all the challenges present at the beginning of the year, and then to see the growth of students at the end of the year.... It's amazing just seeing all the fruits and all the good things that come from them... it is so worth the difficulties that arise throughout the year, you get to that end and you see how much they grew... In some ways you feel like you are being rewarded. Seeing how what you did helped them to grow as a person is wonderful.

Her experiences in the past led her to develop a personal interest in teaching. Her current motivation for teaching was to reach students and make a difference in their lives.

Kate's love of helping children influenced her decision to major in Elementary Education. Her approach to teaching was centered on internal factors, including her moral values, which influenced her motivation to enter teacher training. One of her strongest wishes was to teach children to be good citizens.

Nancy, on the other hand, approached teaching as a family tradition. Her parents and grandparents are all teachers, so she followed their path. In her words, "I am surrounded by an atmosphere of teaching in my family." Before entering the teacher education program, she had not had any teaching experiences such as baby-sitting or volunteer teaching.

Metaphors

Kate's metaphor for teaching was taking a trip, in which teachers have adventures, come to know a new culture, and expand their experience. She further elaborated it as

[s]omething that you experience but other people around you do not realize what you've experienced. So when you come back from your trip everyone around you does not know where you went and what you did. .. They do not see all the good things you see, all the good things you do... People outside of the teaching context, like parents or just society in general, do not see all the wonderful things that go on inside of the classroom. Even though you want them to see how good it is, they cannot see because they were not with you on the trip.

Kate's dynamic metaphor provides insight into her view of her chosen profession. To start with, she attributes a private quality to teaching and the classroom, which she represents as a private space in which unique experiences occur that only teachers are able to grasp. Nobody can truly understand the value and rewards of teaching without experiencing them.

Implicit in her metaphor is her perception of teachers as learners who are excited about having new experiences and learning new things and new cultures. From her point of view, teaching is not the routine, often monotonous job that some consider it to be. Rather, it is an engaging job full of surprises, joys, and excitement, a job that requires preparation and movement as does travel. Another aspect of her metaphor includes some degree of uncertainty. Travelers cannot be sure beforehand what they will see and experience during a trip. In a similar way, teachers cannot predict what they will experience during their teaching journeys.

Nancy's metaphor for teaching was planting. In her words "[t]eachers are planters. Children are like seeds. Teachers help children grow, to be better and [become] fully realized trees." In Nancy's metaphor, teachers are care-givers who should cultivate children's natural development. Her metaphor suggests that children are potentially capable of thriving when the appropriate conditions are provided for them. Her metaphor also implies that teachers need to be patient in order to observe students' growth and realize that their efforts have been worthwhile because they contributed to students' continuing accomplishments well beyond their time in a particular classroom. While hers is a positive metaphor, its image of a teacher as a cultivator rather than an adventurer, as in Kate's metaphor may subtly confirm Nancy's view of teaching as boring.

Current emotions associated with teaching

To get some sense of who they were in the present, I asked Kate and Nancy to describe their current emotions about teaching as a career and then their strengths and weaknesses in relation to their teaching career. Though neither had yet had real classroom teaching experience, their engagement in the teacher education program had evoked emotional responses to their potential teaching careers.

Both identified stress as the main emotion they experienced, not with regard to their work in the teacher education program but when they considered situations in real schools. What Kate learned about contentious issues related to teaching in her educational law class had especially raised the level of her anxiety because the class revealed. She explained, "we learned about legal aspects of what teachers can do or cannot do. I felt a lot of pressure,... and also there is a lot of work in the first couple of years in teaching, and that makes me very stressed."

The pressures imposed upon teachers by government agencies and school boards and a high stakes testing policy were among the major factors that discouraged Kate. She was especially concerned that teachers were judged according to students' test scores, which were the accepted evidence of student learning. Most of the time, she believed, either teachers' efforts were ignored or they were exposed to very harsh criticism by the media and the public and did not get the respect they deserved from media coverage, politicians, and parents. Also, Kate was experiencing a high level of uncertainty. In her words, "I have a vision in my mind, but who knows whether it's going to work".

Kate considered being a creative as her strongest point and the reason why she chose to major in Elementary Education. She believed that teachers, in particular elementary teachers, should be very creative in order to engage children in learning. Nancy identified having learning experiences in the different social contexts of China and the US as her strongest point. She stated that her cross-cultural experiences gave her the chance to observe teachers in both China and the US, which resulted in knowledge of a wide range teaching strategies, teachers' behaviors, classroom materials, and teachers' communication skills. Both Nancy and Kate found that the courses they had taken so far made them aware of their points of weakness regarding their teacher identity. In particular, a class entitled "Communication," in which they simulated being a teacher, brought out their weaknesses.

In this class, Kate pretended to be a teacher while her classmates pretended to be parents, including troublemaker parents. She says "[i]t is easy for me to communicate with kids but not with parents." Regarding her personality, Kate sees herself as one who is intimidated by others and identifies her weakness as her tendency to become anxious when she faces a problem.

In the same class, Nancy also simulated being a Chinese teacher but in her case her classmates pretended to be Chinese students. She found that the experience did not work out as planned due to the high level of anxiety she experienced when talking in front of a group. It was then that she began to think about changing her major. Other factors also influenced Nancy's decision to give up teaching. One of her professors criticized her writing, saying that it did not satisfy college level writing requirements. This criticism was the breaking point for her. After this incident, she immediately consulted with her parents about transferring to another program. Even though she gave her fear of talking in front of a group as her main reason for leaving teaching, her professor's criticism

of her writing might have been equally important. She was discouraged by this assessment, which she felt she didn't deserve because she had always considered her English to be very good.

Nancy chose teaching because of her family's influence without have had experiences that would indicate whether this profession fit well with her personality. Nancy's articulated values regarding teaching that conflicted with her actual opinion of joining the profession herself. She initially said that "I think teachers are the rewarded persons" but later in the interview she admitted that "[t]he jobs I most dislike are doctors and teachers, but my parents are both teachers".

On one hand she saw teachers as valued persons, perhaps because her parents and grandparents are teachers. On the other hand, she considered teaching boring and disliked the fact that teachers follow the same routine every day. Also, because her parents were not with her in the US, their influence on her might have decreased leading to the decrease in her motivation to become a teacher. At the end Nancy had decided to change her major and leave the teacher education program after finishing her sophomore year.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that exploring pre-service teachers' narratives of previous life experiences, their motivations for entering their teacher education programs, and their metaphors for teaching provides valuable insights into early stages of their professional identity formation, suggesting the importance of further research into their narratives and metaphors about teaching. Using narrative interviews in teacher identity research can provide clarification for both researchers and prospective teachers, who may gain insight into themselves and their suitability for teaching careers.

This analysis also illustrates how Kate's and Nancy's individual personalities affected their identity construction, a main factor influencing their processes of adaptation into teaching. Despite being in the same educational program, their approaches to teaching differed because they were greatly influenced their personal responses to their life experiences. Moreover, their different decisions suggested that whether one feels a sense of belonging to the teaching profession affects one's identity development and orientation to teaching.

Given the importance of identity in teachers' professional growth, teacher education programs should emphasize this aspect of their students' development. At this point, teacher educators might have stepped in and helped both students use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses so they could become more confident in the classroom and in dealing with other stakeholders in the educational process.

In relation to formal and informal apprenticeship, as previously discussed, students already have previous educational experiences and ideas about teaching, which they bring to their teacher education program. At this point, the task of the teacher education program should be to help potential teachers become more aware of their previously formed beliefs, dispositions, and values and how these affect their identity formation and ultimately how they teach.

This study contributes to educational researchers' and teacher educators' understanding of the socialization process of pre-service teachers. The findings and recommendations of this study may provide guidance for teacher educators in helping their students develop self-awareness and strategies for meeting challenges, so they may adapt more easily to their teacher education programs and future careers.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have explored the adaptation processes of two sophomores in the same teacher education program as shown in their discussion of their backgrounds and experiences as learners up to their present program.

The findings of this study support much of the current literature on teacher identity and parallel with the main assumption that prospective teachers' identity formation has both personal and contextual dimensions (Avraamidou, 2014; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, Britzman, 2003). Referring to personal aspect of identity, Carter and Doyle (2008) stated that "the process of learning to teach, the act of teaching, and teachers' experiences and choices are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to their identity (p.120). Each student's adaptation to the teaching profession and choices at pivotal points in pursuing a teaching career are influenced by a combination of initial beliefs, towards teaching, motivations for entering a teacher education program, emotions at various times as a learner, and awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Previous life experiences and how the individual interprets them influence his/her responses to experiences in a teacher education program. Thus, although Kate and Nancy entered the same teacher education program together, Kate's commitment to teaching increased while Nancy's decreased. These opposite outcomes may be understood in light of differences in their beginning identities, their motivations for entering the program, and different reactions to their experiences in it. While teaching represented an intrinsic value for Kate, who entered the program with strong conviction, it was a family tradition for Nancy, who did not have a clear direction when she started college. All these results support the work of Sugrue (1997) who claimed that student teachers' personal experiences, family environment, atypical teaching experiences like helping homework of siblings, and apprenticeship observation impact student teachers' lay theories about teaching and directly affect their identity. The findings of this study showed that Kate's earlier experiences in informal teaching such as she taught other students when she was in high school had also given her clear insight into joy of teaching as well as the challenges of teaching and the high degree of effort and patience it required. Thus she entered teaching after she had already decided that it was what she wanted to do.

Rodgers and Scott (2008) defined identity as a "shifting framework of understanding formed by multiple relationships and takes different versions depending on social, cultural, political and cultural contexts." Britzman (2003) too, drew attention to similar features of identity that greatly shaped by contextual factors. Accordingly pre-service teacher education serves as a context for pre-service teachers in forming their identity. Taking courses, having field experiences, and studying with colleagues accelerate pre-service teacher's adaptation to teaching, and directly influence their socialization (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001). Kate's experiences in the teacher education program reminded Britzman's (1986) idea of "natural teachers," (p.451) that refers to some prospective teachers born as a teacher having a "teaching personality," (Sugrue, 1997, p.217) with necessary skills to be a good teacher. The biggest difference between Nancy and Kate was their personalities. While Nancy was following the expectations of others, Kate entered the teacher education program with a high level of awareness of both her personality and her teaching career. That means she has the teaching personality. She believed that her love of spending time with children and her creativity would fit well with being an elementary teacher. Her volunteer experiences in various contexts allowed her to see both the challenges and rewards inherent in teaching. She entered the teacher education program with clear awareness of the responsibilities of teachers.

Based on her previous informal teaching experiences, it could be assumed that Kate had a greater sense of belonging to the culture and language of the world of teaching than did Nancy, whose perception that she would not fit into a teaching career hindered her sense of belonging, resulting in her decision to exit her insipient teaching career in favor of an entirely different field.

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