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**NEW TEACHER IDENTITY AND THE EDUBLOGOSPHERE:
A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF FIRST YEAR TEACHER BLOGGERS**

Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Rebecca L. Payne

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family who has supported me throughout all my crazy adventures, including getting this degree. From that first conversation with Grambo in our pool in Naples when she encouraged me to go for it back in December 2003, to the birth of Juliana in September 2004 just as I started graduate school and to her brother Jack who was born two years later just as I began to write this dissertation, to Melissa and Jon who provided refuge from the storm with visits to Hawaii and the Nut House in Palo Alto, to my brother who served two tours of duty in Iraq while I pursued this degree, to my baby sister Emily who finished her Master's degree and married Luke during this time, to my father who instilled the discipline and goal-setting mentality early in life, and to my mother who has been on this journey with me from the very beginning. And finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my former students who inspired me to dig deeper to figure out how to better support their learning.

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ABSTRACT

New Internet and communication technologies (ICTs) facilitate collaboration and interaction among teachers. The increased presence of web-based tools in education settings prompted this qualitative inquiry. Widely available and inexpensive, these web-based tools (e.g., blogs, wikis, podcasts) provide opportunities for publishing content online. This multiple case study explores the sociocultural construct of identity formation (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007) of four first-year teachers who voluntarily blogged about their experiences. Data sources include the blog posts written by participants during the 2006-07 school year and responses to an electronic questionnaire emailed to participants at the end of the year. A qualitative content analysis (Alaszewski, 2006) was conducted to identify emergent themes in the data. Analysis was guided by a set of dimensions drawn from the research literature on teacher identity and grounded in the data. Findings represent six dimensions of teacher identity that include pedagogical, personal, intuitive, intellectual, social, and political aspects of teaching. The following conclusions were drawn by the researcher: (1) new teachers who capitalize on the affordances of blogging generate feedback from readers that substantiates their experiences and provides encouragement in times of struggle, (2) new teachers rely on their own educational histories to shape themselves as teachers, and (3) new teachers want a “safe place” to interact with other teachers, so much so that concerns about privacy, security and critique are outweighed by the benefits of communicating with other teachers through blogging.

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CHAPTER I: THE INTERNET, BLOGGING, AND NEW TEACHERS

William Safire (2002), linguist and columnist for the *New York Times*, first mentioned blogs in his weekly column “On Language” in 2002, situating the word within our collective vocabulary. Since then, millions of people have transitioned from consumers to producers of content online through blogging. A recent report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project (Lenhart & Fox, 2006) found that about 12 million American adults keep a blog (approximately eight percent of all Internet users) and about 57 million American adults read blogs (about 39% of all Internet users). This study seeks to explore how new teachers use blogs.

The landscape of literacy has changed significantly over the past 25 years, and new skills are required for accessing the tools necessary to function within the context of globalization and rapidly emerging Internet and communication technologies (Gee, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, 2000; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; A. Luke, 2000). The growing body of work referred to as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) embodies this cultural shift from traditional, print-based conceptions of literacy to a more expanded view of literacy that accounts for multiple strands of communication and language use with roots in anthropology, sociolinguistics, sociology, educational psychology, and social semiotics (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Heath, 1983; Jewitt, 2006; Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984).

Internet and communication technologies (ICTs) facilitate new forms of collaboration and interaction that continually impact our understanding of what it means to be literate. A direct correlate of this phenomenon relates to how teachers use these emergent tools to support literacy instruction and to construct professional identities online. Many researchers argue that it

is time to expand our understanding of what it means to be literate within the current context of economic and technological globalization. In his book *Literacy in the New Media Age*, Kress (2003) states that “it is no longer responsible to let children experience school without basing schooling on an understanding of the shift from competent performance to design as the foundational fact of contemporary social and economic life” (p. 37). This shift in our conception of literacy and the cultural reproduction fostered by public education underscores the importance of designing learning environments that facilitate critical thinking, social interaction, and situated learning (Voithofer, 2005). This shift both represents and embodies the new literacies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this multiple case study was to gain an understanding of how new teachers use blogs to document their first-year experiences in the classroom. The primary analytic focus of the study was teacher identity formation. Specifically, I was interested in exploring (1) the experiences of new teachers who voluntarily and publicly chronicled their first-year teaching experiences in a blog and (2) how the blog addresses and contributes to the construction of a teaching identity.

The nascent intellectual online space occupied by bloggers, referred to as the *blogosphere*, provides a rich context for thinking about new teacher development. Specifically, the *edublogosphere* is defined as the online space in which bloggers concerned with educational issues (from classroom practices to federal policy critiques) contribute, consume, debate and produce content, from personal narratives to persuasive political arguments. The public nature of blogs, accessible to anyone with an Internet connection, and their potential for facilitating

interaction via comments, email and open-access make them a unique venue for analyzing teacher identity development through narrative reflection.

The path of inquiry I traversed throughout this study explored the ways in which the emergent multimodal genre of blogging, within the context of the edublogosphere, impacts our collective understanding of the professional identity of a teacher and the ways in which one goes about learning to teach. Blogs provide valuable insight on the current state of education in the United States and other parts of the world. By closely analyzing four teachers' blogs over the course of the 2006-07 school year, I developed a description of each teacher's experiences from their sustained reflections on the blog. This insight provides inroads to understanding the transition process a person experiences as he/she becomes a teacher, and may potentially inform areas of practice concerning teacher preparation and professional development. In this context, the present study is based on the following theoretical propositions: (1) New teachers who blog develop self-efficacious teaching identities that extend beyond their own schools and connect to others in the field and (2) The content of new teacher blogs represents salient issues facing first year teachers as they progress through the school year.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do new teachers use their blogs to enact a professional teacher identity?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The idea of new literacies brings to mind the frequently spoofed "new math". When someone cannot figure out an arithmetic problem, new math is often blamed. I would hate for our loose use of the term "new" to come back to haunt us in a few years. I can hear it

now...*schools were so caught up with these new literacies that they neglected to teach children how to actually read and write.* New literacies are highly unstable. They are difficult to define, constantly changing, context-specific and nearly impossible to assess using a standardized test. They are messy – bringing up questions of ethics, race, gender, social class, power, and truth (as it relates to the information found online). An emergent body of work explores how teachers use the tools afforded by ICTs to foster literacy development (Karchmer, 2001; Kist, 2005; Oravec, 2002) and to construct professional identities (Gee, 2004a; Hobbs, 2006; Juzwik, 2006). Labbo (2006) articulates the “push and pull” of traditional and new literacies and states, “it is critical that educators and policymakers persist in exploring ways to assist students in developing the technological skills that will be required of literate, globally active citizens of the future” (p. 206). The present study models a way to explore this tension by employing *new* multimodal, sociolinguistic texts (i.e., blog posts) to inform *traditional* practices of teacher development.

The public nature of teacher-created blogs foregrounds the often silenced voice of the classroom teacher and provides a first-hand account of current issues concerning teachers. The variety in content and purpose among teacher-created blogs warrants further examination. Ray and Hocutt (2006) point out that “identifying the parameters of this population [blogging teachers] and tracking its growth is critical for future research in this area” (p. 12). By analyzing the narrative reflections of four new teachers using the sociolinguistic, multimodal texts of their blog posts (Chase, 2005), I seek to inform current understandings of the process of teacher preparation and development (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002; V. Richardson, 1996), the construction of digital identities (Farmer, 2006), and the notion of blogs as a distinct, multimodal genre (Bateman, Delin, & Henschel, 2007; Burgess,

2006; Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004), with structural narrative features that facilitate meaning-making, knowledge-building, and identity-construction (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006). The complexity of these new literacies is further compounded by the inverted learning curve created when students possess more knowledge than their teachers. As teacher preparation programs integrate technology and literacy into their courses of study and as Millennials enter the teaching field, this gap will narrow. We are in a time of rapid fluctuation in the roles and understandings of the teacher, student, and technology. The purpose of this study is to offer an initial description of four new teachers' use of new literacies (specifically blogging) in an attempt to map out this relatively unknown and constantly evolving terrain. By incorporating new literacies through the use of blog posts as data to inform our understanding of how new teachers develop and learn throughout their first year, this study contributes to the emergent body of research at the intersection of technology and literacy as it relates to teacher preparation (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Godwin-Jones, 2006; Hobbs, 2006; Kinzer, Cammack, Labbo, Teale, & Sanny, 2006; Labbo, 2006; Leu, 2000; C. Luke, 2003; Reinking, 1998; Swenson, Rozema, Young, McGrail, & Whitin, 2005).

At the heart of this study is the examination of how new teachers develop professional teacher identities through their blogs. In her critical study on learning to teach, Deborah Britzman (2003) eloquently describes the challenges new teachers face, in terms of developing these identities:

What makes this reality (learning to teach) so complicatory is the fact that teaching and learning have multiple and conflicting meanings that shift with our lived lives, with the theories produced and encountered, with the deep convictions and desires brought to and

created in education, with the practices we negotiate, and with the identities we construct (p. 32).

By focusing on new teachers' blogs, this study seeks to augment our current understandings of the process of becoming a teacher. Walkington (2005) points out the value of foregrounding identity work in teacher development: "To acknowledge the differences that make up teacher identity is to be aware of the potential for enhancement" (p. 54). Capitalizing on the new technology of blogging, this study explores the development of teacher identities through the teachers' own words. The significance of this study lies in its investigation of how participants chose to present themselves online, thus enacting a teacher identity that extends well beyond the classroom walls.

LIMITATIONS

This study is constrained by blogger anonymity and credibility of blog posts. It is limited to self-reported data from the teacher's own reflections of his/her teaching practice. The focus of this study, however, centers on the teacher's personal experiences during the first year of teaching.

DELIMITATIONS

Delimitations of this study include purposive sampling of first-year teacher blogs, written publicly and voluntarily throughout the 2006-2007 school year. This sustained, personal reflection of professional practice affords close examination of the phenomenon of becoming a teacher and completing the first year of teaching. Because the blog posts are accessible on the Internet, chronologically archived, and available for public consumption, they represent an

emergent space for engaging in literacy practices that have important implications for teachers and warrant further investigation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Given the emergent nature of this type of literacy research, I offer a list of key terms with contextually relevant definitions or descriptions. Some of these terms are familiar, but they carry additional meaning within my theoretical framework and represent my attempts to connect multiple strands of research from many distinct fields. The terms are presented alphabetically and contain information that serves to situate the reader within the narrative multimodal context of blogs.

Blog – an online journal, derived from the words web log; reverse chronological order of posts; can be authored by an individual or group; posts can be text-based or multimodal including audio/video clips, graphics, pictures, hyperlinks; most blogs allow comments from readers; tools include blogroll (links to other blogs of interest to the author), search field, tag cloud, profile info about the author (Blood, 2002). Blogging encompasses reading, thinking, synthesizing, writing, collaborating, debating, and connecting (W. Richardson, 2006). Blogging embodies emergent systems of literacy.

Blogosphere - the intellectual cyberspace occupied by bloggers (Quick, 2002)

Discourse – the rules that dictate “the way we are” made up of multifaceted strands within larger meta-discourses of individual, community and institutions that overlap and serve multiple

context-specific purposes for communication; social language; Gee (1999a) proposed that little-d discourse, defined as “language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories)” be distinguished from big-D Discourse, which he views as “ways of using language...to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group” (p. 17).

Edublogosphere – the intellectual cyberspace occupied by bloggers concerned with educational issues (from classroom instruction to federal policy critiques)

Enact – throughout this study, I argue that teachers “enact” a professional identity through their blogs. Language is viewed as performative – i.e., as participants wrote in their blogs, they not only represented their emergent teacher identity, but also constructed it through their language (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 2004).

ICTs – Internet and communication technologies that facilitate global connectivity

Multimodal genre - "all elements that occur in such multimodal texts can be analyzed, related to one another, and interpreted in terms of their selection/construction from a collection of multimodal *semiotic resources* (or literacy practices), and in terms of their contributions to the communicative and social function of the whole" (Bateman et al., 2007, p. 153). For the purposes of this study, I interpret “the whole” as the edublogosphere where teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders are collaboratively reconstructing the meta-discourse of “teacher” and “learner”.

Narrative – ongoing observations that make up one’s life story, constructed through models (parents, teachers, media, etc.) and personal experience, related to identity construction and influenced sociocultural norms

New literacies – literacy practices that embrace the rapidly changing nature of global connectivity and emergent Internet and communication technologies. Throughout this study, the terms “new literacy” and “new literacies” will be used interchangeably, unless otherwise noted.

New Literacy Studies – body of research that defines literacy as a socially-situated practice including social & ideological approaches to literacy that draw on the contextual nature of literacy and embeddedness of literacy in particular sociocultural contexts, characterized by the conception of literacy as dynamic, situated and multifaceted (Hull & Schultz, 2002; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995, 2006)

Teacher Identity – the way a teacher perceives him/herself, one’s teaching identity is an individual characteristic based on years observing his/her own teachers, coursework and/or licensure in a teacher preparation program, internship/observation experiences, media representations of teachers, social interaction with other teachers, and sociocultural norms.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Based on theoretical assumptions of the centrality of multimodal design in the acquisition and development of literacy practices (Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995),

this study embraces a new literacies perspective (Leu et al., 2004) that incorporates the role of narratives in identity construction. In this context, narratives are defined as sociolinguistic, multimodal texts from which one creates and negotiates a personal identity. Literacy education is thus defined in terms of “building identities and cultures, communities and institutions” (A. Luke & Freebody, 1999b). Gee (2000) argues "against a perspective that sees literacy as a stand-alone mental ability and arguing for one that sees it as inextricably connected to 'identity work'" (p. 412). Construction of personal identity "is performed by the innumerable narratives that constitute the stuff of everyday conversations, by which community members explore the nature of the social and physical worlds and the appropriateness of their responses to them. They are thus an important aspect of how the self is constructed and negotiated" (Garner, 2007, p. 44). In terms of new teacher development, professional identity construction is paramount for transitioning from student to teacher (Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006).

This study is rooted in the multimodal and sociocultural theories of literacy and learning that conceptualize literacy acquisition and development as dynamic, ideological processes inextricably linked to sociocultural norms and embodied by social interaction.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is organized according to the traditional five-chapter format. The first chapter presents the purpose of the study, a conceptual framework, and the research question. The second chapter consists of a review of literature that frames the study. The third chapter describes the methods of data collection and analysis used in the study. Chapter four presents the findings of the inquiry. The final chapter addresses implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents relevant research to situate my study within the existing body of literature on new literacies and teacher identity. I begin the chapter with my theoretical framework and articulate the multimodal and sociocultural theories of literacy that influenced the design of this study. Next I discuss the new literacies and how they impact literacy instruction, followed by a section on blogs and blogging with particular attention to the affordances of this new medium for educators. The final section includes a discussion of teacher identity with a focus on the relationships between learning to teach and developing a teacher identity. My goal for this chapter is to outline relevant research and provide the reader with an understanding of the confluence of new literacies, blogging and teacher identity formation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical origins of the new literacies represent a conglomeration of perspectives, stemming from the variety of research backgrounds of the New Literacy scholars. Based on a review of the literature, I have identified two broad categories of theory that consistently appear throughout this body of work – multimodal and sociocultural theories. Although the “newness” of this area, confounded by rapid development and innovation, makes it difficult to produce a cohesive theory, a number of researchers and theorists offer descriptions and characteristics toward a proposed theoretical framework. Leu and his colleagues from the reading and literacy community propose perhaps the most comprehensive framework for thinking about the various theories associated with the new literacies and how they relate to classroom instruction with their

call for a cohesive New Literacies Perspective (Leu et al., 2004). Leu and his colleagues (2004) offer an emergent definition of these new literacies:

The new literacies of the Internet and other ICTs include the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives. These new literacies allow us to use the Internet and other ICTs to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of that information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others. (p. 1572)

It is from this theoretical perspective that I discuss the multimodal and sociocultural underpinnings of the new literacies.

Multimodal Theories of Literacy

The first broad category of theory in new literacies research is multimodality. Within a conceptual framework of multimodality, Kress (2003) makes the observation that “the centrality of language will be replaced with an understanding that modes of representation are used in relation to a multiplicity of factors, such as the sign-maker’s sense of what are the apt modes for representing, given a certain audience and therefore specific relations between sign-maker and audience” (p.169). Building on Kress’ multimodal theory, Jewitt (2006) contends that linguistic representation is no longer superior to images, particularly on the screen. Advocating the value of multimodal design as a cognitive process that works to “draw attention to the potential layers

of meaning and alternative readings of what is written” (p.8), he believes “the static notion of literacy as the acquisition of sets of competencies can be replaced with a notion of literacy as a dynamic process through which students use and transform multimodal signs and design new meanings” (p.135). The multimodal nature of electronic texts requires a new way of thinking about literacy instruction. The linear, static quality of the printed page stands in sharp contrast to the visual, hyperlinked quality of the electronic page. There is no beginning or ending when locating information and reading hypertexts online.

The New London Group (1996) proposed a pedagogy of multiliteracies to meet two primary goals for literacy learning: (1) to create access to the evolving language of work, power and community; and (2) to foster the critical engagement necessary for students to design their social futures and achieve success through fulfilling employment. Made up of scholars from Australia, Great Britain, and the United States with backgrounds in sociolinguistics, classroom discourse, semiotics, critical literacy, feminist pedagogy, and cultural theory, The New London Group (1996) drew on its collective knowledge to address the central issue that “what students needed to learn was changing, and that the main element of this change was that there was not a singular, canonical English that could or should be taught anymore” (p. 64). Similar to Kress’s sentiments about the urgent need for a shift in our cultural understanding of literacy and learning, The New London Group constructed a multiliteracies pedagogical framework that focuses on multiple modes of representation and encompasses the complex interaction of four factors: (1) situated practice; (2) overt instruction; (3) critical framing; and (4) transformed practice. Widely cited in the new literacies literature, The New London Group’s early contribution to the field shapes and defines how researchers and educators conceptualize multiliteracies.

In her book *Literacy in a Digital World*, Tyner (1998) underscores the need for instruction in the multiple forms of information and communication technologies. “Multiliteracies related to communication and information, notably media literacy, computer literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, network literacy, and technology have stepped forward to define the changing, amorphous shape of communication needs for a society awash in electronic sounds, images, icons, and texts” (p. 64). In order for students to fully exploit the capabilities of these new media, they should be engaged in learning environments that embrace multiplicity, change, and variability.

Sociocultural Theories of Literacy

The nature of literacy is shaped by the sociocultural context in which literacy events and practices take place. Notions of learning, knowledge, and meaning-making shift as cultural events influence what society deems valuable. “In an integrated sociocultural approach to identity that builds on Vygotskian interests in development, researchers are also encouraged to pay attention not only to the end product of commitment, but to how identities form in practice and over time, both as social products and as personal formations” (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007, p. 109). Drawing on this view of the process of identity formation over time and in practice, this study seeks to explore how teachers develop a teacher identity during their first year as they blog about their practice.

The sociocultural theoretical underpinnings within the New Literacy Studies encompass the sociolinguistic work of Gee’s “big D” discourses (Gee, 1996, 2004b, 2006), the socioliteracy work of Lankshear and Knobel’s analysis of blogs and memes (Knobel & Lankshear, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, 2006), the critical literacy work of Luke and Freebody’s conception

of the emancipatory power of literacy (A. Luke, 2000; A. Luke & Freebody, 1999a), and Street's development of social literacies (Street, 1984, 1995). Street (2006) reflects on the history of this line of research. "What has come to be termed 'New Literacy Studies' refers to a body of work that for the past twenty years has approached the study of literacy not as an issue of measurement or of skills but as social practices that vary from one context to another" (p. 21).

Drawing on the work of Voloshinov, Bakhtin, Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu, and Freire, Luke (2000) proposed a redefinition of critical literacy that "focuses on teaching and learning how texts work, understanding and re-mediating what texts attempt to do in the world and to people, and moving students toward active position-takings with texts to critique and reconstruct the social fields in which they live and work" (p.453). This is increasingly important in a world where unfiltered information travels around the globe instantaneously.

In his early ethnographic work *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Street (1984) makes the distinction between an "autonomous" view and an "ideological" view of literacy. The autonomous view encompasses a decontextualized set of skills that, in theory, lead to increased cognitive productivity. This view of literacy limits students' abilities to connect the set of skills to their own experiences with literacy and inhibits the transfer of skills into everyday life. The implicit message is that there is one way to "do literacy". This may have been the case prior to the information explosion afforded by the Internet, but the current climate of global connectivity makes any particular set of skills outdated, and as Kress (2003) pointed out, it is no longer responsible to continue teaching a curriculum that contains a specific set of skills. Gee (1996) puts it this way: "abstracting literacy from its social setting in order to make claims for literacy as an autonomous force in shaping the mind or a culture simply leads to a dead end" (p. 58).

Street's alternative to this autonomous view of literacy is what he terms an ideological view of literacy. This view encompasses the social nature of literacy. It foregrounds meaning making and knowledge building, as the purpose for employing various literacy practices – traditionally reading, writing, and speaking. Considering the social nature of literacy, students benefit from instruction that builds on the relationships and mentorships that are possible in the classroom (Vygotsky, 1978). Students are more apt to discuss and debate topics that interest them and connect to their personal experiences.

The broad theoretical categories of multimodal and sociocultural aspects of literacy instruction embody many strands of conceptual understandings and analysis of the new literacies. When considered from a New Literacies Perspective, these categories provide a framework for thinking about the new literacies themselves (multimodal) and the resulting changes in our understanding of what it means to be literate (sociocultural). This study addresses both theoretical aspects of new literacies through narrative analysis of the multimodal structure and functions of teacher-created blogs and the sociocultural process of identity construction and representation.

NEW LITERACIES

The 'Newness' of New Literacies

The research literature addressing new literacies is diverse. Traditional reading scholars tend to focus on the development of skills and strategies required to read and write using new ICTs (Coiro, 2003; Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Leu & Kinzer, 2000), advocating an expanded view of literacy acquisition and instruction. "We believe that a theoretical framework for the new literacies of the Internet and other ICTs needs to be grounded in these technologies themselves,

taking advantage of the insights that a variety of different perspectives might bring to understanding the complete picture of the new literacies emerging from these technologies” (Leu et al., 2004, p. 1602). A New Literacies Perspective serves as a cohesive framework that encompasses critical literacies (A. Luke, 2000), multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), media literacy (Hobbs, 2006; Tyner, 1998), and information literacy (Hobbs, 2006).

Another group of scholars, predominately from fields outside of reading and literacy, have developed a substantial body of research under the heading New Literacy Studies. This work tends to focus on the sociolinguistic (Gee, 1999b, 2006), multimodal (Jewitt, 2006; Kress, 2003), critical (A. Luke, 2000), and social (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Street, 1995) aspects of identity-building and meaning-making afforded by the new ICTs. When considering the emergent field of New Literacy Studies from a New Literacies Perspective, it becomes clear that traditional notions of classroom instruction in reading and writing no longer prepare students for the ever-expanding, complexities afforded by ICTs.

Prominent new literacy scholars Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2003) reconcile these seemingly divergent lines of research by distinguishing between “ontologically” new literacies and “chronologically” new literacies. Ontologically new literacies are actually new ways of thinking about literacy practices within the context of rapidly emerging ICTs. The New Literacy Studies typically address ontologically new literacies with their focus on collaboration, situated contexts, social semiotics, and multimodalities. Chronologically new literacies make up the body of skills, strategies and knowledge necessary to read, write and communicate using the wide array of ever-emerging ICTs, including physical tools (computer, laptop, cell phone, smart phone, etc.) and virtual tools (blogs, wikis, instant messaging software, text messaging, e-mail,

audio/video multi-media production, etc.). Researchers working from a New Literacies Perspective typically examine the situated practice of teachers and students using these chronologically new literacies to inform their understanding of how traditional literacy practices are influenced or changed by the introduction of new ICTs.

Historical Context of New Literacies

With each new technological development, a sense of renewal and possibility, along with a certain amount fear and speculation, has provided fertile ground for re-conceptualizing the ways in which we communicate. Paper production and graphite for pencils made it possible to “capture” a thought or idea and “transmit” it to another time or place. Record keeping, correspondence, and literature are forms of communication that can be traced thousands of years to tax collection and other financial interactions, religious letters written and preserved, and the ancient libraries of Alexandria. It is a universal characteristic of human nature to want to be heard. Oppressed groups are silenced, while powerful groups write history.

More recent technological advances during the past 25 years have significantly influenced our everyday lives, including the lives of teachers and students. Although the relationship between literacy and technology is currently in a state of rapid fluctuation, engaged in iterative cycles of creation and refinement, Bruce (1997) points out that the mass-produced book is a “prime instance of a modern technology artifact” that is created, copied, marketed, inventoried and delivered through a sophisticated supply chain more than likely run by computers (Friedman, 2005). Bruce points out the linguistic multiplicity in words we use to describe printed text (page, font, etc.) and physical space (home, room, etc.) that have now mutated into words we use to describe electronic text and virtual space. Part of the success of

Apple computers is the clearly “human” feel in the design of their products (note the recent commercials that cast PC users as stodgy, nervous, uptight businessmen and Mac users as creative, artistic, highly proficient hipsters). Netscape enjoyed sensational popularity (before Microsoft bundled Internet Explorer with their Office Suite software and set off the browser wars that ultimately led to Netscape’s demise, but not before the developers made their source code available in the Mozilla suite that now runs the popular Firefox) as the first web browser that opened up the Internet to novices who quickly figured out the straightforward point-and-click design of Netscape back in 1994. Current Internet applications facilitate social interaction through networked communication and information retrieval that has come to be known as “Web 2.0” or what Richardson and Mancabelli (2007) call the Read/Write Web (technologies that allow users to easily create and publish content online).

The social language of the Internet takes time to learn. Millennials, the generation born after 1982, tend to code-switch seamlessly between the digital environment of technology and the analog environment of the natural world. In considering this code-switching for non-natives, Gee (2004a) points out that “people can only see a new social language as a gain if they recognize and understand the sorts of socially situated identities and activities that recruit the social language; if they value them or, at least, understand why they are valued; and if they believe they (will) have real access to them or, at least, (will) have access to meaningful versions of them” (p. 282). This process of recognizing value and overlaying new knowledge on existing knowledge underscores the iterative cycles of exposure, practice and proficiency that have surfaced in the ever-changing landscape of the Internet and underscores the pedagogy of multiliteracies proposed by the New London Group (1996). The Internet bubble that burst so

dramatically in 2000 has re-emerged in the form of Web 2.0. Companies are developing business models that encourage collaborative knowledge construction and facilitate widespread transmission of multimodal texts created and contributed by seemingly regular folks. Our students are indigenous members of this digital world.

Language and New Literacies

The link between literacy and language often confounds our attempts to prepare teachers to effectively teach students to read. Although the ability to read (in this case, decoding language) is an emergent literacy practice, it often gets distilled into decontextualized, repetitive activities (i.e., scripted programs, canned curriculums, narrow focus on phonics, etc.) for young children just learning to read and for older students who struggle with reading. Luke and Freebody (1999c) reconceptualize literacy as a family of practices: “First, the notion of ‘practices’ suggests that they are actually done -- performed, negotiated, and achieved in everyday classroom and community contexts, rather unlike psychological skills, schemata, competencies, and so forth. Second, the notion of ‘family’ suggests that they are dynamic, being redeveloped, recombined, and articulated in relation to one another on an ongoing basis” (n.p.). Luke and Freebody’s four resources model of reading is anchored on this conception of literacy as a *family of practices* that foregrounds “substantive and visible, dynamic and fluid practices undertaken by human agents in social contexts” (1999c, n.p.). This view of literacy builds on the early work of sociolinguists who articulated emergent theories of language use rooted in communication and social interaction (Gumperz, 1983; Gumperz & Hymes, 1986). Ultimately, the goal of literacy instruction is to prepare students to function effectively in society for a variety of purposes ranging from civic involvement and meaningful employment to individual

well-being and social interaction. The chronologically new literacies afforded by the Internet will continue to expand our collective understanding of what it means to be literate and how that capacity can be fostered in students.

Eisner (1997) connects symbolic representation (or language) and cognition (or literacy), specifically arguing that “without a form of representation that affords our ideas the possibility of life” (p. 349), mathematics and musical compositions would be impossible to create. In terms of making sense of the emerging Internet communication technologies and the new literacies they require, Eisner points out that “each form of representation can be used in different ways, and each way calls on the use of different skills and forms of thinking” (p. 353). The notion that new skills are required for exploiting the potential of the current context of globalization and rapid communication has been well documented (Karchmer, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, 2000; Leu et al., 2004; A. Luke, 2000). What remains largely unexamined, however, are the ways in which teachers use new literacies (both chronologically and ontologically ‘new’) to construct and represent their teacher identity. In terms of computer literacy, are some teachers blissfully unaware of their own digital intelligence and its potential impact on their teaching? By exploring the blogs of new teachers, this study seeks to address these questions. After all, how can we expect teachers to integrate the paradigmatic changes necessary to meet the needs of our 21st century students if teachers are not familiar with new literacies themselves?

BLOGS AS THINKING TOOLS

Blogging provides a venue for reflection on action. The act of writing and maintaining a blog, particularly one focused on a specific topic, involves thinking about one’s practice and determining how to best describe the events in the classroom. Langer and Applebee (1987)

identify four attributes of writing that facilitate thinking:

1. The **permanence of the written word**, allowing the writer to rethink and revise over an extended period
2. The **explicitness required in writing**, if meaning is to remain constant beyond the context in which it was originally written
3. The **resources provided by the conventional forms of discourse** for organizing and thinking through new relationships among ideas
4. The **active nature of writing**, providing a medium for exploring implications entailed within otherwise unexamined assumptions

These attributes apply to electronic writing, such as blogging, and underscore the role of thinking in writing. Technology has impacted the notion of audience (Bromley, 2006), and blogs are a prime example of how writers can reach a much broader audience. As participants write about their experiences, they process the events and attempt to make connections between and among the situations in their classrooms. Blogs provide a way for participants to share and receive feedback from readers located throughout the country and even other parts of the world. This technology has the capacity to facilitate greater understanding of the daily lives of teachers.

Prominent edublogger Will Richardson addressed issues of the multimodality of blogs in a series of linked posts on his blog *Weblogg-ed* (2006). “Blogs are powerful communication tools. Blogs are powerful publishing tools. But *blogging* (the verb) is still much more than that to me. Blogging, as in reading and thinking and reflecting and then writing, is connecting and learning” (W. Richardson, 2006). Blogging (the verb) involves synthesizing information and constructing new understandings. Therefore, as a literacy practice, blogging (the verb) has been

around considerably longer than blogs (the noun), which have only recently been developed and even more recently gained widespread use. Oravec (2002) points out that “weblogs annotate or bookmark the Web in a way that allows others ready access to the material deemed important by bloggers; they provide a personal ‘map’ of the Internet” (p. 620). By exploring the multimodality of blogs through the lenses of blog as genre, blog as verb, and blog as noun, I will provide an overview of the existing research on blogs and draw attention to the unique affordances of this new literacy, in this case the longitudinal narrative reflections of first year teachers through the sociolinguistic multimodal texts of their blog posts, and the need for further research to explore how these affordances impact teacher preparation and identity formation.

Anatomy of a Blog

The basic anatomy of a blog consists of a banner, entries or posts, and a sidebar. The banner includes the title of blog and a descriptive tag line. It serves as a navigation device that, when selected, returns reader to the home page of the blog. Entries or posts make up the main content of the blog. They typically appear on the screen in reverse chronological order and provide links for comments. The sidebar includes navigation links and other blog site tools such as a keyword search, calendar, archived entries, recent entries, blogroll, RSS syndication, Creative Commons license, and blog software icons. It is located to the right and/or left of the blog entries and can be modified by the blogger.

For this study, blogs are viewed as thinking tools through which participants construct and enact a professional teacher identity.

Blog as Genre

The blog has emerged as a distinct genre – a multimodal, interactive hybrid genre drawing from multiple sources both on- and off-line (Herring et al., 2004). As mentioned earlier, Swales (1990) points out that “...exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of *structure, style, content, and intended audience*” (p. 58). Early blogs served as filters for the ever-increasing content available online (Blood, 2000, 2002) and continue to serve as maps for online information consumers (Oravec, 2002) who recognize patterns of structure, style, content and intended audience within and across blogs for various purposes, supporting the claim of blogs as genre.

Thinking about blogs as a distinct multimodal genre involves identifying patterns within and across blogs, articulating the semiotic affordances of blogs, and examining the layers of description of blogs, ranging from linguistic rhetoric to accounts of production and design. “This process of investigation is intended to gradually reveal more detailed aspects of the ‘landscape’ within which genres are situated. Rather than seeing genres as isolated constructs, such as found in lists of unrelated text types, they are turned instead to instances or examples drawn from a known landscape of possibilities” (Bateman et al., 2007, p. 159). By integrating multiple genres into a central theme or idea, the writer draws examples from the known landscape of possibilities that Bateman, Delin, and Henschel refer to above. Accordingly, blogs have the capacity to function as an inclusive, multimodal genre.

Blog as Verb

Blogging is a dynamic process of connecting and learning, synthesizing and constructing, designing and re-designing, questioning and answering, searching and sharing. The act of

blogging encompasses many things: reading, writing, thinking, reflecting, and responding. These practices are not new. Dating back to cave drawings and early alphabets, humans have read, written, thought and responded to each other through various forms of symbolic representation for thousands of years. Conceptualizing blogging as a complex verb, composed of multiple literacy practices largely familiar to teachers and students, removes some of the ambiguity associated with blogging. My own experience with the blogging phenomenon is fairly typical. I first became aware of blogs through the media, years before I ever read or posted to a blog. I later stumbled on blogs in my Google search results, which provided an entry point for me to read specific blogs associated with my original search terms. By accessing these blogs, I was able to learn about the structural and functional features of blogs through models related to my specific content interests.

Blog as Noun

The “newness” of blogs stems from its current electronic iteration. The blog itself is a type of journal with the potential for multiple organizational structures (White, 2006). Many blog hosting websites are available for little or no cost and provide templates and user-friendly interfaces that support the user in designing and maintaining the blog. Blogs therefore provide an affordable venue for publishing and sharing content online with important implications for writing instruction (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006). Blogs play important roles in politics, law, education and journalism (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006), as well as in gaming, celebrity gossip and special interest groups (homeschooling parents, Golden Retriever owners, watchdog groups, etc.). This free exchange of information, facilitated by global connectivity, provides unlimited opportunities for meaning-making, knowledge-building and critical-thinking (Lankshear &

Knobel, 2006). As teachers become more familiar with the blogosphere, the potential for transfer into their instruction and understanding of literacy increases dramatically.

TEACHER IDENTITY

Identity and Learning to Teach

Identity is an elusive concept that has been defined in many ways. Holland and Lachicotte (2007) describe identity from a sociocultural perspective:

Identity is an achievement of a person's activity, but only within the contexts and events of social interaction. One's identities are social products drawn from social history, actively internalized, and redrawn as one's expressions of these identities enter into new circumstances and new activities (p. 118).

Of particular relevance for this study are the ways in which new teachers cast themselves in the role of teacher, drawing and redrawing their identity as they enter into new circumstances involved in learning to teach. Recent empirical research on learning to teach and teacher identity provides guidance in conceptualizing the notion of teacher identity (Luehmann, 2007). Because this study taps into the relatively new world of teacher bloggers and provides previously unavailable access to new teachers' reflections and insights during their first year, there is little research on this topic. The majority of research on teacher learning and teacher identity was conducted on pre-service teachers. With the controlled environment of a teacher preparation program, teacher educators and researchers have direct access to participants and can integrate data collection with course assignments. This research provides insight on the transition from student to teacher and creates a starting point in terms of conceptualizing this process mediated through the blogs.

A common theme among the learning to teach literature is the impact of the prospective teacher's years in the classroom as a student (Marsh, 2002; Mayer, 1999; Twiselton, 2004; Walkington, 2005). Mayer (1999) describes this as their *apprenticeship of observation*. In her qualitative study of four pre-service teachers, she delineated the notion of a teacher's role from their teaching identity:

A teaching role encapsulates the things the teacher does in performing the functions required of her/him as a teacher, whereas a teaching identity is a more personal thing and indicates how one identifies with being a teacher and how one feels as a teacher (n.p.). She argues that "by conceptualizing 'experience' as the dialogic interaction of role and identity, the social dimensions that are interwoven into our very existences are accommodated" (Mayer, 1999, n.p.). In other words, by integrating the two strands of role and identity, teacher educators capitalize on the *apprenticeships of observation* and build on the prior knowledge of student teachers.

Twiselton (2004) studied a group of 47 student teachers over a 5-year period and described teacher identity as a "central, dynamic force that appears to have an impact on the way the (student) teachers interpret classrooms and leads them to manage and shape the activity systems in which they operate" (p. 159). She identified three types of student teachers (Task Managers, Curriculum Deliverers, and Concept/Skill Builders) and argued that identity formation is impacted by personal educational history and curricular expectations of the school.

Walkington (2005) analyzed the journals of 240 first year undergraduates who planned to become teachers and found that their initial statements about why they chose the profession fell into two categories. The first one included statements describing positive experiences with

teachers, coaches or community members, and the second category included statements about the prospective teacher's natural ability to teach and their 'teacher personality'. These are certainly noble reasons to become a teacher, but they also perpetuate the misnomer of the 'natural born teacher'. Walkington argues for a shift in the way new teachers are mentored, from supervision to socialization of student teachers, providing space for reflection on action and the development of a teaching self.

In a case study of five new teachers, Findlay (2006) critiques the induction process for teachers in the UK. She identified a tension for new teachers "as beliefs and ideas about teaching are challenged by the realities of being a classroom teacher and the professional landscape in which they must operate" (p. 516). Based on her research, she suggests connecting professional development to new teachers' career paths, viewing learning to teach as a process facilitated by professional reflection and growth, and instituting a collaborative approach at the department level to offset the feelings of isolation many new teachers experience.

Teacher Identity and New Literacies

What factors contribute to teaching identity construction? How is this emergent identity supported through systems within the institution (faculty, administration, district, state, federal) and outside (blogging, community participation, reading and reflecting)? Many new literacy researchers underscore the point that traditional reading and writing remain essential components of a pedagogy of multiliteracies (Jewitt, 2006; Leu et al., 2004). The ability to cognitively process text, whether linguistic or multimodal, requires attention to print, some form of decoding or mediation between the text (whether on the screen or the page) and the reader, critical analysis of the source and theme of the text, and the transactional process of textual meaning-making

(Lemke, 2004; A. Luke & Freebody, 1999c; C. Luke, 2000). New ICTs like podcasting, virtual learning environments, collaborative web-based projects, blogs, wikis, video/audio production, social bookmarking, tagging, and RSS feeds provide abundant opportunities for teachers and students to collaboratively construct new ways of making meaning about the world in which we live. Clearly the role of the teacher in these new literacy classrooms shifts from an authoritative stance to one of guide and apprentice. Teachers are even more important in the networked world of the Internet since information is not derived from a static teacher's manual or textbook, but from a dynamic, living collection of facts, figures, images, propaganda, dogma, advertising, predators, experts, and friends (Leu, 2000, 2002; Leu et al., 2004). This new role for teachers includes teaching students how to make sense of this abundance of information and to encourage democratic participation in this new environment.

Recent studies on teacher identity have examined various angles of becoming a teacher. Researchers have focused on developing reform-minded teachers (Lasky, 2005; Luehmann, 2007), the social aspects of identity formation (Marsh, 2002; Twiselton, 2004), the role of intellect in teaching (Walkington, 2005), the emotional aspects of learning to teach (Zembylas, 2003), and the contextual factors involved in learning to teach (Findlay, 2006). The intent of this study is to capitalize on this research by examining new teacher identity formation within the context of blogging.

Historical Context of the American Teacher

Early in the 20th century, enrollment in schools increased significantly which led to more organization within local school districts and the establishment of more colleges devoted to teacher preparation. In her account of educational research history, Lagemann (1997) discusses

the “emergence of a research community in education” that was characterized by a reliance on empirical data, a willingness to accept input from outside experts, and the formation of philanthropic organizations dedicated to funding education research. The American Educational Research Association was established during this period to further undergird the notion of education research as a measurement science. The movement toward professionalizing the field of education research led to many advances in teaching, but it also created a gap between theory and practice. The focus primarily centered on school leaders rather than teachers. Consequently, a top-down model emerged in which teachers were often left completely out of the research equation. Also during this period, the advent of the assembly line exponentially increased productivity in the automobile industry and fundamentally influenced organizational design and efficiency in business models with ripple effects in education practices.

Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, the federal government made dramatic strides toward increased involvement in the daily functions of public schools receiving federal funds. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) ushered civil rights into public education and eventually paved the way for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In exchange for much-needed financial support, these schools are typically required to make specific curriculum choices approved by the federal government (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000). At this crucial point in history, the dawn of a new millennium, teachers are expected to implement mandates calling for improved test scores that often discourage individuality and creativity in favor of standardized curriculums that are recognized by the federal government as scientifically-based. In this context, a teacher’s autonomy and control over instructional practices is greatly diminished. Based on my own experience teaching in an at-risk school, I

believe teachers (particularly recent graduates of teacher education programs) are capable and willing to continue learning, building on their internship experiences, to develop and refine their teaching practices. As they experience success and overcome failure, new teachers develop a sense of agency that positively contributes to their teacher identity.

Teacher Knowledge and Beliefs

A teacher's knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning fundamentally impact the way they conduct their classrooms. Individual characteristics emerge among teachers on a faculty that, in theory, work together to make a stronger whole (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004). Richardson (1996) conceptualizes three "categories of influence" that contribute to one's teacher identity – personal influences (images and metaphors), schooling (12,000 hours in classroom settings observing many models of teaching, learning and managing), and formal knowledge (content and pedagogical knowledge). Street (2006) points out that, "the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being" (p. 23). Teachers inevitably bring their deeply rooted epistemological beliefs to the classroom, although they may not know how to negotiate these beliefs with other influencing factors involved in teaching. Recognizing and nurturing a new teacher's knowledge and beliefs about teaching, drawing out individual strengths and weaknesses and building on the existing foundation of one's past experiences fosters an environment of efficacious professional growth.

Construction and Representation of Teacher Identity

Teacher identity is composed of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning consisting of one's attitudes, perceptions, implicit theories, cognitions, reasoning, images,

metaphors and epistemological beliefs (V. Richardson, 1996). As mentioned earlier, these beliefs are influenced and shaped by multiple factors. The process of constructing a teacher identity unfolds differently for each person (Mayer, 1999). A challenge to teacher educators exists in the propositionary nature of teacher preparation. Although the identity construction process varies among individuals, it comes into excruciating focus on the first day of school. At this point, the new teacher (who is substantially familiar with the operations and norms of schools) must take her place on the other side of the desk. What happens next depends on the climate of the school, the support of other faculty, the knowledge and beliefs of the teacher, and other resources available to support the teacher (Kauffman et al., 2002).

Familiarity with schooling by the general public creates “armchair teachers”, people who have years of experience observing teachers but little grasp of the abstract knowledge of teaching. Lagemann (1997) defines professionalism “as a continuous historical process by which different groups have vied for jurisdiction over different social functions” (p. 5). Her claim is that once a group has abstract knowledge that is not available to others that the occupation then becomes a profession. Her contention is that with the highly technical and sometimes abstract nature of educational research, the current educator should now be considered a professional. Fundamentally, “to gain jurisdiction, which allows a particular group to define the problems involved in, say, educating children, that group must possess abstract knowledge that is both not available to others and relevant to the tasks demanded by that particular occupation” (p. 5-6). This abstract knowledge fortifies a teacher’s professional identity and underscores the complexity of teaching.

The acts of construction and representation are intertwined as a new teacher begins establishing a teacher identity. Many of the expectations of teachers (writing lesson plans, maintaining classroom management, and teaching content) are themselves representations of a teacher identity. The Internet, and blogs in particular, provides an additional venue for representation. The structure and content of a teacher's blog embodies how that teacher chooses to represent oneself online. The notion of a digital teacher identity will be explored in this study by examining new teachers' blogs and how they choose to represent themselves online as a teacher.

SUMMARY

This review of literature maps out what is known about the converging issues of new literacies and teacher identity. By establishing a conceptual framework of new literacies based on multimodal and sociocultural theories, I aim to clarify this emergent strand of literacy research and locate it within the larger interdisciplinary work of sociologists, sociolinguists, anthropologists, linguists and economists interested in literacy, language and technology. The section devoted to new literacies explores the definitions, historical contexts and linguistic elements of the relationship between literacy and technology. This is followed by a section specifically focused on blogs and blogging, within the context of education and teacher learning. In the final section, I discuss teacher identity as it relates to new teacher development, articulating the need for further research on new teachers and blogging. The next chapter outlines the techniques I employed to conduct the study.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

The purpose of this dissertation was to gain understanding about how new teachers use blogs to enact a teacher identity. Chapter 1 introduced the study by presenting the problem, purpose and significance of the study, research question, limitations and delimitations, definition of key terms, and the theoretical assumptions on which the study is based. Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature that included a discussion of new literacies, blogs and blogging, and teacher identity. Along with my theoretical framework, the literature review provided background information that situates the present study within the current research on new teachers and blogging.

In this chapter, I begin with a rationale for my methodological choices. This is followed by a detailed description of the methods used in the study including participant selection, data collection, and the stages of data analysis.

RATIONALE FOR METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

Little is known about the ways in which new teachers use blogs to develop their teacher identities. In fact, there is limited education research available on the role of blogging in general. This study seeks to provide an initial description of the phenomenon of blogging teachers and offer guidelines for further research on this emergent trend in technology use by educators. This study is a qualitative inquiry through a sociocultural lens (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007) that focuses on participants' lived experiences. To address my research question, I chose to conduct case studies on teachers who voluntarily and publicly blogged throughout their first year of teaching. The case study approach provides a structure for describing these lived experiences

within the context of a “bounded system” (Stake, 1995), in this case participants’ first year of teaching. Yin (2003) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 13). I chose the case study method to examine the phenomenon of teacher identity development, in the context of the edublogosphere, over the course a one school year (Merriam, 1998).

The present study employs a multiple-case design with a holistic unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the participant’s first year of teaching, mediated through his/her blog. Each case is holistic, meaning that description and analysis encompasses the teacher’s experiences during one complete school year. The decision to use a multiple-case, holistic design for this study was based on the exploratory nature of this research. Given the fact that teacher blogging is a fairly recent phenomenon, I sought out early adopters to gain an understanding of the ways in which they use blogs to develop their teacher identity.

METHODS

Blog Selection Criteria

The present study seeks to develop a language of description (Street, 2006) for the emergent edublogosphere. To begin this process, I established a list of teacher-created blogs based on the following criteria: (1) authorship, (2) structure, and (3) content. For authorship, I selected blogs written by first-year teachers. Initially, I was interested in blogs written exclusively by graduates of traditional teacher education programs. However, throughout the course of searching for teacher blogs, I discovered a network of new teacher bloggers who were teaching with an alternative license and had taken a non-traditional path to the profession. This caused me to reconsider the criteria of authorship and to include these teachers’ blogs in the

recruitment process. The second criteria I used to select blogs for the study was structure. Essentially, I focused on blogs that were regularly updated and “active”. I was interested in selecting blogs that were updated at least 1-2 times per week during the 2006-07 school year. The third criteria was content. Blogs were selected that focused specifically on the blogger’s experiences as a first-year teacher, as opposed to more diverse topics. It was my desire to see how new teachers were using blogs to develop a teaching identity, so it was important to filter blogs that did not focus on learning to teach.

At this point in the study design, I grappled with how to request IRB approval from my university. After all, these blogs were publicly available on the Internet. What was my responsibility as an ethical researcher planning to study these blogs? I consulted with my dissertation advisor and the university IRB consultant, both of whom advised that I obtain Informed Consent from the participants. I searched for insight from other researchers who conducted research online and found that the consensus was to gain Informed Consent (Chase, 2005; Runte, 2008). After contemplating how to best address my research question and realizing that I would like to contact the participants to ask them about their experiences blogging, I decided to seek consent to study the blogs even though they were publicly available.

Recruitment and Consent

To begin the process of locating blogs for this study, I conducted an Internet search using the terms *first year teacher blog*, *new teacher blog*, and *beginning teacher blog*. Following the selection criteria listed above, I compiled a list of 10 potential blogs for the study. The low number of new teacher blogs indicates that this new technology has yet to be widely adopted by first year teachers and underscores the value of studying the blogs of these early adopters. I

monitored these blogs throughout the school year and contacted the potential participants in June 2007, after they had completed their first year of teaching. I posted a comment on each blog with my contact information and a brief description of the study (Appendix A). Of the ten bloggers I identified for the study, six replied to the comment I left on their blog, and four included their mailing address for the Informed Consent form (Appendix B). I mailed a hard copy of the Informed Consent form to each of the four bloggers who expressed an interest in participating in the study. These four individuals each signed the Consent form and mailed it back to me within 10 days. Because I had pre-screened the blogs according to my criteria prior to contacting potential participants, I decided to include all four bloggers who agreed to participate and signed the Consent form.

Participants

The four participants in this study represent a variety of new teachers. The first participant, Ms. Grover (all names are pseudonyms), taught 4th and 5th grade special education in an urban elementary school. She was a non-traditional teacher who participated in a program that recruits college graduates to teach in high-needs schools. Ms. Grover had an alternative license and was enrolled in a graduate education program during her first year of teaching. The second participant, Ms. Bailey, also taught 4th and 5th grade special education in an urban elementary school. She was a non-traditional teacher who participated in a program that recruits professionals from other fields to begin a second career as a teacher in a high-needs school. Ms. Bailey also had an alternative license and was enrolled in a graduate education program during her first year. She was the oldest participant, and the only one who had already started blogging before she decided to become a teacher.

The third participant, Ms. Atkins, taught regular education in a multi-grade class with 4th and 5th graders in a rural elementary school. She was a traditional teacher who had earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Elementary Education and held a teaching license in her state. Of the four participants, Ms. Atkins was the only one who did not return to her school for a second year. The fourth participant, Mr. Sizemore, taught math and computer science in a suburban high school. He was a traditional teacher with a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics. He was dually certified in his state to teach high school math and computer science, and was enrolled in a graduate program in computer science education during his first year of teaching. Mr. Sizemore was the only male in this study and the only participant to blog using his real name.

A more in-depth description of each participant, along with excerpts from their blog, will be presented in the Participant Narratives section in Chapter 4.

Data Collection Methods

This study involved two phases of data collection. During the first phase (described above), I identified blogs written by new teachers and secured Informed Consent from each participant. The second phase of data collection involved sending an electronic questionnaire to each participant in the study via email. I decided to conduct the questionnaire through email for two reasons: (1) participants were located throughout the United States and the expense involved in traveling prohibited face to face interviews and (2) my aim for the study was to examine participants' use of technology and I felt that it was important to use an electronic medium to communicate with them.

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions about the blogging experience (Appendix C). The purpose of the questionnaire was to gain insight from participants about their reasons for blogging. After reading the blogs and considering my research question, I found myself wondering about the story behind the story for these bloggers. In addition to the blog content, I was interested in their rationale for blogging and designed the questionnaire to elicit reflection on their decision to blog. The questions focused on four aspects of blogging: (1) author's purpose for blogging; (2) intended audience; (3) social interaction through blogging; and (4) blogging as it relates to teaching. After completing the questionnaire, participants emailed their responses directly to me.

The sociocultural lens (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007) I used to analyze the data conceptualizes identity formation as a *process* that occurs over time in relation to others. The blog provided a venue for me to consider how participants enacted their teacher identity through the language they used, the events they shared, and the characters with whom they interacted and developed relationships during the course of the school year. The questionnaire yielded insight on participants' motivation and rationale for blogging and supplied background information that was not otherwise available on the blog.

Data utilized in this study included transcripts of participants' blog posts during the 2006-07 school year and their responses to the electronic questionnaire. There was a total of 386 blog posts with over 500 pages of text. The number and length of posts varied among participants. Ms. Grover wrote 123 blog posts consisting of 97 pages of text, Ms. Bailey had 69 blog posts and 123 pages of text, Ms. Atkins posted 146 entries containing 262 pages of text, and Mr. Sizemore's blog had 48 posts and 66 pages of text.

Data Analysis

The central data source for this study was the participants' blog posts written throughout their first year of teaching. Each blog is considered a text that provides insight on participants' identity formation in the context of their first year of teaching. Silverman (2006) distinguishes *texts* as "data consisting of words and/or images which have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher (e.g. through an interview)" (p. 153). The purpose of this study was to examine how new teachers used blogs to enact a teacher identity. To conceptualize this process, I viewed the blogs as online diaries. Alaszewski (2006) points out that "while diaries may be seen as a means to an end, they can also be seen as texts in their own right used by the diarist to construct his or her own identity to support an account of social reality. The nature and structure of such accounts can be explored using techniques developed in literary or textual analysis" (p. 42). He characterizes diaries as texts that provide a contemporaneous record of personal events maintained over time. Since the blogs were created independent of this research study, they are therefore considered unsolicited and naturalistic. "...the naturalistic researcher is concerned to minimize the impact and intrusiveness of their research into natural social settings. Researchers using unsolicited diaries can achieve this ideal" (p. 80). My rationale for contacting participants at the end of the school year was to maintain this type of authenticity without researcher intervention.

To address my research question and focus my analysis, I articulated two underlying theoretical propositions about teachers who blog: (1) New teachers who blog develop self-efficacious teaching identities that extend beyond their own schools and connect to others in the field and (2) The content of new teacher blogs represents salient issues facing first year teachers

as they progress through the school year. Yin (2003) asserts that foregrounding these theoretical propositions in the context of analysis “helps to focus attention on certain data” and “helps to organize the entire case study” (p. 112). These propositions focused my analysis as I read through the blog transcripts and questionnaire data. They encompassed my initial beliefs about the study and served as a foundation on which to analyze the blogs. Did participants develop self-efficacious teacher identities? Were participants using their blogs to connect with teachers beyond their schools? How does the content of their blogs inform our understanding of identity formation for new teachers?

I conducted a qualitative content analysis of the blog texts to identify themes in the data to articulate how participants engaged in identity work through their blogs. In the past, content analysis has been associated with identifying and counting aspects of the text based on a particular coding scheme (Krippendorff, 1980). For this study, I was more concerned with identifying trends in the data that addressed the social reality that participants described in their blogs. Silverman (2006) points out that researchers interested in this type of research “use a different form of content analysis in which they report (untabulated) extracts which illustrate particular categories” (p. 161). Alaszewski (2006) further clarifies the difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis:

While content analysis can create data which can be summarized numerically, it is important to recognize that if the research is designed to create hypotheses and not test them then such numbers will usually indicate general trends within the data rather than the values of specific variables (p. 86).

The categories I used for the content analysis were developed iteratively by comparing my data with the existing literature on new teachers and identity formation (Bauer, 2000). These categories, along with a description of how I developed them, will be presented later in this section.

Data analysis commenced after I received consent from each participant. I began by printing out each participant's blog text and arranging the posts in chronological order. This enabled me to read through the data as a story, beginning with pre-planning and preparation and ending with the close of the school year. My analysis took place in two phases: (1) a detailed description of each participant and the themes within his/her blog and (2) a cross-case analysis for commonalities among all four participants. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the steps I took in each phase.

Phase I

During this initial phase of data analysis, I examined each case individually. I began with the first participant who returned the Consent form and moved through them one at a time (Grover, Bailey, Atkins & Sizemore). I purposefully focused on one participant at a time in order to develop a detailed description of each individual before thinking about them collectively. To construct each description, I read the blog posts and questionnaire responses and developed coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) based on the blog content.

My goal for this phase of analysis was to develop an understanding of each participant's experience, in terms of the teaching and blogging activities described in the text. I noted words and phrases in the margins that related to these experiences. These words and phrases served as my initial codes. After reading and coding each blog, I compiled a list of all the codes and

arranged them into categories. I collapsed the codes and identified broad categories that accounted for the entire text. I then re-read the text to ensure that my coding scheme fit the data. The initial list of categories for each blog contained between 75-100 codes. These codes were collapsed through several iterations and eventually 4-6 categories were identified for each blog (Appendix D). I selected relevant excerpts from the blogs and questionnaire responses that illustrated each category and maintained a record of these excerpts for reference. At this point, I began to write each description based on the categories and continued to refer back to the data to ensure the verisimilitude of my findings. These accounts can be found in Chapter 4 in the Participant Narratives section. They serve as the basis for comparison between and among participants and lay the foundation for the next phase.

Phase II

During this phase, I conducted a cross-case analysis of the four blogs to identify common themes. I began by comparing the four sets of coding categories identified in Phase I and identifying similarities and differences among them. I compiled a master list of categories and developed data displays (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to better understand the data (Appendix D). As I thought about the categories in light of my research question, I continued to re-read the excerpts that represented each category and asked questions of the data to clarify my understanding. I contemplated how to conceptualize teacher identity formation in the context of the categories I had identified in the texts.

I returned to the literature and developed a list of dimensions of teacher identity based on the findings of other researchers who studied identity formation in new teachers. I compared this list with the categories I had identified in my data and generated a list of six dimensions of

teacher identity that addressed my data: (1) pedagogical – the roles and responsibilities of teachers concerning instruction (Luehmann, 2007; V. Richardson, 1996); (2) social – the relationships and interactions with students, mentors, colleagues, parents and community members (Twiselton, 2004); (3) intellectual – the teacher’s cognitive abilities and content knowledge (Schlager & Fusco, 2004; Walkington, 2005); (4) intuitive – the decision-making, judgment, discernment, intuition and confidence of the teacher (Zembylas, 2003); (5) political – the value, challenge and allocation of work (Findlay, 2006); and (6) personal – the teacher’s beliefs, attitudes, commitment, sense of purpose, expectations, and values (Britzman, 2003; Hoy et al., 2006).

Using these six dimensions as a framework for the content analysis, I re-coded the texts and calibrated my existing coding categories with these dimensions. Since this was a cross-case analysis, I viewed the blogs collectively and drew from all four texts to support my claims of teacher identity formation. As I gathered excerpts from the texts into each dimension, I read them to augment my understanding of that particular dimension and asked questions of the data. Does this excerpt fit my definition of this dimension? Are participants’ ideas preserved in this dimension? Throughout this process, I came to see the dimensions in relation to each other. I developed a conceptual model of teacher identity (described further in Chapter 4) that encompasses all six dimensions and demonstrates the connections between them. To articulate my findings for Phase II of the analysis, I developed descriptions of each dimension and provided excerpts from the text to illustrate aspects of the dimension and demonstrate how participants’ blog posts contributed to their emergent teacher identity.

My purpose in writing this analysis was to convey how new teachers enacted identity work throughout their first year of teaching. To enhance the trustworthiness of my interpretations, I conducted a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by contacting each participant in August 2008 to solicit feedback. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out, “member checking is a process carried out with respect to constructions” (p. 316). By sending each participant a draft of the narrative that I wrote about them, I sought to substantiate my construction of their realities throughout the first year of teaching as conveyed through their cumulative blog posts. All four participants responded through an email message that contained their feedback. The participants corroborated my interpretation, offered additional clarification on specific aspects of the narratives (i.e., further description of how a particular situation played out), and thanked me for involving them in the process.

SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the methods I employed for this study. I provided a rationale for my methodological choices and a description of the blog selection criteria, my recruitment and selection process, the participants, and my data collection and analysis phases. My goal in this chapter was to provide insight on an emergent form of education research and to document the interpretive decisions I made along the way.

The relative newness of blogging, particularly as a resource for new teachers, provided impetus for this study. How can this new Internet technology be used to support teachers and teacher educators? A logical first step was to design a study in which I examined how new teachers were using blogs. I was interested in the impact of this communication technology on new teachers’ identity formation. By studying their writing, and subsequently their thinking,

about the process of learning to teach and surviving the first year, I was provided a new perspective on teacher development. In the next chapter, I will introduce each participant and present my findings from the cross-case analysis.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents my findings related to the central research question: How do new teachers use their blogs to enact professional teacher identities? The findings are organized into two main sections – participant narratives and identity dimensions. The descriptive framework for each participant narrative includes a description of the participant's background and the community context of his/her school. Key findings are highlighted for each participant, along with a description of the categories within the blog and how, together, these analyses address the research question. My goal with each participant narrative is to describe the participant's experiences during the first year of teaching mediated through their blog. This narrative lens provides a view of each participant that foregrounds their individual experiences and highlights their unique voice.

The second main section of this chapter presents my findings from the cross-case analysis of the four participants' blogs. The analytic framework for this section is based on the six dimensions of identity and how they are represented in the participants' blogs. Both sections address aspects of the blog content identified through an inductive analysis. These aspects are divided into two broad categories: contextual features and interactional features. Contextual features of the blog content include posts about district policy, diversity and community involvement. These contextual features have been conceptualized as elements of teaching that typically occur outside the bounds of the classroom. Interactional features of the blog content include posts about curriculum and instruction, teacher learning, classroom management, career choice and technology integration. These interactional features are

characterized by their relation to classroom practice. For instance, posts about instructional strategies or classroom management involve an interaction between teacher and student. Teacher learning and technology integration are similarly relational, characterized by the relationships involved in professional development.

My first aim for this chapter is to portray each participant individually through the narrative description. This section highlights the teachers' stories by foregrounding their unique experiences and backgrounds. It also sheds light on similarities and differences between participants. My second aim is to delineate how participants engaged in identity work during their first year of teaching through their blog. This section foregrounds identity formation, articulating six dimensions of teacher identity and presenting findings from the cross-case analysis. Together, these aims provide a structure for the chapter that encompasses both the individual and collective voice of the participants. This multi-modal representation of my findings reflects the multimodality of blogging itself.

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

Each participant narrative includes a description of the participant's background, the school and community contexts, and the content categories within their blog. It also integrates participants' responses to the e-questionnaire about their blogging experience. The participant narratives address how these new teachers enacted professional teacher identities through their blog posts. Each narrative begins with an excerpt from the blog's opening post. This first post sets the tone and purpose for the blog. It is interesting to see how each individual chose to introduce themselves to the Edublogosphere. The two alternative license teachers began their blogs in April and May 2006, while the two traditionally licensed teachers started blogging in

August 2006. Direct quotations are italicized, and blog excerpts include the date of the post. Undated quotes indicate responses to the e-questionnaire, which participants filled out in June 2007, after completing their first year of teaching. All names and specific geographic locations have been pseudonymized, according to the Informed Consent that was signed by each participant.

Ms. Grover

Introductory Blog Post

I'm a 23-year-old college graduate from a small town in rural America. I've dreamed of living in the big city since I was 10 years old and alas, in a month I will be making the move to participate in a program for new teachers. This blog will chronicle my experiences in the classroom and in the city. Please check back later in June for updates on our training and life in the city! (05/19/06)

Ms. Grover the Teacher

Ms. Grover is a graduate of a prestigious Mid-western university. She majored in English, and during her senior year, she applied to a program designed to attract recent college graduates to teach at high-need schools. Growing up in a small town, Ms. Grover got a taste of city life during college. After graduation, she found an opportunity to move to another big city on the east coast. Her vehicle to the city: a job teaching special education students in a culturally diverse urban community. Although Ms. Grover had no teaching experience, she brought a sense of social justice to her job and wrote this in her blog profile; *I am participating in a program that puts strong leaders in inner city classrooms with one mission - close the*

achievement gap. The following excerpt broadly illustrates the two cultures Ms. Grover straddles – small-town USA and the inner city:

Maybe it was the 20 boxes of 10 cent crayons or the 30 spiral notebooks (also on sale for 10 cents) or the 8 boxes of markers that gave me away but somehow the Target checkout lady knew.

I was a teacher.

"Where do you teach?" she asked.

"[name of the area]," I told her.

"Oh, that's nice," she said.

She continued scanning crayons and notebook paper and stickers until it clicked.

"[name of the area]? Like [name of the city]?" she asked.

"Yep," I said with a smile on my face. The pride my students have in being from '[name of the area]' has rubbed off.

"Wow, I bet that's scary," she said, still not scanning.

"Actually, I love it," I said, still smiling.

The next couple of minutes were full of scanning, then pauses to ask questions I could tell she wasn't sure were appropriate. She wanted to know if my students brought guns to school, what their families were like, if there were metal detectors and police officers in my building.

One by one I answered her questions and after nearly every answer she would say, "God bless people like you."

People like me???

She continued scanning and totaled up my supplies. By now other people in line were also involved in my story, asking similar questions and giving me similar 'God bless you' looks.

I picked up my bags full of pencils and paper and folders and scissors and walked confidently out of the store, having shared more of my life than is normal for a 2 minute checkout line conversation.

"I'll pray for you!" said the check out lady as I left.

The phrases 'people like you' and 'pray for you' stuck in my mind all day.

The stereotypes people have about my kids make me sick. The only way to break them is to keep sharing, honestly, what has been my experience.

My experience has been that my kids, who have lived much more life than I had at their age, just need someone to teach them how to believe in themselves. (Ms. Grover, 08/07/06)

Ms. Grover posted this vignette after spending two months in the city teaching summer school and participating in professional development. She returned home to visit family and friends before beginning the new school year and, like most teachers, stocked up on school supplies for her students. This excerpt also illustrates the multiple influences she brings to bear on her decision to take such a challenging position. She takes pride in this decision and the opportunity it gives her to break stereotypes that people have of inner-city schools. Part Jonathan Kozol-part Margaret Mead, Ms. Grover embarked on her teaching career with a sense of advocacy and a desire to document her experiences in the hope of changing minds and breaking stereotypes.

The program provided 6 weeks of *teacher boot camp* during the summer. Describing the orientation, she wrote *overall, the most overwhelming part so far has been the sheer number of us [program participants]. There's 566, and we're herded like cattle for the most part. Despite the attempt at small groups, it's largely impersonal, although sometimes the anonymity is nice* (Ms. Grover, 06/27/06). On the first day of professional development:

Chaos reigned. Long breakfast lines and running out of food and late buses and the realization that managing this many people is still too much for staff to patiently handle. We're numbers, not people, and questions are answered only in the context of very carefully timed sessions that would be effective if people could focus on the content but we're still learning how to be attentive and inspired while getting used to the changes that never seem to end. This will get better, but in order to see the progress we made we must remember our beginning (07/03/06).

The next day, she wrote that:

Even people that went to big schools can't help but feel mass produced sometimes. But then there are times, like today in our 'life map' sessions, where it's just a few of us, getting to know each other and coming to the realization that we are surrounded by amazing people. People who believe in why we are here and want to make a difference in the lives of our kids (07/04/06).

The intensity of training so many teachers, preparing them for difficult placements in such a short amount of time, certainly took its toll on the prospective teachers.

She began the year with a sense of *giving back* and had the full support of her family. She maintained a nurturing stance toward her students, determined to meet their needs. *It's*

about kids. Kids in a classroom that are waiting for me to give them everything I have for the next 2 years (02/22/06). Incidentally, the program she participated in prescribed a two-year teaching commitment. And although she is an employee of the school district, her commitment seems to be to the organization, rather than to the school or the students. This brings to light a flaw in this reform movement. It essentially brokers positions to new graduates in high-needs schools for hard-to-staff positions in two-year intervals. Ms. Grover came in with an open heart and an academic pedigree that sustained her through the first year of teaching. It will be interesting to follow up with her in the coming years to see if she continues to teach, or moves on to graduate school or another career.

She returned to the school to teach a second year and posted this on her blog in August 2007, illustrating her anticipation for the coming year:

I cannot WAIT to see my babies. Some of them are coming to help me set up my room I think...They're great cleaners, their little obsessive compulsive/ADD selves. Plus they know JUST how our room is supposed to look and they take great pride in it. We're doing lots of new stuff this year. A leadership curriculum, class meetings (which I started doing at the end of the year last year, half heartedly), full blown math centers (I've got to cause I'm teaching 3 grades of curriculum all by my lonesome), and by golly I will figure out how to get Elvis and Adony to read ON GRADE LEVEL if it kills me. I've got my work cut out for me but I'm SO focused and SO motivated. I made the coolest welcome back video for my kids featuring highlights from last year and inspirational music. Full speed ahead and never looking back. My kids deserve this. Time to go to work – more stories to come (Ms. Grover, 08/28/07).

Ms. Grover the Blogger

Ms. Grover blogged anonymously. When asked about this, she explained that *I use the first letter of my last name, to protect my anonymity if my blog was ever found by someone at my school.* She enjoys the social interaction that comes from blogging with other teachers, but she is aware of the potential risks that come with blogging about one's occupation. She writes that *if it was ever found by someone at my school, I would feel like I could not be as open as I have been about my experiences here. I also feel like it helps to protect my kids if my whole name isn't floating around out there.* Although she recognizes the implications of blogging candidly about her classroom experiences, Ms. Grover chooses to *write as if no one will read it* and tells herself that *most of these people don't read it.* However, she admits that,

in reality, I know that most of my immediate and extended family reads it, as do many of my college friends. Over the last year my blog was 'found' by some staff of the program I am in and I know a number of them also read it regularly. As mentioned before, when I write, I try to tell myself that most of these people don't read it.

There is a clear dis-connect between Ms. Grover's blogging self and her teaching self. When asked if she discusses her blog with anyone at her school, she simply answers *Never.* Her rationale for this stance? *When I write I write as if no one will read it, otherwise I feel it's too censored.* When asked why she blogs, Ms. Grover gave two reasons:

The first one was to get feedback from more experienced teachers about issues I was facing in my classroom. The second was to keep a record of my experiences for both myself and for those who I was close to, such as family members and friends.

She capitalized on the social interaction and communication afforded by blogs. In addition to her own blog, she reads a few other education-related blogs and likes to *read about other people's experiences in the classroom and finds it comforting when their experiences are so similar to mine!* By identifying herself with other practitioners, she participates in a loosely-defined community of practice. She continues to shape herself as a teacher in relation to these written accounts of others. Her compelling desire to connect with other teachers outweighed her concerns about being “outed” by someone at her school.

The content of her blog included both contextual and interactional features of teacher identity. The contextual features within her blog include the school district and community demographics of her school. She described her district's Internet policy; *we have an Internet policy in general, more concerned with the use of using kids' full names and pictures on websites.* The interactional features of her blog include posts about curriculum and instruction, teacher learning and support, classroom management and her career choice. These features of her blog will be further explored in the section on dimensions of teacher identity.

Ms. Bailey

Introductory Blog Post

Alright...welcome to my journal. Well...one of them. This one's going to be specific to a new turn I'm taking in my life. I'm becoming a teacher. Specifically a Special Education teacher in an urban elementary school through a program for career-changers. I thought it would be interesting to keep a journal of my first year...and maybe beyond. We'll see what happens. So...welcome to it! The diary of a first year teacher! (04/20/06)

Ms. Bailey the Teacher

Ms. Bailey came to teaching through a program that recruits career-changers. *I'm not 22 or 23...I'm 35. And I still do believe in possibilities...even if it's tempered a little* (Ms. Bailey, 06/15/07). As a program participant, she was granted a conditional teaching license in a high-needs area, in her case special education. Her decision to become a teacher stems from her own experiences as a student; *I know that it is a monumental challenge, but as a child of public education, I know how valuable public education is and believe that every child deserves a chance to succeed* (Ms. Bailey, 05/04/06). She got a job teaching special education at an urban elementary school. *Hooray!! I've got a job!!! It's a 12:1:1 (12 students, 1 teacher, 1 paraprofessional) Mental Retardation class. There are some behavior issues, but the primary diagnosis is MR* (Ms. Bailey, 06/26/06).

During the summer before her first year, Ms. Bailey participated in 7 weeks of teacher training. She described the training; *so week one of "teacher boot camp" is over! It was really good, if at times a little overwhelming.... The Student Achievement Framework sessions...they're good...usually. They're also a bit fluffy at times, which isn't good since that's where we're supposed to learn the nitty-gritty stuff to start us out. But overall, it's good* (Ms. Bailey, 06/24/06). At the conclusion of the pre-service training, she described the culminating session:

Schools Attuned is wonderful. You can find some info on it here and here [links to websites]. It's a long day ~ 8:30-4:30 ~ but it really doesn't feel that long. And it feels like it's putting a lot of the things we learned over the last 7 weeks together...like I'm seeing the bigger picture and how things fit together now. The attuning process is kind of like writing an IEP or an FBA. And it's all about differentiation. So I feel like I'm

getting to pull everything together. It's a nice feeling to not be confused. Or as confused. LOL. I just know I'm as psyched about this as I've ever been! Yay!!!! (Ms. Bailey, 08/07/06).

On the verge of beginning her first year of teaching, Ms. Bailey has already identified herself as a teacher. Her experiences participating in the pre-service training provided an avenue for exploration and contemplation on her role as a special education teacher.

The pre-service training also included a practicum component in which prospective teachers observed and worked with students enrolled in summer school. During the summer, she actually worked in the school where she got her job. Incidentally, about half of her students in the fall were also in her summer school class. She described the demographics of the students in her district:

Now, keep in mind... These are Hillcrest kids [pseudonym for the name of the district]. Which means they're too challenged to be in a general education setting ~ for various reasons, often emotional disturbances. They're not quite at the level of institutionalization. So they're kids society would easily leave behind. Add to that the fact that in the school I'm in, most of these kids live in poverty or near poverty conditions. They have free breakfast and lunch. They're often from single parent homes, often with multiple siblings where all have a different last name. Again, kids that are easily brushed aside by society. And I'm supposed to go in and teach them. And I've fallen in love with them. Even the rough ones (Ms. Bailey, 08/02/06).

Ms. Bailey certainly perceived herself as an advocate for her students and elaborated this perception in her application essay for the program:

I know it takes someone special to do that; to look at a child and see the potential, to open up gateways for them they never thought possible, to help them believe in themselves by believing in them first. I want to be a teacher to help children learn and grow into the people they were created to be. To walk beside them as they make discoveries about the world around them, about themselves. To work to find ways to make learning come alive for them. I know it is not an easy calling, but it is one to which I feel called (Ms. Bailey, 05/04/06).

She elaborates on her view of the role of a teacher:

They need someone to be a champion for them; someone to help them drown out the voices of negativity that surround them; to believe in them even when they are not capable of believing in themselves until they are able to believe in themselves. I want to be that person in my students' lives; to be what may be the only voice in the wilderness of their lives, the beacon of light pointing to the possibilities beyond the life they know (Ms. Bailey, 05/04/06).

These excerpts from her application essay, which she posted to her blog, indicate the beliefs and convictions that she brought to teaching. It is interesting to note that her description of the Hillcrest students aligns with these initial beliefs about her role as an advocate, striving to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by offering students a path toward success and self-fulfillment.

She credits her own upbringing and education as influences on her decision to become a teacher. Citing these influences, she described her approach to the students:

Because of the unconditional love I have received, I strive to see and accept people as they are. Because of being allowed to question, I create space where children and young people can ask questions and make discoveries for themselves. Because I was given a place to be me, I make every effort to let the children and young people in my care know that they are special and that they belong. In so doing, I have been able to create a diverse community of love and acceptance where the children can begin to grow into the people they will become, confident in the knowledge that there is at least one person who cares about them no matter what (Ms. Bailey, 07/10/06).

Ms. Bailey's commitment to her students' well being is evident in the way she describes her students and the relationships she builds with each one. She capitalized on these positive experiences to construct a compassionate stance on teaching and viewed her work as service to those less fortunate.

Ms. Bailey began the school year with optimism and hope. After the first few days of school, she blogged about the multiple roles she played as the teacher:

Referee. Therapist. Interpreter. Hero.

It depends on the day.

Or in my case, the moment. I feel like in the past two days I've been all of those. And a new teacher alternatively trying to keep my head above water and feeling like I can do this.....and do it well! Ok, I'm confident that I will be able to do this...and do it well. But I have to be patient with myself (Ms. Bailey, 09/06/2006).

She maintained this resolve throughout the year. Although she faced many challenging situations during the year, Ms. Bailey took these obstacles in stride. At the end of the year, she reflected on her growth as a teacher:

Wow...One year ago today I moved to [name of city]. Just over one year ago today, I was sitting in [name of theater], in the midst of 1900 other prospective teachers. We were watching children perform, we were listening to letters and speeches, we were taking the first steps at the beginning of a journey that would take us on twists, turns, heartbreaks, and loves...a journey on which we would see and experience things we could never have imagined (Ms. Bailey, 06/15/07).

She also observed the number of program participants who did not make it through the first year:

Now, one year later, our number has dropped. I don't know to what, but if [name of her graduate school] is any indication... There were I think at least 12 advisory groups with like 25 people per group. Now we're in 10 sections along with mid-year participants for our first class this summer ~ my class has 21 people, and I think that's pretty indicative of the others. My group alone has lost 4 that I'm aware of. We're scattered into other classes on different nights. We don't really get the chance to see each other a lot (Ms. Bailey, 06/15/07).

Similar to Ms. Grover, Ms. Bailey's connection is with other teachers in the program, rather than to teachers at her school. This illustrates the intensive bonding that occurs when people travel a difficult path together. According to her estimate, about 30% of the program participants dropped out before completing the first year. Unfortunately, the percentage of teachers leaving classrooms, especially those in high-needs schools, is not surprising. Ironically, this is a

foundational reason these alternative licensure programs were developed – to place teachers in hard-to-staff positions.

Ms. Bailey the Blogger

When asked how blogging impacted her first year of teaching, Ms. Bailey wrote that *it gives me a way to reflect on my practices ~ and in some cases bounce ideas off others who have been there or are going through similar things. Kind of a little distance from the problem so it's not SO overwhelming.* Similar to Ms. Grover's dilemma of writing online, Ms. Bailey grappled with her decision to blog publicly; *I really try NOT to think about it. I know I'll go back and read it. And looking at the stats, people are googling different topics and finding it. But I really write more for a record for me.*

Ms. Bailey blogged prior to starting her career in teaching:

I'd been blogging for a while before my first year of teaching. It's a way for me to kind of get my head around things ~ sometimes I have to write them down and go back to look at them to figure them out. I also figured it would be (a) fun for me to go back and look at as the year and years passed (it already is...looking back at my posts from this day last year I can't believe how far I've come) and (b) maybe give someone else ideas or hope that you CAN survive your first year. So I made a new blog devoted entirely to teaching.

This excerpt illustrates the iterative nature of blogging. As Ms. Bailey responded to my questionnaire, she read over her past posts and reflected on her own growth.

Ms. Bailey's teaching blog is semi-pseudonymous, meaning she uses initials to refer to students and colleagues at her school, but it also links to her personal blog that contains her offline identity. When asked about her district's Internet policy, she responded, *I think as long*

as we're protecting the children's identities and not being TOO specific it's ok. She described her interaction with other teachers online:

I read blogs of some more experienced teachers ~ and know at least one of them reads mine ~ for insight and the knowledge that even experienced teachers have bad days and they get through it. One's become an online mentor to me ~ helping me put some things in perspective and reminding me that I have to walk a fine line between caring too much and not caring enough about the kids. The first will burn me out and tear me up. The second is a sign I need to get out.

This excerpt illustrates how Ms. Bailey uses her blog to communicate with other teachers. She draws support and encouragement from veteran teachers who read and comment on her blog. The other interactional features of her blog content include posts about curriculum and instruction, teacher learning, classroom management, and her career choice. She blogged about contextual features of teacher identity related to the administration and school district. These features of her blog will be further explored in the upcoming section on the dimensions of teacher identity.

At the end of her first year, Ms. Bailey poetically reflected on her experiences, remembering how overwhelmed she felt at the beginning:

One year ago, I had no clue what path my life was going to take. Oh, I had a general idea in the broad sense...kind of like opening a map of the United States and saying "I'm gonna take a road trip from here to here...but not plan the route in advance, just take it as it comes." There were no clear markings (Ms. Bailey, 06/15/07).

And after recounting the year's ups and downs, she concluded: *I don't know what the next year will bring. But I know it will be even more of an adventure* (Ms. Bailey, 06/15/07).

Ms. Atkins

Introductory Blog Post

Hello! As I have not yet begun my first year of teaching, nor my inservices, I figure this ("ground zero," so to speak) is a good place to start. As luck would have it, the first day of school for the students is on my 23rd birthday. I am both enthralled and terrified to begin this gigantic step in my life! This blog is mostly for myself, so that I have a record of the insanity of the year, but I'm absolutely welcome to any comments, thoughts, questions, or concerns that you may have (even if you're a perfect stranger). (08/06/06)

Ms. Atkins the Teacher

Ms. Atkins had always planned on becoming a teacher. She completed a traditional teacher preparation program in April 2006, and got a job teaching in a small, rural district. Like Ms. Grover and Ms. Bailey, she started a blog for the purpose of publicly documenting her first year of teaching. In her first post, she described her background, illuminating the path she took to the classroom:

I suppose I will begin with my interest in teaching, as well as my educational background. I have known intuitively that I've wanted to teach since I was 6 years old; I have documented evidence! With this idea in mind, I constantly volunteered from age 8ish (Girl Scouts) until the present, attempting to gain as much knowledge about people as I possibly could. I graduated high school with honors, and went on to college.

She majored in human development and early childhood education at a large public university in the Midwest, where she graduated magna cum laude and with distinction. She re-located to the Southwest and graduated with distinction, earning a Master of Education degree from a large public university. Ms. Atkins was ready to become a teacher; *I am excited to FINALLY be on my way to achieving a dream nearly 17 years in the making!* (08/06/06). She was eager to get started and looked forward to meeting her students. However, in her first blog post, she described an unanticipated change in her teaching assignment that foreshadows the year to come, in terms of how she handles challenging situations:

Though I had signed the contract in April for a 5th grade position, I have been informed that there are not enough 4th nor 5th graders to form their own classes. Thus, I get stuck with the 'leftovers', in a sense, of both grades. Bad move for a principal to do to a first-year teacher, but I shall prevail (Ms. Atkins, 08/06/06).

She felt overwhelmed by the demands of teaching two grade levels simultaneously and found managing her classroom to be a challenging endeavor.

From early in the year, Ms. Atkins seemed to be surprised by the challenges she faced in the classroom. After summing up the events of the first day of school, she admitted to having second thoughts about teaching:

Also, I had a few bouts of self-doubt again. Can I do it? Do I even want to do it? Should I join the Peace Corps, be a school counselor, or get an office job? I just don't know.

This is a LOT of work...we'll find out if I think it's worth it or not (Ms. Atkins, 08/16/06).

After the second day of school, she blogged, *I really feel unprepared, even though I have TWO degrees in education. They don't prepare you for this at all* (Ms. Atkins, 08/16/06). As she

muddled through the first few weeks of school, her blog posts began to have an increasingly dubious tone. Ms. Atkins questioned her ability to stay motivated and engaged as a teacher. These are common questions for any new teacher. It is interesting that Ms. Atkins shared such personal dilemmas on her public blog. She also disclosed that, in late September 2006, she began taking anti-depressants, citing the high number of teachers who take *happy pills*.

In contrast to Ms. Grover and Ms. Bailey, who were simultaneously teaching and learning throughout their first year, Ms. Atkins arrived in the classroom ready to teach. This typifies (epitomizes?) the educational paradox at the intersection of teacher preparation and the realities of being a classroom teacher. Ms. Atkins had a particular vision of what the classroom would be like, and the reality just did not measure up.

Two weeks into the school year, she wrote:

Right now, my sole need with my job is that of survival. I'm merely trying to survive right now, and little else. Are the kids learning? Are the standards being taught? How effective are my teaching strategies? These questions, for the moment, are all secondary to this one: Can I make it through the day? (Ms. Atkins, 08/28/06).

Her sentiments support the “sink or swim” myth of learning to teach. Ms. Atkins drew on the support of her family and a few colleagues who attempted to help her manage the students. Her principal assigned a part-time assistant to support her. Incidentally, the assistant was actually an experienced pre-school teacher who was working on an advanced degree in educational administration. She worked with Ms. Atkins on both classroom management and instructional planning.

Her frustrations typically centered on the students' behavior, which she often described as *annoying*. After a particularly challenging day in early September, she admitted:

Today I yelled. I yelled a LOT. I really don't like yelling; it is more of a power struggle than anything else, and no one feels better after being yelled at (well, no one I know of, anyway). Today, however, I felt pushed to my limit. I yelled, and I was harsh. I didn't like it, but the kids were out of control!

Reflecting on the event, she questioned her decision to become a teacher:

And I can't help but wonder: Will I become one of those teachers I despise so much? Will I be the one who's always yelling, who's never happy, who is more like a drill sergeant than a teacher? Will I hate my job more than I love it? Will the kids fear me but not be learning? Yuck. It's REALLY a shame that you can't be too nice when teaching, or the kids eat you alive. I hate that about our society. The teachers I've seen in my life have been caring, nice individuals. It's amazing how a class of 27 kids can turn one from a sweet, nice person to an angry, burned-out, miserable old coot. Will I be that coot? I hope not (Ms. Atkins, 09/01/06).

As the daily battles wore on, she came to describe her relationship with her students as *bi-polar*. In this excerpt, she contemplated why so many of her boys seemed to have emotional problems:

Today, I had yet ANOTHER student just fail to cope and put his head down for 45 minutes. What is UP with these boys just shutting down? I have 4 in my class right now who either freak out, cry, run out of the room, or just don't respond to me when they're stressed. It's very frustrating. My "runner" is one of the sweetest kids in the class; he

said he was just annoyed with the girl sitting next to him. Hmmm...might there be better ways to deal with that than running, dear friend? (Ms. Atkins, 09/07/06)

She brought a detached compassion for her students' problems. She cared for them and was delighted when they showed signs of learning, but her patience with classroom management issues often ran out each day by lunchtime. Although Ms. Atkins experienced frustration in dealing with repeated behavior problems of her students, she contributed to the school community by serving as the PTO secretary, planning a fundraiser to renovate the school's dilapidated playground, organizing field trips, attending band concerts, communicating with parents in Spanish, and tutoring struggling students during lunch and after school. She was proud of her students' work and posted excerpts from their writing and descriptions of particularly engaging class discussions about sweatshops, environmental issues and the crisis in Darfur.

In late March, she mournfully reflected on the state of American schools. As a traditionally prepared teacher, she grappled with the implications of walking away from the classroom:

...I'm increasingly pessimistic about what is happening in education in our country. What's worse is my exact case: I, an educated, caring, motivated young woman, had wanted to make a real difference by entering the teaching profession. What I was met with upon my arrival (indifference, anger, drama, irresponsibility, lies, etc.) has caused me to reevaluate my career choice. I am nearly certain I will be out of the field within the next few years, and that fact worries me about our country. I've decided that I don't want to deal with all this right now. It's too much. And if I, who was so dedicated to

enacting social change, am so jaded and bitter and cynical, who will teach our children?

(Ms. Atkins, 3/30/07).

She brought a similar sense of advocacy for the students as Ms. Grover and Ms. Bailey; however, she differs from them in the way she addressed the nuances of daily classroom life. It is interesting to note that the alternative license programs that Ms. Grover and Ms. Bailey participated in are actually addressing Ms. Atkins' question, *who will teach our children?* Rather than debate which path to teaching is more effective, this study seeks to illuminate the ways in which new teachers use blogs to enact professional teacher identities. In this case, Ms. Atkins is leveraged her insider status as a teacher to speak openly about her experiences in the classroom.

She finished the year, but took another job in June 2007. *I'd once told myself that I would NOT be one of the 50% of teachers who burn out in the first 5 years... Goodbye, yellow brick road* (Ms. Atkins, 03/22/07). She reflected on her decision to leave teaching in late May:

I'm getting very nostalgic and almost sad that I'm leaving. I start my new job in less than 2 weeks now, which makes me happy, but I can't shake my feelings of guilt for leaving the kids here high and dry. I do believe I'll still participate in the PTO next year, and continue helping with the playground project. I want to stay involved with the school, while at the same time not actually teaching. (Ms. Atkins, 05/22/07).

Clearly, she had reservations about leaving the students who needed her so much. Like Ms. Grover and Ms. Bailey, Ms. Atkins felt compassion toward her students and often advocated on their behalves. However, while Ms. Grover and Ms. Bailey conveyed a commitment to the organization that sponsored their teacher training and certification (and the professional support

it provided), Ms. Atkins shouldered the burdens of the first year of teaching on her own. She entertained the notion that she may someday return to the classroom:

*Though I'm leaving the teaching profession at the end of next week, I'm starting to think more and more that it is but a temporary hiatus from this line of work. I do so love when the students really *care* about issues and topics, and that's what would keep me going as an educator. I have yet to figure out effective classroom management tactics, homework policies, conflict resolution facilitation, and so forth... but I feel that I may be able to *do* this someday and enjoy it (Ms. Atkins, 05/26/07).*

Ms. Atkins wrestled with her decision to leave right until the end. It is interesting to note the aspects of teaching that continue to challenge her (effective classroom management tactics, homework policies, and conflict resolution facilitations) are things that take teachers years to perfect.

Ms. Atkins the Blogger

Ms. Atkins started her blog in August 2006, as a way to document her first year of teaching and to stay in touch with family and friends who lived elsewhere. New to her community and new to teaching, Ms. Atkins searched for other blogging teachers online. She was unable to find such a community and decided to use her own blog as a *sounding board on education*, and throughout the year, she *heard from people around the world who were either astonished or sympathetic with the profession's myriad problems*. When asked about her perceived audience for the blog, Ms. Atkins mentioned family and friends. She is aware, however, of the potentially broad audience afforded by her blog and writes to the layman who may not have any background in education. *That way, I feel my blog is more accessible to the*

general population and, therefore, more interesting. Similar to Ms. Grover's aspirations to record and share her experiences in the classroom, Ms. Atkins also capitalized on the affordances of blogging (i.e., social interaction, relationship between writing and thinking about one's practice, level of anonymity) to disseminate her experiences, reflections and thoughts regarding her new role as a teacher. She described the role that blogging played during the year as an outlet for her: *I felt extremely isolated in much of my teaching experience, especially being confined to a room full of children all day, and it was nice to be able to speak freely about my experiences.* Her blog morphed into a place for her to purge the events of the day and interact with sympathetic others.

Although there was no specific policy or guidelines for teachers' technology use in her district, Ms. Atkins was aware of the legal and safety issues associated with blogging. She chose to use pseudonyms for herself, her students, colleagues, administrators and parents. She did not include specific information about the location of her school. She balanced her desire for authenticity and candor in the blog with an awareness of the *legal ramifications* of her words and the need to protect her young students' identities.

Blogging certainly played a central role in her development over the year. At the end of the year after deciding not to return to teaching, she reflected on her blogging experiences:

I will also actually miss blogging about this unique experience. It's been a nice outlet for my whole teaching career (short-lived as it may be), and I've appreciated knowing that I have an audience cheering me on. Thank you, readers, for caring about the issues I've brought forth in this blog (Ms. Atkins, 05/30/07).

She also wrote that, *due to blog-sickness, I have started another one. Thus, I can keep writing, but that one will be about more random (and sometimes more personal) things aside from my life as a teacher* (Ms. Atkins, 05/30/07). Ms. Atkins capitalized on the ease of blogging and came to rely on the regular outlet it provided and the social interaction it facilitated from her readers. Ms. Atkins' blog content contained interactional and contextual features related to teacher identity formation. She blogged about interactional features including classroom management, curriculum and instruction, teacher learning and her career choice. She also wrote about the contextual issues of community involvement and school district administration. These features of her blog will be further explored in the section on identity dimensions.

Mr. Sizemore

Introductory Blog Post

My name is Joe Sizemore and I am very excited to introduce my first ever blog (yeah, that reflective writing thing). I am going to be a first year teacher at Huntington High School in Ohio. I will be sharing my experiences through my first year of teaching Mathematics and Computer Science with hopefully a few readers... I have had the opportunity to read and browse many other tremendous blogs such as Weblogg-ed, Computer Science Teacher, and Cool Cat Teacher. My goal is to provide some insight into my experiences...especially those that concern my teaching ability and thoughts. (08/12/06)

Mr. Sizemore the Teacher

Mr. Sizemore is a Math and Computer Science teacher at a suburban high school in the Midwestern United States. He graduated from a large public university in the Midwest with a

Bachelor's degree in Mathematics. He was working on a graduate degree in Computer Science Education during his first year of teaching. He is dually certified in high school Mathematics and Computer Science.

Mr. Sizemore taught five sections of Computer Science and one section of Algebra II. His classroom was actually a computer lab, and he described the challenge of developing innovative ways to teach math in this untraditional space:

So, I am going to have a group of 24 Algebra II students in a computer lab with a small whiteboard, projector, Tablet PC, and my inexperience. At first, I was trying to figure out how I could manage this situation when the only model of instruction for mathematics I have ever seen is in a "normal" classroom. I have come up with some ideas... (Mr. Sizemore, 08/13/06).

He listed a few ideas for integrating the computers with his math instruction and solicited suggestions from his readers. Juggling the two types of classes actually provided impetus for him to develop innovative ways to integrate math and computer science. Incidentally, he described his schedule for the upcoming second year:

The major difference between my approach to technology is that I am now a math teacher who teaches one period of computers. Last year I was a computer teacher who taught one period of math. I am very excited and willing to take on the challenge of utilizing web 2.0 and presentation tools in the math classroom (08/16/07).

Mr. Sizemore began the year by constructing a web-based environment for his classes. He created a Drupal site designed to function as a learning management system with resources

for students. This excerpt illustrates his organizational thinking and demonstrates the use of a new medium (blogs) for an old practice (teachers sharing helpful information with each other):

Here is the lowdown on the way I built my website...

- 1. I have six classes which include Algebra II, Web Development, Advanced Web Development, Operating Systems, Introduction to Programming: Visual Basic, and AP Computer Science*
- 2. Each student will have their own login name and password on the website and will only be able to access the FRONT PAGE and THEIR CLASSES (i.e., Suzie Q is in AP Computer, she can only see the AP Computer)*
- 3. Each class website (once logged in) contains a forum and a class blog. The forum will be used for teacher proposed questions mainly because students can email me if they have questions. I will update the class websites with only information that pertains to that class. For instance, the Algebra II class does not need to know my advice given to an AP Computer class.*
- 4. The front page is a blog, in a way. Not the reflective writing blog, but a homework blog that I will basically post what the homework was for that specific day and perhaps a few words of encouragement.*
- 5. This seems like a very simple and logical design (if it wasn't...my hair would no longer be attached), but there is always something to tweak before the school year.*

(Mr. Sizemore, 08/15/06)

No longer are new teachers limited to the expertise within their building. By explicitly blogging about his practice, Mr. Sizemore identifies himself as a teacher and participates in a community

of learners that reaches far beyond his local school or community. Mr. Sizemore contributed to this community by sharing his experiences integrating meaningful instruction and technology, in this case how he designed a website to manage the demands of teaching six different classes. He also created the template for a class wiki that he planned to pilot with two of his classes:

My first year of teaching is going to be challenging enough, I think I might stick with just having 2 periods of Web Development hack away at the class wiki because I want to get a little more experienced before I open it up further. The drupal website and class wiki take up a lot of my preparation and I want to make sure that technology does not come before pedagogy (Mr. Sizemore, 08/15/06).

As a new teacher, he is aware of his own learning curve and factors that into his instructional design decisions for the students. This approach contrasts with Ms. Atkins' frustration when things did not go according to her plan. Mr. Sizemore anticipated the challenge of managing the class wikis and devised a workable solution (staggered release).

Mr. Sizemore blogged about his professional development during the year. He viewed himself as a lifelong learner and continued to refine his practice throughout the year. He relished the opportunity to interact with others interested in technology and education and encouraged his readers to participate:

I am really looking forward toward the start of the K-12 online conference with speakers such as David Warlick and Will Richardson. Those of you out there in the educational blogging/web 2.0 universe should check out the K-12 online conference which starts on October 23 (Mr. Sizemore, 10/08/06).

Mr. Sizemore participated in this month-long virtual conference and blogged about 15 different sessions that he attended. Each post included a description of the session and how he planned to use the new knowledge in his classroom. This excerpt illustrates his reflection on a session led by a teacher and his students about their experiences and thoughts with Web 2.0:

As a young teacher, I felt like I was one of the students pleading to use technology in more classes and to have teachers that understand Web 2.0. I may not have understood the message behind wikis and blogs; however, I was aware that there was an entire world of SOMETHING out there. You could stand outside the forest and see something moving or hearing the leaves, you just didn't know how to trap the animals. I now want to pass this onto my students (Mr. Sizemore, 11/24/06).

His curiosity in the affordances of the Internet, and Web 2.0 tools in particular, as a way to enhance learning propelled him to connect with others who shared this curiosity and equipped him with the confidence to try new things. For instance, he posted his reflections on a session about RSS for educators (RSS provides a streamlined way to update content on blogs):

This quote [from the training] gave me a great perspective on how I could use tagging in the classroom. Once I setup a school wiki, I could create feeds on the frontpage that link to each of my classes; therefore, when I create homework for a specific class, the feed will simply take care of the link on the wiki (Mr. Sizemore, 10/28/06).

The synergy between his Web 2.0 ideas and his enthusiasm as a new teacher accelerated the application of cutting edge practices in his teaching. In this excerpt, he reflected on the K-12 Online conference and how it shaped his thinking:

This K-12 Online conference comes at a time during my teaching career, if I can even say that I have one right now, in which I'm reflecting on myself as an instructor, blogger, coach, and motivator. The conference is making me realize that my blogging needs to count, quality over quantity. I need to make a more concerted effort to link to others content and thoughts in order for my own to be shared. After all, isn't that what the Internet as the very base is turning into, a place where thoughts and opinions are shared amongst the many informative resources. I talk at least once a week to my students in my web development class about blogging because I want them to realize it is a way to communicate with their own peers and make their opinions count (Mr. Sizemore, 10/17/06).

Mr. Sizemore's critique of his own blog reveals an openness to change. Throughout the year, he continued to re-form his practices and shared his thinking in the blog.

Compared to the other three participants, Mr. Sizemore rarely wrote about behavior problems with his students. His suburban high school was located in an affluent community in the Midwest with little ethnic diversity. Additionally, he taught advanced courses that typically served college-bound juniors and seniors. He did, however, grapple with many of the same challenges as the other participants, in terms of the workload of a new teacher:

I have had so much to do that I have not had the chance to thoroughly develop alternate strategies of teaching, differentiate instruction, and provide adequate time for those students who need help before or after school.

This excerpt, written at the halfway point in the year, indicates that he understands what a good teacher is “supposed” to do, and questions his ability to sustain the momentum necessary to sustain him through the years:

I knew what I was “signing” up for and understood what it would mean, but what about 5 years from now (the key year highlighted in studies)? What if I still have this type of schedule and feel like I still have not had time to develop in any specific areas. I hope in the future that I will be allowed to have some sort of continuity. Not because of work. Not because of time demand. Not because of subject matter. Not because of laziness or ambition. BECAUSE MY STUDENTS are losing out on instruction which could be much more solid... I hope there are some readers who can relate to this issue and can provide me some solid professional advice, rather than act as if I’m complaining, which is far from the truth (Mr. Sizemore, 01/21/07).

Similar to Ms. Atkins’ candid posts about the tribulations she faced in her classroom, Mr. Sizemore publicly shared his perceived shortcomings as a new teacher and reached out to his readers for “solid professional advice”. His desire to learn from experienced others outweighed his concern about appearing lazy or unwilling to do the work required to become an accomplished teacher.

Mr. Sizemore the Blogger

Mr. Sizemore was the only participant to blog using his offline identity. He viewed the blog as an extension of his professional teaching identity and made an effort to connect with other teacher bloggers:

I have used my real name and/or referred to my real geographic location. I used other bloggers as an example. Many of them were known by their real name rather than their Internet screen name. I just felt that my writing would eventually show my location. I was also hoping that teachers in the area would contact me.

Mr. Sizemore blogs to connect with others; *I used the blog to describe my own experiences as a first year teacher. It was important for me to post information so others could constructively comment.* He mentioned that he *received comments from people who are all over the globe. Based on the comments, it seems like there are teachers from a variety of subjects and ages visiting [the blog].* When he reads education blogs, Mr. Sizemore looks for *blogs which give both information about Web 2.0 applications as well as accounts of classroom activities.* He describes himself as a lifelong learner who values the social interaction facilitated by blogging, *it isn't so much the fact that I blog, but the fact that I can read and gain feedback from others. That is the real impact.*

Mr. Sizemore's blog is reflexive, in that he blogs about blogging. During February 2007, he posted a series of reflections on the Web 2.0 tools he tried with his students. After each reflection, he summarized his thoughts with a single sentence about why he blogs. Pieced together, these excerpts illustrate Mr. Sizemore's rationale for blogging:

I blog because I care about the totality of the students, not just these students... I blog because I care about the profession and the "insanity" of others who have my same visions... I blog to do more than be noticed, I blog because others want to be noticed for their experiences also... I blog to learn from others who have the information and are willing to allow me to learn from them... I blog because I want students to be motivated

by what I show them and vice versa... I blog because I want to be recognized globally and therefore feed that to my students... I blog because I want to learn and want others to learn from my learning... I blog because if I show my opinion on the issue, students are more likely to discuss the issue (Mr. Sizemore, 02/11/07, 02/13/07, 02/24/07).

These excerpts also provide insight on the affordances of blogging, particularly in the service of teaching and learning. It is interesting to note that Mr. Sizemore's reasons for blogging integrate multiple strands of teaching and learning including teacher learning and communication with other professionals, student engagement and critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication.

His blog content included the interactional features of teacher learning, career choice, curriculum and instruction, and Web 2.0. He also blogged about the contextual features related to the school administration. Mr. Sizemore not only articulates these affordances, he contributes content to the Edublogosphere, completely self-aware of his role as a Web 2.0 pioneer.

Summary of Narratives

These narratives present the stories of four individuals who chose to publicly chronicle their first year of teaching in a blog. All four participants completed the school year, and three of them planned to return for a second year. Participants purposefully maintained their blogs and interacted with readers as they enacted aspects of their emergent teacher identity. In the next section, I discuss my findings from the cross-case analysis, in which I looked across all four participants' blogs to develop generalizations about how they enacted teacher identities.

IDENTITY DIMENSIONS

This section presents findings from the cross-case analysis in terms of six dimensions of teacher identity. These identity dimensions were developed iteratively through an inductive analysis of the blog content and a review of new teacher literature. From a sociocultural perspective (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007), teacher identity is conceived as a fluid, dynamic construction of self in the context of learning to teach. The six dimensions of teacher identity include the personal, intuitive, social, political, pedagogical, and intellectual aspects of teacher identity formation. This section begins with a discussion of the framework I developed to further explicate the six dimensions, followed by descriptions and illustrative excerpts of each dimension.

Identity Framework

The identity dimensions have been conceptualized as a series of points on an x/y-axis (Appendix E) with the horizontal axis representing the continuum between the explicit and implicit expectations for new teachers and the vertical axis representing the continuum between the internal and external influences on the development of a teacher identity.

Explicit expectations are characterized by specific models for how teachers should enact certain aspects of their role as teacher. Examples of such models include standardized tests for students, certification and licensure exams for teachers, and packaged curriculum materials. The intellectual and pedagogical dimensions of teacher identity are closely aligned with explicit expectations. Implicit expectations lack specific models and tend to be communicated informally, often after a new teacher acts in a way that does not fit into the implicit model. These implicit models include cultural-historical norms that vary depending on the context.

Examples of implicit expectations include the ways in which a teacher interacts with colleagues, students, parents, administrators and community members, the judgment required to establish and maintain order in the classroom, and the confidence in one's abilities to actually teach students. The intuitive and social dimensions are characterized by these implicit expectations.

The vertical axis on the model of teacher identity spans the continuum between internal and external influences on identity formation. The internal influences include the attitudes, beliefs, and values that one brings to teaching. A teacher's personal history of schooling impacts how she conceptualizes herself as a teacher. Participants often cited former teachers as inspiration for their career choice. Internal influences also include a teacher's intellectual capacity and her decision-making ability. The personal, intellectual, and intuitive dimensions of teacher identity are internally derived. The external influences include policy guidelines from state and federal education agencies that dictate how a teacher interacts with others and instructs students. External influences determine the allocation of work and the distribution of tasks within a school, typically articulated by the school administration. The political, pedagogical, and social dimensions of teacher identity formation are externally influenced.

These axes, explicit/implicit and internal/external, represent the complexity of identity work and illustrate the multiple forces that impact how one enacts teacher identities. They also create a framework for making sense of the six dimensions of identity, in terms of the expectations and influences for new teachers. In the introduction to this chapter, I articulated two features of the blog content that guided my analysis: contextual features and interactional features. Contextual features were conceived as facets of teacher identity beyond classroom instruction – the *context* in which participants functioned as teachers, including aspects related to

state and district guidelines, local community expectations, and diversity of cultural backgrounds of students and teachers. Interactional features were regarded as characteristics of teacher identity that related to classroom practice – the *interactions* involved in teaching. Examples of such interactions include posts about instructional practices, classroom management, and teacher learning. These features formed the basis of my thinking about the dimensions of teacher identity and provide further insight on the relationships between and among the six dimensions.

The following sub-sections delve into each dimension, further illuminating the nuances of learning to teach and articulating how the dimensions manifested in the blog content. Beginning with the personal dimension, I will continue to move around the circle to the intuitive, social, political, pedagogical and intellectual dimensions.

Personal Dimension

The personal dimension of teacher identity is internal and individual. Each new teacher brings a personal history of experiences in school as a student. This history includes one's own successes and failures in school, relationships with teachers/mentors/coaches, beliefs about the role of a teacher, and notions of what constitutes learning. Aspects of this dimension manifested in the blog content when participants wrote about their career choice as a teacher, their recognition of student achievement, and media representation of teachers.

The personal dimension of teacher identity encompasses the attitudes and beliefs that new teachers bring to the classroom. This dimension includes aspects of teachers' emotional lives. It comprises the teacher's sense of purpose and commitment to student achievement. The interactional features of the personal dimension of teacher identity include posts about their career choice and their teaching practice, as it relates to student achievement and teacher

expectations. The contextual features of the personal dimension include posts about the media's representation of teachers and how these popular culture images influence how they perceive themselves as teachers.

Career Choice: Being the Teacher

The primary purpose for these new teachers' blogs was to record and share their experiences in the classroom during their first year. They each began the year with high hopes and expectations for themselves and their students. Participants credited positive experiences as students for their decision to teach. Ms. Bailey described the teachers who influenced her in this post:

I remember Mr. Smucker, my fourth grade teacher who allowed us the space to learn and explore on our own with an hour each day to read, work puzzles, or play checkers or chess. I remember Mrs. Garren, my middle school band director who pushed us to the edges of our abilities and helped us play music more difficult than any of us realized. I remember Mr. Wolfe, my physics teacher who helped me through trigonometry by turning it into science because I could "do" science but didn't believe I could "do" math. These teachers and so many more helped shape me into who I am today (Ms. Bailey, 05/04/06).

Participants modeled themselves after their own teachers who influenced and supported them.

Student Achievement

Another aspect of the personal dimension of teacher identity involves the ways in which participants described student achievement in relation to their teaching. Participants took responsibility for their students' success and often blamed themselves when students did not "get

it” or seemed unengaged. Ms. Atkins described a social studies lesson in which her students were unengaged:

We were learning a fun state song, which should've taken 15 minutes. We first reviewed the lyrics together, which has all 50 states and their capitals. We underlined each state as a class, then circled the capitals.

In an exercise that should've been quick, I asked students (at random) to tell me the capital of each state as I said the state's name. If you take a look at the lyrics, you'll see that each state's capital either directly precedes or follows the state. I was even pointing out each state on the overhead, while the students followed along on their own copies. HOWEVER, I'd call on people who would ask, "Where are we?" or "Which one are we on?" or "What are we doing?" Ugh!! It took sooooo long. I was extremely frustrated, especially since the answers were RIGHT THERE!!! I told them that we had to get through the review before we could go to Art. We ended up being almost 15 minutes late to Art because of so many students being off-task. One girl was even on the floor. Peer pressure ultimately got her back in her seat, but people were angry. Several girls even cried because of missing Art. I told them that I was upset, too, and that it's not fair for this to happen. I got stern and angry, and they knew it (Ms. Atkins, 11/14/06).

In this excerpt, the participant described a lesson that fell short of her expectations. Learning to pace instruction was a topic all participants mentioned in their blogs, but this example illustrates how one participant’s frustration led to feelings of anger toward her students for their off-task behavior. This participant preferred teaching her students about *actual things that matter* in the

context of whole-class discussions. A few weeks after the post about the dismal social studies lesson, she wrote about a more successful lesson:

Of note today: in science, we began talking about tobacco, alcohol, and drugs (even though technically alcohol is a drug!). It was very interesting, and I like having discussions about actual things that matter. This far this year, we've talked about:

1.) The Darfur situation

2.) The war in Iraq

*3.) The *real* meanings of the words "gay" and "retarded"*

4.) Evolution/intelligent design

5.) School shootings

6.) Drugs (Ms. Atkins, 12/04/06)

These excerpts highlight the tension participants experienced as they balanced their personal notion of teaching and learning with the realities of actually conveying new knowledge to students. Ms. Atkins struggled with the traditional curriculum that prescribed narrow indicators for learning. She preferred open-ended class discussions about relevant and often controversial topics. In her view, learning involved critical thinking and problem solving. The lessons that made her feel most fulfilled were those in which students wrestled with difficult social problems.

Ms. Grover, a special education teacher, described her students' growth in the context of political pressure to document "significant gains":

I don't see numbers or visions of organizations anymore. I see Joshua with his chubby cheeked smile, Jose with eyes that light up when I call on him, Adony who smiles when he sees me walk through the gate in the morning, even though he tries to hide it, Mario, who

follows me around until he gets the help he needs, Amanda who gives hugs so long I have to remind her you only hug for 5 seconds...

Significant gains, to me, is so much more than my kids' reading and math data. It's their ability to interact with other people. It's their ability to trust me, as an adult, a white person, and an authority figure. It's my ability to spark in them a curiosity that makes them want to learn (Ms. Grover, 2/4/07).

This excerpt illustrates how she conceptualized her role as a special education teacher. She is proud of their work and “publishes” student writing on her blog. Here is an example of a poem written by one of her students:

We're in the middle of our poetry unit and my kiddos are coming up with some pretty good stuff. Here's one of Malik's:

Why?

Why in a big world

Is there fighting and tears in people's eyes?

I can't think that you can just be born in a world

Where people fight

Fist in your face

Why and again why do people do gang banging?

That is the question no one knows

So I ask why.

We're doing free verse, focusing on content rather than rhyme or rhythm or anything like that. That will come this week when we start writing raps. They can't wait... (Ms. Grover, 3/18/07).

There is a theme of engaging students and fostering change in how they view themselves as learners. Later I will discuss curriculum and instruction in more depth in the section on the pedagogical dimension of teacher identity, but in this section, I argue that a new teacher's perception of student achievement is conceived, in part, through their personal attitude toward learning. Framed by their own positive experiences in school, participants perceived their students' progress as an indicator of their success as teachers.

Media Representation of Teachers

In addition to their own personal school histories, participants frequently wrote about how movies and other media shaped their understanding of teaching. These movies served as inspiration for them, particularly early in the year as they prepared to meet their students. Mr. Sizemore referenced "The Ron Clark Story", a made-for-TV movie based on a 6th grade teacher who felt motivated enough to help out New York City schools and found himself as a replacement teacher for a 6th grade class in a Harlem school. Mr. Sizemore addressed his blog audience and recommended that *anyone reading this blog for educational value needs to watch "The Ron Clark Story" when they get a chance. This is a huge motivating force behind the beginning of my teaching career* (Mr. Sizemore, 08/17/06).

Participants used movies about teachers to inspire her. The night before school started, Ms. Bailey watched a movie for inspiration:

I watched Akeelah and the Bee just now. Good movie for me to watch just before starting school. Remind myself how you never know where you're going to find gifts in students. Support for them and yourself. And also that we're never in this alone. That there ARE people pulling for you...and people who can pull you (Ms. Bailey, 08/30/06).

Participants also wrote about stereotypes in movies about schools. Upon visiting an urban elementary school during her summer teacher training, Ms. Bailey described how the school did not match her image of an inner city school:

The sense of calm present in the school was surprising for what is essentially an inner city school. When we see inner city or high need schools in Hollywood portrayals or hear about them on the news, we see schools in disrepair with broken windows and locked doors. There was security present, but no metal detectors greeted us at the doors (Ms. Bailey, 06/30/06).

This excerpt illustrates that her beliefs and expectations about teaching in an urban school were based on television and movie images of rundown, chaotic schools.

The pervasiveness of media images of classrooms and teachers, together with the participants' personal history of schooling, create a unique situation in which the novice comes in with a significant amount of background information. As participants encountered situations in their emergent teaching lives, they often blogged about how these events resembled or differed from their preconceived notions of what it would be like to be the teacher.

Summary of Personal Dimension

In this section, I have presented three examples of how participants enacted the personal dimension of their teaching identities. The decision to become a teacher was a personal one for

each participant influenced by positive experiences in school and a desire to help children learn. Aspects of participants' personal selves also manifested in how they defined student achievement in relation to their instructional practices. Finally, participants drew on images of teachers and schools from popular culture. The next section explores the intuitive dimension of teacher identity.

Intuitive Dimension

The intuitive dimension of teacher identity encompasses judgment, intuition and confidence. This dimension comprises the many decisions that a teacher must make each day. The interactional features of the intuitive dimension of teacher identity include posts about managing student behavior, teaching as a vocation or calling, and exploring Web 2.0 tools for use in the classroom. This dimension is conceptualized as the teacher's "gut response" to situations that arise in the classroom (i.e., behavior management), as well as more thought-out decisions pertaining to career choice and Internet safety.

Dealing with Bad Behavior

Classroom management is a primary task for teachers. In this study, participants who taught elementary grades often described behavior incidents in their classroom and how they handled the situations. Although they established rules and consequences for behavior, participants faced challenges that forced them to think fast and make decisions quickly. For instance, in this excerpt a participant who teaches special education described how she and her teaching assistant diffused a potentially dangerous situation:

I had to call the crisis team in for K. He was sent to the quiet corner and just flew off the handle...ripping the quiet zone sign and then trying to hit, kick, or bite Mr. Hylton when he attempted to handle him since I was working with a small group. I bolted to the phone and called crisis, who said "We're on our way." They were and they took him for a little while. He came back and was generally subdued, but still edgy, even after his meds (Ms. Bailey, 9/11/06).

Another participant described how she tried to manage a student's behavior:

At the end of the day, one boy became extremely frustrated. He ignored me, which I told him was not a good choice. I gave him two options: follow directions (picking up papers around his desk and packing up to go home, or going to the library to calm down), or receive a lunch detention. He opted to continue ignoring me. This all escalated to the point where he would not leave the classroom. I had to have three other staff members come in (one at a time), and only the last one was able to get him out of the room. Seems he's being harassed by other students, and one teacher thinks he's suicidal. I tried calling his parents, but to no avail. Sigh (Ms. Atkins, 10/26/06).

These excerpts highlight the role of decision-making that teachers face daily. In addition to their curricular responsibilities, participants wrote about these situations. Their descriptions reveal the implicit nature of this dimension and its role in the emergence of their teacher identities.

Teaching as a Vocation

The decision to become a teacher is not one to be taken lightly. Participants wrote about their choice with high regard and viewed themselves as advocates for their students. Ms. Bailey, a career-changer who entered teaching in her mid-30s, wrote:

Teaching is a challenge and a responsibility that should not be entered into or taken lightly. Yes, I am approaching the possibility of teaching a little older than if I was just coming out of college, but my experiences since then have helped form me into a person more prepared for the challenges of the classroom. Do I expect it to be easy? No. Nothing really worth it ever is (Ms. Bailey, 05/04/06).

Another participant used her blog as a venue for writing an open letter to her future students.

The night before school started, she posted this letter to her students:

Kiddos, please know that however nervous or frazzled or unorganized I seem tomorrow I have a plan for you. A plan made out of a genuine desire to make sure you have choices in your life. I came here with a mission and I will put every ounce of what I have in to making sure you succeed. I will not tell you that staying in your neighborhood or living in the projects for the rest of your life is the wrong decision. When it comes down to it, it will be your decision. But you will stay because it was your choice, not because you didn't have the skills needed to leave because tomorrow marks the beginning of a very bright future for all of us (Ms. Grover, 09/04/06).

This letter reads like a mission statement for her class and illustrates her intentions for her students. Participants who taught in high needs schools were particularly committed to helping students access a better life for themselves.

Another participant who struggled throughout the year with her career choice, reflected on the changes in her attitude from being a student teacher to being the teacher,

it's almost harrowing to think of how I was when I started student teaching (just over a year ago) – bright-eyed, eager, idealistic – and to see how I am now – completely done

with the whole thing. We'll see, though; next week might be drastically different (Ms. Atkins, 03/22/07).

Although her attitude toward teaching seems dismal in this excerpt, her initial feelings about the career were certainly hopeful and optimistic.

Web 2.0: Internet Literacy

Through their use of blogging, participants displayed a working knowledge of this new medium afforded by the Internet. There was a distinction between participants who used blogs to chronicle the personal details of becoming a teacher and those who used the blog as a platform for sharing one's practice and interacting with others to co-construct a deeper understanding of both content and pedagogy. The former tended to use pseudonyms and tried to distance themselves from their geographic location, while the latter blogged with real names and locations. At this point, the relationship between the Internet and education is still being negotiated. This study reveals that new teachers are using these tools, but with different degrees of implementation. Participants who taught younger elementary-aged children were aware of their responsibility to protect their young students' identities online.

Only one participant used blogs with his students:

I have used blogs in my web development class. I would propose a topic about many different issues throughout the semester. The students surpassed my expectations often through their writing.

As a computer science teacher, Mr. Sizemore's focus was on programming and coding, and by incorporating blogging into his teaching; he tapped into his high school students' critical

thinking and writing abilities. In May, Mr. Sizemore reflected on his growth as a teacher and his growing understanding of Web 2.0:

There are still two weeks left in the school year, but time has blown by at a frenetic rate. It has been a great year, with many learning opportunities for the students and myself. The great thing about teaching is that you are always learning, not at a workshop or institute necessarily, but from the students. I can really see the point of Web 2.0 more than ever before. The K12 Online Conference really helped me tie together the loose ends. If you have not looked at some of the sessions from last year, visit the conference blog. I took the conference for graduate credit this time around; in turn, I learned a great deal about Web 2.0 tools and developed my own blogging skills further. (Mr. Sizemore, 05/28/07)

The nature of technology, coupled with the rapid development of new Web 2.0 tools, makes it nearly impossible to know everything about the Internet. However, as Web 2.0 tools like blogging become more prevalent in our society, it is imperative that teachers have a working knowledge of the affordances and shortcomings of various online tools. The participants of this study primarily explored blogs cautiously, screening their “real” identities and reporting candidly about their classroom experiences. These blogs, although filled with posts about students and learning activities, were written for other teachers and educational stakeholders, rather than for students.

The exception is Mr. Sizemore who self-consciously blogged, sharing his blog with his students as a model for how to construct an argument (through blogging about controversial topics) and to connect with others (collaborative coding project with students from other states).

His confidence and expertise with technology is linked to his own educational history. He excelled in advanced programming courses as a student and brought enthusiastic curiosity for all things new.

All participants, regardless of the level of their technical understanding of Web 2.0 tools, relied on their professional judgment about to effectively and ethically use these tools. By contributing content to the edublogosphere about their development as a teacher, participants enacted the intuitive dimension of their teacher identity as they wrestled with the dilemmas and affordances of writing candidly about aspects of the job that were previously unavailable to the public audience. In the noise of the Internet, blogs have emerged as spaces for personal reflection in a public forum, places to voice one's opinions and ideas, venues for social critique and citizen journalism. This unprecedented access to information and broadcast technologies demands public attention, in terms of the social implications of such widespread accessibility. With Internet portals in virtually every American school, it is vital for teachers to lead by example and make decisions about how to use Web 2.0 tools safely and productively to support student learning.

Summary of Intuitive Dimension

Participants all blogged about difficult decisions they were called upon to make during their first year. They intuitively navigated classroom situations that demanded discernment about student behavior and consequences for inappropriate conduct. Participants also blogged about their devotion to teaching, citing the importance of a teacher's role in society. They were aware of the affordances of blogging and used this medium to pose challenging questions to their readers and to describe how they resolved these issues. Participants used their blogs as a space

for clarifying the often implicit expectations of teachers, hoping to gain insight from veteran teachers in the edublogosphere. One participant recognized the support he received from his blog audience:

I appreciate those of you who have made comments because it makes it easier to reflect on my experience. I just need to keep up the hard work and remember to stay on an even emotional and mental playing field. This will allow me to concentrate on the students a little more as time goes on, rather than my own challenges (Mr. Sizemore, 09/02/06).

Mr. Sizemore's resolve to maintain *an even emotional and mental playing field* underscores the intuitive nature of learning to teach. For the participants, transitioning into their role as a teacher involved building relationships with their students and colleagues. The next section explores the social dimension of participants' emergent teacher identity.

Social Dimension

Teaching is a social activity. It involves building relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and community members. Through these relationships, participants shaped themselves as teachers in relation to others. Although the social dimension comprises the relationships teachers developed within their schools, it also encompasses the interactions between blogger and audience.

This section presents four examples of how participants enacted the social dimension of their emergent teacher identity. I begin with the interactional features of identity related to classroom management and teacher learning, followed by the contextual features of the dimension associated with professional relationships and community involvement. Implicit in

this dimension are the ways in which participants described their interactions with their blog audience.

Relationships with Students

Classroom management, viewed through a social lens, manifests itself in the relationships teachers develop with their students. There is certainly an implicit expectation for teachers to maintain a safe and orderly classroom environment; however, the means by which new teachers achieve such an environment are dependent on how the teacher establishes herself as an authority in the classroom. One participant described the type of relationship he planned to build with his students:

After my first week of teaching I feel the confidence flowing and can tell that many of the students agree with my style and know that I care. I'm working more on respect than the students "liking" me because of my inexperience. Especially in my AP Computer and Algebra II class I wanted to establish a dominant first impression. So far it seems to have worked. I am already noticing students saying "hi" to me in the hallway, coming to me with help, and asking questions because they are not intimidated by what I might say in return (Mr. Sizemore, 09/02/06).

Another participant who experienced problems handling her students' behavior described a technique for classroom management that she learned from a guest speaker (an expert on classroom management):

...at the seminar yesterday, our instructor had us choose one (or two or three) REALLY problematic children. Of course, Tommy immediately came to mind. (I have a few others, too, but Tommy was the first on my list.) The speaker suggested that we try to establish

relationships- real relationships with caring and patience and praise- with our most troublesome students. He reminded us that these children most likely have really crappy home situations, and that we may be the ONLY positive adult role models in their lives. A little depressing, but absolutely true (Ms. Atkins, 03/06/07).

Although this participant experienced repeated problems with her students' behavior, the fact that she considered a new way to manage their behavior through *real relationships with caring and patience and praise* indicates both the importance of these relationships and her openness to innovate ways to address the problems in her classroom.

Another participant described how these relationships simultaneously drained and exhilarated her:

It's such a mix of intensity positive and negative that at the end of every day I am exhausted. It only grows more exhausting as my relationship with each one of them grows but the relationship is what they need so I give...and give...and give...and when they leave at 2:50 on Friday I put on my sneakers, shuffle home, collapse on my white fluffy comforter and breathe...breathe...breathe...and think about them (Ms. Grover, 5/20/07).

Particularly for those participants who taught in communities with prevalent social problems, the burden to meet students' personal needs often took its toll on the teacher's heart. Ms. Bailey described an example of this phenomenon:

There is no black and white. Only very complicated shades of grey. You can't not care and do your job. And you can't care too much and do your job. So you care. And you risk getting your heart broken over and over.

And yet it's still nothing compared to the heartbreak so many of these kids have had to deal with in their young lives.

All I can do is love them, be there for them, and do the best I can for them while I've got them. And trust that somehow it's enough (Ms. Bailey, 04/27/07).

The relationships that participants built with their students often sustained their own self-doubt. As Ms. Bailey points out, any negative feelings that she may experienced are eclipsed by the daily lives of her students. Blog posts about relationships with students and managing classroom behavior were particularly plentiful in the blogs of elementary and special education teachers. All participant, however, grappled with establishing themselves as the instructional leader in their classrooms and dealing with the implications of that role.

Colleagues, Peers, and Mentors

Participants described how they forged relationships with colleagues, peers and mentors. The dynamics of school faculties differ, as do the ways in which they initiate new teachers. All participants blogged about mentors, but the depth of interaction with the mentors differed. One participant described meeting her official mentor:

It's official. I'm a mentee. :) I met my Board of Ed mentor, Marissa, today. She's going to be wonderful, I can already tell. She came in while Mr. Hylton was on his lunch, and from her virtual non-reaction about it, I'm guessing that having no coverage is normal (Ms. Bailey, 09/07/06).

Another participant blogged about an informal mentor:

I feel like I have an informal mentor teacher next door. ... She's wonderful, and she said her first year teaching, she'd lock herself in the school bathroom or broom closet or

classroom every day to cry. She said she threw up almost every morning from stress, and couldn't eat much. It's not that bad for me, but I was thankful to have someone who was completely empathetic (Ms. Atkins, 08/22/06).

A few months later, this participant described an incident in which she collaborated with another teacher to address the dilemma of teaching two separate curricula to her multi-grade class:

Wow, I finally got some good news about work today...So, after an all-day in-service (ugh), I learned that I have to split up my math into 4th and 5th grade. This means that I'd have to teach math twice daily, to two different groups. Needless to say, I freaked out a little bit. The other 5th grade teacher, however, suggested that we ability-group the 4th and 5th graders (with the other 4th grade teacher as well), and that each of us takes a group. I'd done ability-grouped math for student teaching, and it worked wonderfully. I told the 5th grade teacher that I was completely on board with her, though the 4th grade teacher had some reservations. For awhile, things looked bleak; it seemed our plan was doomed.

However...the 5th grade teacher ultimately stepped up and offered to do something awesome: she said she'll take my 5th graders for math EVERY DAY, so I can teach just the 4th grade class!!! Wow. This is awesome! Scheduling-wise, all I have to do is flop my class's computer/library time with the kindergarten class's. Should be easy enough... So starting Monday, I'll only have to teach math to 12 fourth graders!! Heaven!! (Ms. Atkins, 10/14/06).

The outcome of this collaboration illustrates the importance of developing relationships with others and how these interactions factor into the social dimension of teacher identity formation.

Ms. Atkins' enthusiasm for this new arrangement is evident in her use of multiple exclamation points. From one day to the next, her teacher identity was shaped through social interaction and collaboration.

Participants also received support from others in the edublogosphere. One participant described a blog he regularly reads and what he has learned from reading it:

I read this blog frequently and gain a great deal of knowledge about teaching, life, and how to become a blogger. She really makes me think about how bloggers converse and where I stand in all of this (Mr. Sizemore, 12/23/06).

All participants blogged about the relationships they built with colleagues, both professional and personal. Learning to teach is enhanced with support and feedback from experienced teacher. Participants in this study capitalized on the social connections available online to augment the support they received from colleagues in their offline lives.

Diversity: Us and Them

For participants who taught in schools with children from backgrounds other than their own, the topic of diversity came up in the blogs. As they tried to establish themselves as a teacher, they also had to learn how to interact with people quite different from themselves.

Ms. Atkins' taught in a small, rural district in the Southwestern United States. Her school had a high ELL population. This excerpt illustrates how she interacted with her Spanish-speaking students and parents:

I surprised most of the class when I started speaking in Spanish. I was trying to identify the Spanish speakers, so I'd know if I needed to draft a letter home or not for tomorrow night's open house. I asked, in Spanish, "How many of you speak Spanish? Raise your

hands.” Three hands shot up, and then they were like, “Whoa...did you just speak Spanish?” So I told them that I spoke and wrote Spanish, and that I wanted to know if I needed to write a letter home in Spanish also. Popular consensus agreed that I did (Ms. Atkins, 08/21/06).

Ms. Atkins enjoyed speaking Spanish with her ELL students: *One girl had her b-day today, so we sang to her... en español. :) (She's bilingual, and was delighted that I taught the class how to sing to her in Spanish. It was cool!)* (Ms. Atkins, 01/18/07). She capitalized on her ability to speak their native language to make connections with her students and their parents.

Another participant described the first time her training class of new teachers arrived at an urban elementary school for an observation:

The first day of induction we did an observation at a school. 60 of us got off the bus in our business suits and walked up the sidewalk and as we neared the school, a car pulled up. They rolled down their window and asked, “Are you teachers?”

We looked at each other and eventually somebody said, “Yeah.”

“Good,” they said. “We need some here.”

I smiled. I still smile when anyone tells that story. We’re here for a purpose. The struggle to hold on to that is one that I face everyday (Ms. Grover, 07/17/06).

The response from the community fortified her confidence in the decision to accept such a challenging teaching assignment. It confirmed her conviction that she was making a difference in the school and illustrated her relationship with community members. In contrast to Ms. Atkins, who leveraged her knowledge of Spanish to foster relationships with her students and their parents, Ms. Grover perceived herself as an outsider with something to share with the

community. However, despite her insider status facilitated by her fluency in Spanish, Ms. Atkins' description of parent involvement reveals a similar perception of distance between herself and the parents of her students:

I just spoke with two more parents tonight. For as poor and ill-educated as parents generally are around here, they really do care about their children. I think nearly EVERY student in my class has at least one parent who genuinely cares about his/her child's progress and development. I'm astounded (Ms. Atkins, 02/27/07).

Her surprise at the parents' concern betrays her initial assumption that *poor and ill-educated* parents somehow do not care about their child's learning. This excerpt illustrates both her social view of the community and her willingness to acknowledge that her views may need to change in accordance with her interactions with parents. The next section presents several examples of how participants contributed to their communities.

Community Involvement

Participants made connections with community members and blogged about community service projects. One participant described a collaboration with the local youth baseball program and his Advanced Web Development class to develop a website for the organization:

Soon after planning how we would build up the website, I realized that the students are going to learn much more than website development. They will learn community involvement, presentation structure, work ethic on a long project, and how to work within a group atmosphere all with the same goals. Here are a few observations I have made...

1. The students are all of the sudden really concerned about how the pages actually look and if the grammar is correct. They do not want to create pages where the viewer is distracted by either the look or the feel of the website.

2. Many of the students are eager to remove the default/temporary page that we have currently posted on the webspace.

3. Part of this project is that we are going to hand this off to someone who is below average to average in web development. I told the students that we had to made ALLL PAGES editable. They are taking precautions and most are avoiding any major complicated designs.

4. The commissioner in charge of the league, is an 8th grade teacher, who has reached many of their lives. I also had the privilege of having him through school, so I know that the students want to complete this project for him and themselves.

5. Often, when you go to college, there are large projects you have to complete and they mean little to nothing. This is a project which is going to define the group of students as long as the website continues.

6. We are making pages which deal with everything from sponsors, teams, schedules, and community involvement.

7. Finally, that little ClustrMap is serving as the final piece of motivation. I simply love this project and hope the students realize that they are part of something that is not defined by size, but effort and accomplishment (Mr. Sizemore, 03/11/07).

This excerpt illustrates how Mr. Sizemore enacted his identity as a teacher who uses real-world situations to integrate learning and community service. His insightful description of the

opportunities for student growth that resulted from this project reveal his affinity for authentic learning and creative problem solving.

Another participant blogged about a fundraiser she organized to replace the dilapidated playground equipment at the school:

So I decided on the spur-of-the-moment to organize a fundraising activity (a whole-community silent auction) to get \$\$ for playground equipment!! I've sent a mass e-mail to more than 500 local organizations, businesses, and people. In less than 2 hours, I've received offers for the following donations:

***several \$50 gift certificates*

***an aromatherapy gift basket*

***a restaurant gift certificate*

***cash*

***\$100 personal donation*

!!! Wow!!! I think this thing'll be HUGE!!! I can't WAIT to see what pours in the next few weeks!! A local newspaper has already offered to cover the whole effort FOR FREE!!!

I'm so psyched, and I can't wait to tell my kids tomorrow! !:) I've also received several nice e-mails from people who are eager to help and are excited about the cause :) (Ms.

Atkins, 01/18/07).

This project originated after her observations of behavior problems on the playground. She realized that students were starting fights because they lacked adequate playground equipment. Her enthusiasm about the response and generosity of the community illustrates the evolution of her teaching identity, in terms of the relationship between schools and the community.

Summary of Social Dimension

The social dimension of teacher identity encompasses the external aspects of how teachers interact with key educational stakeholders. In this section, I presented four types of relationships that participants described in their blogs. These interactions The first type involved the relationship participants developed with their students and how it impacted classroom management and student behavior. The second type involved the relationships that participants forged with their colleagues. The third category of the social dimension addressed issues related to cultural diversity and participants' status within their communities. The final category presented examples of community service projects that participants developed. The variety and scope of these posts related to the social dimension of teacher identity formation underscores the central role that relationships play in teaching and learning.

Political Dimension

The political dimension of teacher identity encompasses the challenge and value of the work. It includes issues of the allocation and structure of work. The interactional features of the political dimension relate to career choice and teacher learning. The contextual features of the political dimension include the school district and the work required of teachers beyond classroom instruction and the requirements for teacher licensure and other credentials. The political dimension is characterized by external influences such as state and local policies. In this section, I present two broad categories within the blog content that illustrate the political dimension: posts about teacher workload and administrative policies.

Teacher Workload

Participants frequently blogged about the teacher's workload. From their experience as students, they brought assumptions about what the job entailed. Many did not realize the amount of time required beyond the school day. One participant wrote about his struggles to manage the multiple preparations that often come with teaching high school:

Many other teachers who would read this blog (I hope you are still out there), understand having many different preps. I feel I am almost hindered because I have two areas of certification. Kind of like the blond saying it is a curse to be blond. My areas are Mathematics and Computer Science. The school looks at those and decides that I can teach both subjects at various levels. If I had only one area of certification wouldn't I just be getting a full year of study hall and another duplicate class to fill the schedule? Sure is hard developing young teacher skills with this type of schedule and different types of classes (Mr. Sizemore, 01/21/07).

He elaborates on this last point about developing *teacher skills*:

I have had so much to do that I have not had the chance to thoroughly develop alternate strategies of teaching, differentiate instruction, and provide adequate time for those students who need help before or after school. I knew what I was "signing" up for and understood what it would mean, but what about 5 years from now (the key year highlighted in studies)? What if I still have this type of schedule and feel that I still have not had time to develop in any specific areas. I hope in the future that I will be allowed to have some sort of continuity. Not because of work. Not because of time demand. Not because of subject matter. Not because of laziness or ambition. BECAUSE MY

STUDENTS are losing out on instruction which could be much more solid. This is surely something I will blog about in the future months when I get some free time. I hope there are some readers who can relate to this issue and can provide me some solid professional advice, rather than act as if I'm complaining, which is far from the truth (Mr. Sizemore, 01/21/07).

His concerns illustrate a theme among the participants in how they handled questions about the job. There was an awareness among participants about appearing lazy or complaining about the working conditions.

Another theme among participants was the implicit expectations from their school administrators. Participants blogged about confusing guidelines and conflicting directives from the district office. This excerpt illustrates one participant's struggle:

It's just been a lot of stuff as of late. Monday was Open School and the decree came forth that we would do ALL of the IEPs on that day. Then the 7th we learned about report cards. The 9th we were told we were NOT doing them because it was too much. Then the 10th we were given paper photocopies with the no longer used Alternate Performance Indicators and told yes, we WERE doing them. So the weekend was spent doing report cards and IEPs (Ms. Bailey, 11/15/06).

Similar to Mr. Sizemore's concern about appearing lazy, Ms. Bailey wrestled with the changing deadlines and seemingly unrealistic requests from her administrators.

Another participant genuflected on the results of this confusion:

I hate that this job takes good-intentioned, idealistic youngins and promptly turns them into jaded, bitter little things. I honestly thought I had the heart and mind for this; I don't know why I don't enjoy it. Every day when I get here, I think, "Oh, here's another day..." and when I go home (usually around 8pm), I'm too tired to think. I just veg out, go to sleep, rinse, and repeat. It's vicious, really. And I'm not only burned out on the teaching; it's the administrative crap, the gossip, the constant anger that tears through a school, the meetings, the accountability, the standards, the requirements, the tutoring, the responsibility...you get the drift (Ms. Atkins, 03/22/07).

This was a common theme among participants. They each strived to support their students and felt guilty when they felt they were not meeting all their needs.

Participants described the myriad distractions that kept them from teaching.

One participant complained about the amount of paperwork required of teachers: *It's hard to believe that our school's motto is "children first!" when we've had weeks like this. With all the paperwork, there's no time to teach!!* (Ms. Bailey, 02/03/07). Another participant blogged similar sentiments in this post:

I don't know how to fight for myself when my kids seem so much more important.

Professional development and missed preps and illegal ratios seem unimportant when I look at all that needs to be accomplished.

Today I got scolded for not filling out a form to fix my printers.

I really don't care about printers.

Could we fix my kids first please? (Ms. Grover, 11/01/06).

These excerpts illustrate the frustrations that participants experienced when they tried to fulfill all the administrative requirements of the job. Their priority was meeting students' needs, but so much of their time was consumed by administrative duties.

Administrative Policies

A common theme concerning the political dimension of teacher identity is the role of the administration in supporting new teachers by communicating expectations and school norms. Typically, these posts described a lack of consistent communication of school procedures and point to the notion of an "implied curriculum" for teachers to figure out as they go. Ms. Bailey described an example of the "implied curriculum":

In the morning memo, we were greeted with "If you haven't been sending out a newsletter yet, you must begin those in October." (Not the exact wording.) When nowhere in ANY information we've been given has a newsletter been mentioned. (Ms. Bailey, 9/27/06)

Mr. Sizemore reflected on his teacher preparation and offered a thoughtful critique of teacher education programs in a post titled "I guess I missed that class in college..."; *it is great to discuss pedagogy, child psychology, child development, and schools in society; however, being put in difficult situations where YOU are the decision maker is really where the learning takes place* (Mr. Sizemore, 04/08/07). He continued with a list of *several situations that no one ever discussed... (1) Number of Preps, (2) Changes in the Schedule, Staff Meetings, and Staff Evaluations, (3) THAT ONE KID, (4) Computer Lab Classroom, and (5) Extra-Curricular Activities Attendance*. He described how each of these situations, unknown to him until he began

teaching, contributed to the complexity of learning to teach and support the notion that an “implicit curriculum” exists that new teachers must learn to navigate.

Another issue related to the political dimension of teacher identity is standardized testing and preparation. Ms. Grover reflected on her role in test preparation for her special education students after they completed the English Language Arts test:

I failed them by being there too much. By not allowing them to handle their own situations. By protecting them too much...advocating for them too much. We've all failed them by teaching them test prep instead of content. On Friday test prep for the math test started. We take it in March. After the math test, Science test prep starts. We take the state Science test in April. Goodness (Ms. Grover, 01/13/07).

At various points during the year, each participant blogged about problems in the American education system. They leveraged their insider status as classroom teachers to voice concerns, state opinions, and make suggestions for change.

Teachers look to administrators and district leaders to ensure that learning is a top priority. This includes making scheduling decisions that protect instruction time. The complex nature of scheduling often translates into frustrated conversations in the teacher's lounge. Ms. Atkins described the logistics of getting her mixed grade level students to the appropriate specials, while maintaining a high level of engagement and productivity with all of her students. She described her afternoon routine:

After lunch, I read to them (The Twits by Roald Dahl), then half the class left for beginning band. Ah yes... the logistical nightmare that is...band. See, 4th and 5th graders who have never played an instrument before can be in beginning band. I have 14 such

students in my class. 5th graders who have played instruments before can be in intermediate band. I have about 9 of these. The bands meet EVERY DAY for 45 minutes each. This wouldn't be bad if I had one grade. However, since I have 14 students in one band and 9 in the other, there is an hour and a half period each day where I barely have half my class. Awesome. So I alternate study halls and science for each band group, but bleh. Band EVERY day? Don't get me wrong; band is wonderful, and I was in it from 4th grade through grad school, but every day is a bit excessive in elementary school. I no longer have time to teach whole-group science or social studies (Ms. Atkins, 09/06/06).

This excerpt illustrates the scheduling dilemmas of her multi-grade class. It also supports the argument that participants felt conflicted about expressing critiques of the school administration's policies and procedures. Similar to Mr. Sizemore's concern about appearing lazy, Ms. Atkins reassures her audience that she supports band, but questions the wisdom so many interruptions during her instructional time. Participants blogged about the administrative policies of their schools, primarily within the context of how these policies affected them personally.

Summary of Political Dimension

Schools are complex systems in which compromises must be made to accommodate all students. The excerpts from participants' blogs illustrate how new teachers handled the demands of the job. For the most part, participants used their blog to decompress from the day and share insights with others. The political dimension of teacher identity manifested itself in the posts about teachers' workload and the administrative policies that impacted how participants did their jobs. It involves the external influences of administrative and public opinion. Participants were

aware of their role in the classroom, as defined by these external policies. The examples described above illustrate how participants navigated the implicit (school culture) and explicit (job description) expectations for new teachers.

Pedagogical Dimension

The pedagogical dimension of teacher identity encompasses the roles and responsibilities of teaching. This dimension includes aspects of teachers' daily lives from establishing class routines to managing behavior. My conception of this dimension evolved throughout the process of writing this analysis. Initially, I described this dimension as *functional*, in terms of blog posts pertaining to the daily functions of the teacher. However, upon further analysis, I came to realize that what I had previously considered merely functions of the teacher, were actually the ways and means of how the participants described their pedagogy. It involves a teacher's pedagogical knowledge. The interactional features of the pedagogical dimension of teacher identity include posts about classroom management and curriculum and instruction. The pedagogical dimension incorporates external aspects of how participants interacted with students and the practice of teaching and assessing learning. There are explicit expectations for what to teach and how to manage students. State standards and curriculum materials influenced how participants planned instruction and assessed learning. This section explores two aspects of the pedagogical dimension, curriculum and instruction and classroom management.

Curriculum and Instruction

A central responsibility for teachers is to ensure that students are learning. As mentioned earlier in the section on the personal dimension of teacher identity, there was a strong connection

between how the participants carried out their instruction and how they defined student achievement. The focus in this section on the pedagogical dimension foregrounds how participants structured instruction and integrated curriculum materials. One participant described her initial attempts to determine her students' abilities:

I will be much happier when we get our training on the Brigance and I can assess the children. Right now I'm playing hit or miss. I've established an initial range of too easy and too hard on math...but there's a big range in between, so there's going to be more hit or miss in that. ELA we're working c-v-c (consonant-vowel-consonant) words like -an, -at, -en, -et, -in and so forth. That's going well. Science is the five senses. Social Studies is community safety. I definitely have to plan a unit on animals in science. J. is chomping at the bit to learn, learn, learn. I ruffled his hair today and told him to relax...we've got PLENTY of time for learning this year. We're only in the first week!
(Ms. Bailey, 09/07/06).

Ms. Bailey taught elementary special education and grappled with the varying levels of her students. This excerpt, posted during the first week of school, demonstrates her enthusiasm and emergent understanding of the curriculum. Another participant described her principal's stance on curriculum:

The principal told us that we are to use textbook series for subjects and little else. She said if we want to supplement materials (e.g., other books, guides, outside resources, etc.), we have to run them each by her. My heart sunk. Seems like everything is pretty rigid as far as curriculum goes (Ms. Atkins, 08/09/06).

Clearly her school administration embraced a top-down approach to curriculum that dictated exactly which materials could be used in the classroom. This participant, with two degrees in education, felt disillusioned by these limitations on curriculum materials.

Some participants used the blog as a place to critique their own practice. Ms. Atkins wrote about the struggle to meet each student's needs: *A hard thing for a first-year teacher to understand is that she will NOT be able to make every student perform perfectly on everything. I'm slowly coming to grips with this fact, but it's excruciating* (Ms. Atkins, 03/20/07). She articulated a challenge in teaching, trying to *make every student perform perfectly on everything*, that is pervasive in this No Child Left Behind era of education. At this stage in her career, passion outweighed expertise, and she conceptualized classroom events in black and white, rather than shade of gray. Incidentally, this participant did not return for a second year.

In contrast to Ms. Atkins' frustration with differentiating instruction, Mr. Sizemore described his first blogging assignment with his Web Development students. He gave them a hypothetical vignette about a 3-year-old purchasing a car on eBay. With a few guiding questions about the implications of this story (role of the parents, access to information, accountability), he solicited critical feedback from the students for their initial blog post assignment. He described his impression of the outcomes of the lesson:

My students are 9th through 12th and have different levels of technology, writing, and argumentation. This is why I went through each of my student's blogs and commented on each of them. Here are a few things I noticed about there comments and the way they answered the question:

- 1. Being the first time that we blogged on a topic as a class, some of the students were not aware of how serious I was about putting thought into their responses. Some were very short-sided and would say that they thought the parents were to blame and should monitor their child but never gave any solutions.*
- 2. The thoughtfulness of lack thereof from certain students who I know show a lot of HTML/JavaScript creativity was not necessarily reflective in their writing. I noticed several of the technologically sound students were among the poorer bloggers. A few of the slow typers or those that lack HTML skills were doing a great job at responding to the question.*
- 3. The best responses from the entire course student body were from those students that quietly sit and do their work during class and act almost as outsiders. Through this writing activity, they would supply arguments and facts as well as creative ways of representing it.*
- 4. My favorite blog post from the first week started like this... "Personally I think that was a kind of pointless story. I didn't find it that funny nor did I really find it the least bit amusing. People need to understand that these kinds of things will happen....The point is...." This student went on to talk about how this is not news worthy and opinions about technology in school. The great part about this response is that it is not the work of a traditional "Yes Man" or "Yes Woman." The student goes directly to the fact that this article does not render any amusing thoughts.*

5. *There are still a few logistic things I need to figure out considering as a first year teacher I am running the blogs off of my own Drupal installation on my own webspace. That is a scary thought* (Mr. Sizemore, 09/30/06).

This excerpt illustrates Mr. Sizemore's approach to teaching and learning. He thoughtfully examined the results of the lesson and critiqued his students' work. His analysis of the lesson indicates his organizational thinking and the creativity he brings to the job. He is learning along with his students, whereas Ms. Atkins seemed to subscribe to the notion that the teacher has the information and that she is responsible for transmitting that information to her students. She preferred following her students' lead and developing instruction that engaged and motivated them to learn:

Also, as my luck would go, I realized that the science lessons I did last week are NOT in the 4th or 5th grade state standards. Grrr... We're doing a human body unit (which the kids really dig), and we covered the skeletal system last month. Now, intertwined with other things, we're doing a unit on the organ systems. We did the respiratory system last week, and I just checked to see what standards I'd covered. NONE. Grrrr... so I'll have to make the body unit a little shorter to make room for whatever else I have to teach (Ms. Atkins, 02/25/07).

The difference, however, between these two participants is in the way they interpret the events of the classroom. Mr. Sizemore devoted considerable time after the lesson critiquing and analyzing what worked and what bombed. Ms. Atkins tended to get annoyed and easily frustrated when her lessons unfolded differently than she imagined or, as in the excerpt above, they did not match with state curriculum standards.

These differences illuminate how individuals approach the profession with vastly different purposes and personal convictions, and how these differences are shaped throughout the first years of teaching.

Classroom Management

The second strand within the pedagogical dimension addresses classroom management. I discussed classroom management earlier, in terms of the intuitive and social dimensions. Within the context of the pedagogical dimension, classroom management is perceived as a precursor to engaged learning. Participants who taught elementary school blogged extensively about managing student behavior and establishing routines and consequences. One participant described her initial response to the students' behavior after the first week of school:

My kids can NOT be punching each other all day. How do you rely on classroom culture to fix these problems when you can't do team building or culture building activities without students punching each other? How do you use the 'don't do this because you'll get in trouble' approach when there really isn't any trouble to get into? (Ms. Grover, 9/7/06)

Clearly she envisioned a cohesive classroom community. The phrases *team building* and *culture building* indicate her goals for the class, but the reality of how to achieve these goals eludes her. Another participant expressed similar thoughts on classroom management early in the school year:

What the hell?????? How the hell am I supposed to teach them anything when I have to spend the whole time the para's out of the room on discipline. Not only are the kids not learning anything, their physical health is potentially in danger if K. gets violent. Exhibit

A: Monday he got mad when I asked him to sit down. He walked around his quad of desks cursing, and when asked again to sit down, he started hitting B (Ms. Bailey, 9/27/06).

Ms. Bailey and Ms. Grover both taught elementary special education. They each had students with significant mental illnesses and struggled to maintain a safe learning environment for all the children.

Participants challenged by managing their students blogged about practicing routines with their students, modeling exactly how they were to conduct themselves. For instance, Ms. Bailey blogged about how she practiced the dismissal routine with her students:

The plan for tomorrow is to practice the routine of getting ready to go downstairs for bussing because it was chaos today... We're lining up by busses and by seating area to go down for bussing from now on. But even before we got down there, it was chaos in the room. So rehearse we shall. And keep rehearsing it until they get it right (Ms. Bailey, 09/07/06).

Similarly, Ms. Atkins described her frustration with her students' incessant talking: *anyway, the rest of the day was annoying... We did some work (and they worked well for a while), but ended the day in silence because I was at my wit's end with all the dang talking. Bleh!!* (Ms. Atkins, 10/25/06). Her solution for managing her talkative class was to remove the privilege to speak at all.

In contrast to the participants who taught elementary school, Mr. Sizemore described his approach to engaging students using a sports metaphor: *as a tennis coach, I am a huge advocate of hitting strokes from day one of class. The only difference is that the computer science*

classroom has keystrokes (Mr. Sizemore, 03/19/07). He aimed to captivate students' attention by getting them involved from day one in their exploration of the course content, in his case computer science, networking and web development.

The trend in participants' blog content about classroom management indicates that it is a central focus for elementary teachers, but also vital for high school teachers who seek to stimulate curiosity and foster critical thinking in their students. Participants wrote about management in terms of a barrier to overcome, an obstacle on the path toward learning.

Summary of Pedagogical Dimension

Pedagogy is at the heart of any learning situation. For this study, the pedagogical dimension of teacher identity has been conceived as the actual instruction that occurs in the classroom. I identified two manifestations of the pedagogical dimension within participants' blogs. The first strand portrayed how participants delivered instruction and assessed learning. The second strand entailed how participants managed student behavior. As participants progressed through the school year, they continued to blog about these central issues of learning to teach.

Intellectual Dimension

The intellectual dimension of teacher identity encompasses the content knowledge involved in teaching. This dimension includes aspects of teacher learning including professional development and technology integration. As teachers, participants demonstrated their intellect through teacher certification and subject area exams. The very nature of being a teacher implies some level of expertise and knowledge that one plans to share with students. Like identity,

intellect is a nebulous concept that manifests itself in the way participants described their knowledge of the content and the professional development opportunities provided by their schools.

Professional Development

Professional development, in theory, is the ongoing process of refining one's practice and integrating new knowledge into one's repertoire. Participants blogged about professional development in different ways. For instance, this excerpt reveals how one participant felt about spending the day with other teachers:

Today I attended a workshop on reading comprehension. It was my first professional development day all year. It was so nice to wake up and know I would be a normal, peaceful person for a day. To be filled instead of just filling...to absorb and ask questions instead of constantly giving answers (Ms. Grover, 03/12/07).

Another participant described how she tried to implement the techniques presented during a professional development training on classroom management:

I tried some of the presenter's stuff today, and it's been a really incredible turnout. I told myself that, no matter what, I would NOT lose my temper or snap at a student AT ALL. I pride myself on accomplishing this so far (and there's only an hour and a half in the day left!!... my kids are in art at the moment). I've been trying to apply the ratio of 4 praises to every 1 behavioral reprimand, and it's working pretty well. It is extremely difficult to be positive sometimes, but the atmosphere in the classroom today was a lot happier than usual, and I can't help think it's because of the approach I took today (Ms. Atkins, 03/06/07).

These excerpts reveal how participants viewed professional development, first as a respite from the demands of teaching, and second as a source of inspiration to try a new approach or strategy to address enduring challenges in the classroom.

In addition to school and district trainings, participants also sought learning opportunities online. One participant blogged about his professional development in using Web 2.0 tools in his instruction. He actively participated in many online workshops and conferences and shared his new knowledge with his blog readers. In the following excerpt, Mr. Sizemore eagerly described his goals for attending a state conference on technology:

On Monday, February 12 and Tuesday, February 13, I will be attending the Ohio eTech Conference in Columbus, OH. This conference will have probably 7,000 total people involved in the entire process. This one is on the district, which is great to say, but I am really hoping to gain some perspective from listening to others share their experiences....Many of you have attended many conferences like this, but for me this is a first experience at a large conference involved in technology.

Here is what I hope to accomplish...

- * Gain perspective of my own teaching and how I can improve my use of technology and teaching methods*
- * Gather resources involving software, especially the use of software like moodle, elgg, and drupal*
- * Get solid information about Tablet PC and Texas Instrument calculator use in the classroom*

** A couple deserved days off doing something that I thoroughly enjoy...conversing about technology and education*

Hopefully, the presenters, exhibitors, and keynotes have a positive affect and effect on me and I drive back home with a smile (Mr. Sizemore, 02/11/07).

This excerpt reveals an organized, thoughtful teacher who thrived on learning and anticipated interacting with and learning from other educators at the conference. It is evident that teacher professional development varies across schools, grade levels and subject areas. Mr. Sizemore's posts about teacher learning convey a confident stance on his own knowledge and a desire to share and learn from others. Ms. Bailey viewed professional development as a way to learn specific information necessary to assess her students' abilities (i.e., Brigance training). Ms. Grover enjoyed interacting with other adults during professional development sessions, and Ms. Atkins blogged about specific techniques she acquired from a training on classroom management. Participants also engaged in professional development through the written reflections on their blogs.

Learning from Blogging

The intellectual dimension of teacher identity includes teacher learning. The previous section provided examples of formal professional development from the blog content. In this section, I present how participants actually learned from blogging, both in writing about their practice and learning from the blogs of other educators.

As mentioned earlier in the section on the intuitive dimension of teacher identity, participants of this study were early adopters of blogging as a form of teacher professional development. Participants described reading other teachers' blogs to gain insight on both

blogging and teaching. *I do read the blog by one of my classmates from my summer training ~ we're really good friends and have VERY different, yet also similar experiences, so it's fun to read hers* (Ms. Bailey). Another participant shared similar sentiments on the value of reading teacher blogs, *I like to read about other people's experiences in the classroom and find it comforting when their experiences are so similar to mine!* (Ms. Grover). Although blogs are becoming ubiquitous on the Internet, they are still not the mainstream. One participant admitted she had trouble locating other teacher blogs: *when I first started blogging, I searched for a community of first-year teacher bloggers like myself. However, it was a more difficult search than I'd anticipated, and so I did not get to read many other teachers' blogs* (Ms. Atkins). These comments illustrate a common theme related to technology integration, primarily that the learning curve itself is dynamic and constantly changing as new tools are developed and more teachers join the edublogosphere.

Mr. Sizemore was the most self-conscious participant, in terms of his use of blogging as a teaching and learning tool. In a post titled "What I learn from Blogging...", he reflected on his role as a teacher blogger and the way he has learned from other teachers who blog about their practice:

I like to read people who are widely read and view new knowledge not as an opportunity to dig in and resist but to learn and grow... They are wise not because they know it all but because they know that they don't and have adopted a mindset of lifelong learning (Mr. Sizemore, 12/23/06).

Mr. Sizemore clearly draws on the experiences of others to shape his identity as a teacher who continues to learn and grow as an educator. He also used educational blogs to support his content knowledge:

As an AP Computer, Web Development, and Operating Systems teacher (even though Mathematics is really what my brain thrives on) I need a blog that I can always go to for information about products and ideas that I'm involved with everyday. As a school which is all PC, we use an inordinate amount of Microsoft products, including office suite, programming platforms, and several levels of the operating system (Mr. Sizemore, 12/23/06).

Regardless of their technical knowledge of computers, all participants found ways to capitalize on the affordances of blogging. They learned about teaching by reading blogs written by other teachers. They learned about blogging by writing their own blog and participating in the edublogosphere.

Summary of Intellectual Dimension

The intellectual dimension of teacher identity encompasses teacher learning. The primary venue for formal teacher learning was district-sponsored professional development sessions, while the main source of informal learning was through the social interaction facilitated by blogging. Participants were early adopters of a new technology and continued to expand their understanding of the medium as they blogged their way through the first year of teaching. The sustained period of written reflection throughout the year certainly bolstered their own intellectual prowess, in terms of experiential learning and curiosity in cutting edge technical innovations.

Summary of Identity Dimensions

The six identity dimensions described in this section illustrate the complexity of learning to teach, as well as the breadth of the blog content. Participants blogged about all six dimensions, but three dimensions seemed to dominate my analysis – personal, pedagogical and social. In other words, participants’ blogged most frequently about aspects of student achievement, their teaching practice, and the relationships they built throughout the year. These three dimensions accounted for the majority of the data. The other dimensions – intuitive, political and intellectual – accounted for the remainder of the data. For these first year teachers, the ways in which they enacted a professional teacher identity manifested itself most in the relationships they developed with their students and colleagues. They shaped themselves as teachers within the context of these relationships.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented my findings in two main sections. First, the personal narratives portrayed each participant individually and foregrounded their unique voice. My intention was to underscore the variations across participants and to illustrate how each person’s educational history played out in their own classroom. After describing each participants’ path to teaching and their decision to blog publicly throughout their first year, I analyzed the four blogs for common themes and patterns. The six dimensions of teacher identity exemplify how participants wrote about their experiences in the classroom. Taken together, the dimensions and narratives represent how participants enacted professional teacher identities.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to gain understanding of the ways in which new teachers use their blogs to enact teacher identities. I began this qualitative inquiry in Chapter 1 with a description of the purpose and significance of the study, the central research question, and the limitations and delimitations of the study design. In Chapter 2, I presented a review of the literature that articulated my theoretical framework and provided the reader with background on the convergence of new literacies, blogs and blogging, and teacher identity. Chapter 3 outlined the methods I used to collect and analyze data. In Chapter 4, I portrayed my findings as individual participant narratives and cross-case dimensions of teacher identity. This final chapter puts forth my conclusions, recommendations for further research and implications for teacher educators.

CONCLUSIONS

Learning to teach is a complicated process laden with social and cultural expectations that influence how one “becomes” a teacher (Britzman, 2003). Participants in this study articulated this complexity in their blogs. The sustained thinking about one’s practice that catalyzed the written reflections provided a space for these new teachers to document and cogitate themselves as teachers. Writing is a meta-linguistic process that provides a conceptual model for speaking (Olson, 1995) and thinking (Langer & Applebee, 1987). The participants in this study voluntarily chose to write about their experiences in the classroom during their first year of teaching. By engaging in this ongoing written reflection, participants developed scripts for themselves to think about their role in the classroom and the outcomes of their efforts on

student achievement. It also provided a venue for participants to shape themselves as teachers in the public arena – the Edublogosphere.

In her critical study of learning to teach *Practice makes Practice*, Britzman (2003) points out the variables involved in becoming an accomplished practitioner:

When the moral and existential dilemmas that are so much a part of the work of teachers, and the rich complexities born of social interaction, subjective experience, dependency, and struggle that characterize life in and outside the classroom are examined, reality does not take on an immutable and unitary presence. When teachers are viewed as sources of knowledge, a more constructivist notion of knowledge evolves (pp. 65-66).

The present study positioned teachers as sources of knowledge, and the findings substantiate an evolution of knowledge among participants. This evolution was traced in Chapter 4 through the discussion of the dimensions of teacher identity. Within each dimension, I presented illustrations of how participants enacted aspects of teacher identity. Luehmann (2007) points out that “the focus on professional identity affords a lens in which the breadth of one’s experiences is considered in light of how they impact one’s professional practices, values, beliefs, and commitments” (p. 827). As participants posted descriptions of professional practice to their blogs, they engaged in the process of enacting these aspects of identity. In other words, the values, beliefs, and commitments they put into practice each day in the classroom were further enacted through their written accounts on the blog.

Before I share my conclusions, I would like to revisit my original propositions for the study. The first proposition, *new teachers who blog develop self-efficacious teaching identities that extend beyond their own schools and connect to others in the field*, was accurate in its

assumption that blogging teachers connect with others in the field beyond their own schools, but fell short in its supposition that participants would necessarily develop self-efficacious teaching identities. Participants reported that a main reason for blogging was to keep friends and family updated on their daily experiences in the classroom. They also described finding inspiration from the comments of strangers who read and offered feedback to their blog. The connections they made with these strangers illustrate a primary affordance of the broadcast capabilities of blogging by providing access to people they would otherwise not have known. In the case of Ms. Atkins, however, her blog evolved into a critique of American schools with specific examples from her experience to support her claim that the system is broken. In both cases, fortuitous interaction with supportive strangers or platform for airing grievances, the blog empowered these new teachers by providing a venue for them to voice their thoughts and experiences.

The second proposition, *the content of new teacher blogs represents salient issues facing first year teachers as they progress through the school year*, guided the identification of the six dimensions of teacher identity by foregrounding participants' own words as they wrote about and enacted aspects of teaching that they themselves deemed important and appropriate for publication on their blog. Blogs provide the capacity for new teachers to reflect on their practice and receive feedback from readers. Research supports the critical role of reflection (Walkington, 2005) and interaction (Marsh, 2002) in new teacher development. Marsh contends that, "by providing teachers with the tools for conceptualizing teacher thinking as social we offer them alternative ways to author their identities" (p. 346). Through their blogs, participants were able to sustain a forum for both reflection on practice and interaction with others.

The following three conclusions summarize the findings of this research study and articulate the ways in which new teachers used blogs to enact a teacher identity during their first year of teaching.

New teachers who blog benefit from the social interaction with others outside their immediate school context. Participants capitalized on the affordances of blogging by creating online spaces dedicated to documenting the challenges and surprises of learning to teach that generated feedback from readers who, in turn, substantiated their experiences and provided encouragement in times of struggle. As Findlay (2006) points out, “feelings of alienation and isolation could be countered by mechanisms that facilitate collaboration” (p. 529). Findings from the present study indicate that blogs are an example of such a mechanism. Participants blogged about varying levels of support provided within their local school communities, but there was overall consensus among participants that the support, advice and insight that they received through their blogs yielded a different, more personal level of assistance that directly related to the issues and challenges they faced in the classroom.

New teachers rely on their own educational histories to shape themselves as teachers. Their exposure to classroom practice as students impacts their conception of a teacher’s role and provides mental models for their own teacher identity. This corroborates Mayer’s (1999) notion of an “apprenticeship of observation” throughout the potential teacher’s own schooling and Lasky’s (2005) comparison to an archeologist, “through reflection teachers can begin unearthing the various influences that have shaped their identity and sense of agency, much like an archeologist might make meaning while sifting through layers at a dig site” (p. 905). By blogging about their experiences, participants created a record of events. This historical archive

catalyzed ruminations about aspects of their teaching by generating distance from the immediacy of classroom events and facilitating multiple layers of contemplation from which these new teachers could examine their emergent teacher identities and reflect on the various influences brought to bear on their development as teachers.

New teachers want a “safe place” in which to interact with other teachers, so much so that concerns about privacy, security and critique are outweighed by the benefits of communicating with other teachers through blogging. Luehmann (2007) refers to this phenomenon as “recognition work” and positions it as a bridge between theory and practice. She argues that professional identity development “not only requires opportunities to participate in relevant experiences and the discourse, but to have one’s participation interpreted and recognized, as well as valued and accepted, by self and others” (p. 833). The present study substantiates Luehmann’s claim and illustrates that new teacher identity work thrives in community with other teachers. The aspect most relevant to this study is the use of blogging technology to foster such community. Since blogging is relatively new technology, there are few guidelines or boundaries for acceptable practice and use by teachers. Participants in the present study took measures to ensure the security of themselves and their students, but they still recognized the potential risks of writing about their classroom practice online. With the exception of Mr. Sizemore, all participants used pseudonyms for themselves, their students and the name of their school. As an Advanced Placement Computer Science teacher, Mr. Sizemore’s purpose for blogging differed from the other three participants who used it as more of a diary or personal journal, while he used it as a model for his students and a source of information for other teachers interested in Web 2.0 tools. All participants in the present study viewed blogging

as a positive component to their first year of teaching and recommended it to other new teachers, regardless of the potential risks involved in publicly chronicling the events in their classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although I gained considerable insight on how new teachers use blogs to enact teacher identities, lingering questions remain about the study design and implications for further research on this topic. First of all, designing the study based on unsolicited documents (the blog posts) granted access to authentic texts and capitalized on a new technology still in the early stages of adoption by classroom teachers. My goal with this study was to launch a research agenda that addressed new literacies and teacher identity. The findings from this study provide a foundation for further exploration of the phenomenon of blogging teachers. For example, how might the findings of this study compare with a similar study in which participant blogs were solicited by the researcher at the beginning of the study? Would similar dimensions manifest in the data? What additional insights could be garnered through face-to-face interviews with participants about their blogs or through observation of their actual teaching?

In addition to aspects of the study design, I also have lingering questions about specific phenomena related to my study. For example, are traditionally prepared teachers lulled into a false sense of confidence in themselves as “highly qualified teachers”? How can traditional teacher education programs better prepare graduates for the realities of the classroom? Participants described themselves as life-long learners. How does this manifest in their teacher identity? In what ways does blogging enhance a teacher’s first year? Are students at risk when their teachers blog? What potential policy implications may result from teacher bloggers? What

are the legal ramifications of teacher bloggers? What are the ethical considerations related to teacher bloggers?

An underlying concern related to teachers and blogging is Internet safety. I hope through this study to shed light on blogging as a viable way for teachers to connect with each other and share the burdens associated with learning to teach. There are, of course, significant risks associated with blogging, particularly when children are involved. The participants in this study were aware of these potential dangers and took strides to protect themselves and their students. However, researchers studying new technologies and employing emergent methods of data collection and analysis should carefully consider the safety of their participants within the context of the Internet.

Another area that warrants further research is the role of writing on new teachers' identity formation. Alaszewski (2006) points out that "in modern society an individual's social standing and identity are relatively flexible and fluid and need to be created and protected. Diaries provide one way of creating and protecting such standing and identity" (p. 12). Are new teachers in fact creating an identity as they compose their blog posts? The present study provides evidence to support this claim, but further studies are needed to address the dimensions of identity manifested in the blogs. For instance, how do challenges with classroom management impact one's identity? Or what repercussions may a teacher face when candidly describing a particularly challenging student? The answers to these questions, I believe, will be addressed as more educators embrace these new technologies and begin to incorporate them into their professional lives. The new literacies, after all, are simply (re)formations of existing literacies in the context of global connectivity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

The Edublogosphere provides a space in which teachers can easily produce and share content. As such, it yields insight for teacher educators. I would like to conclude this dissertation with suggestions for teachers and teacher educators that resulted from the study.

Integrate blogging into teacher education programs to encourage reflective practice. Journal writing is a mainstay in teacher education and used for a variety of purposes (e.g., response journal, research journal, reflective journal, observation journal). By substituting blogs for journals, pre-service teachers become “part of the conversation” and benefit from the collaborative and interactive affordances of this new technology.

Introduce the use of blogs judiciously in teacher preparation. Teacher educators are advised to carefully structure blog assignments and familiarize themselves with the risks/benefits of blogging. Using passwords and/or pseudonyms may alleviate risk and foreground the importance of online security, while modeling ways to use blogs as educational tools.

Conceptualize writing as a source of meaning-making and knowledge-building, rather than a means to an end (e.g., displaying acquisition of course content). Engage students in discussions about the ways in which their writing (through blogs) can support or undermine public opinion of teachers.

Examine notions of “being the teacher” and consider how the six dimensions of teacher identity represented in the findings of this study are manifested in your own identity as a teacher educator. Use identity formation as lens for pre-service teacher education and articulate the dimensions as a way for students to envision the many roles and expectations of being a teacher.

Support the conception and understanding of new literacies through practice. By integrating the use of new technology into pre-service instruction, teacher educators are poised to model appropriate use, stimulate creativity and curiosity, and facilitate critical discussions on the value and impact of technology on teaching and learning.

Capitalize on the blogs of practicing teachers to inform current understandings of teacher induction and open the “black box” of classroom teaching for prospective teachers. Excerpts provide insight on the realities of classroom teaching and prompt discussions about vital issues.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Initial Email to Participants

June 2007

Dear **Blogging Teacher** (Participant's name),

My name is Rebecca Payne. I'm a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee working on my dissertation on beginning teachers who blog. I'd like to talk to you about your experiences. Please email me directly at rpayne7@utk.edu for more information. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you,
Rebecca Payne

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Informed Consent Statement

Mapping the Edublogosphere: Implications for Literacy and Instruction

INTRODUCTION

As a first-year teacher who blogged throughout the 2006-07 school year, you are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine how new teachers use the tools of the Internet (specifically blogs) to support their instruction and to construct a *teaching identity*. As a participant in this study, your blog will be analyzed as a comprehensive, chronological story about a teacher's first year. After conducting an Internet search and identifying first-year teacher-created blogs, your blog was selected for a case study. Little is known about the day-to-day experiences of new teachers as they begin their teaching careers. Your participation in this study will help researchers better understand the transition from student to teacher and may inform future practice in teacher education programs.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Your involvement in the study consists of participating in an email interview about your blogging experiences. The interview consists of ten open-ended questions (see attached Interview Protocol) that should take approximately 30 - 60 minutes to complete. You may, however, choose to answer the interview questions over several days, in order to reflect on your experiences. You will also be given the opportunity to provide the researcher with additional feedback.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. All identifying factors (i.e., your real name, school names, names of others you mention in the blog, specific geographic information) will be replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect your off-line identity.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Rebecca Payne, at A234 Claxton Complex, 1126 Volunteer Boulevard Knoxville, TN 37996-3442, and (865) 974-9074 or (865) 544-4277. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you want to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data from the interview will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant:

Name	Signature	Date
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Researcher:

Name	Signature	Date
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Appendix C: Questionnaire

1. Why did you blog throughout your first year of teaching?
2. When you blog, who do you think is reading it?
3. Do you use your real name when you blog about teaching? Why or why not?
4. Does your district have a policy about teachers blogging?
5. Do you talk about your blog with other teachers at your school?
6. Do you read other blogs about teaching? Which ones? Why? Why not?
7. Do you respond to comments left on your blog?
8. How does blogging impact your teaching?
9. Do you use blogs in your classroom? How?
10. Would you recommend blogging to other new teachers? Why? Why not?

Appendix D: Category Development Displays

(1) Cross-case analysis

Categories	Identity Dimensions	Ms. Grover	Ms. Bailey	Ms. Atkins	Mr. Sizemore
Teaching as vocation or calling	Personal	X	X		
Teacher training (alternative pathways)	Intellectual, Personal	X	X		
Reference to teacher preparation (traditional pathways – teacher education, certification, licensure)	Intellectual, Personal			X	X
Instruction, curriculum, pedagogy, literacy, professional development (issues related to the <i>act of teaching</i>)	Functional*	X	X	X	X
Culture of school administration (district context) – professional relationships, power dynamics, workplace politics, professional development, teacher expectations, paraprofessional support, school safety	Social, Political	X	X	X	X
Role of mentors	Social		X	X	X
Teaching identity – reflections on development as a teacher	Personal, Functional	X	X	X	X
Classroom management – issues with student behavior, rules/consequences, building classroom community	Functional	X	X	X	
Cultural diversity (community context)	Social	X	X	X	
Episodes – narrative snapshots	Personal, Social	X			
Political commentary on teacher preparation	Political, Personal			X	X
Web 2.0 & Education – specific use of blog as instructional technology	Intellectual, Intuitive, Functional				X
Teacher Learning	Intellectual, Personal, Intuitive				X

*Functional dimension changed to Pedagogical dimension (addressed in Ch. 4)

(2) Ms. Grover

Category	Sub-categories	Identity Dimension
Teaching as a vocation	Deep relationships with students	Social
	Reflections on becoming a teacher	Personal
	Positive attitude in the face of challenges	Intuitive
Cultural diversity	Community context	Social
Role of school administration	District context	Political
	Professional relationships	Social
	Power dynamics/workplace politics	Political
	Paraprofessional issues	Political
	School safety	Functional
Teacher preparation	Teach for America	Personal
	Professional development	Intellectual
	Graduate coursework	Intellectual
Pedagogical issues	Curriculum materials	Functional
	Teaching practice – instruction	Functional
	Professional development related to curriculum & instruction	Intellectual
	Reading instruction	Functional
	Student achievement	Personal
Classroom management	Severe behavior	Social
	How teacher handles discipline issues	Intuitive

(3) Ms. Bailey

Category	Sub-categories	Identity Dimension
Beliefs about teaching	Writing assignments for graduate school	Personal
	Graduate coursework	Intellectual
	Reflections on teaching	Personal
	Marking time	Political
	Concern for students' well-being – community context	Political
	Use of metaphor – jumping off the high diving board	Personal
Role of mentors	Fellows training model	Intellectual
	Board of Education mentor	Social
	University mentor	Social
	Relationships with colleagues	Social
Role of administration	Professional relationships	Social
	Paraprofessional issues	Political
	Professional development	Intellectual
	School safety	Functional
	School culture – implicit teacher expectations	Political
	Workplace politics	Political
Pedagogical issues	Student achievement	Personal
	Class routines	Functional
	Preparing IEPs	Political
	Literacy instruction	Functional
Classroom management	Student behavior	Social
	Rules/consequences	Intuitive
	Relationships with students	Social

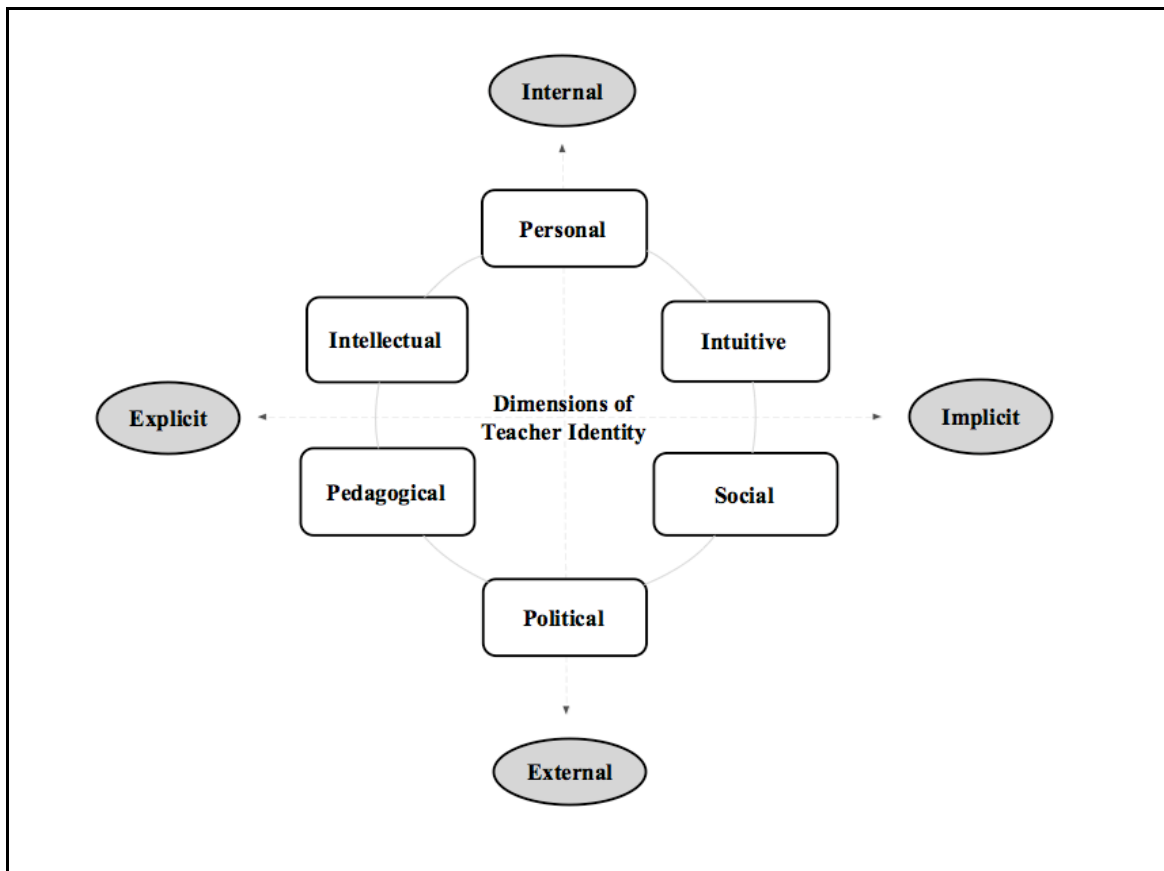
(4) Ms. Atkins

Category	Sub-categories	Identity Dimension
Classroom management	Ups & downs	Personal
	Solid morning routines – chaotic afternoons	Functional
	Frustrated by constant off-task behavior	Personal
	Aware of pervasive anger in some of her students	Intuitive
	Relationship with students	Social
Role of mentors	Instructional support	Intellectual
	Social interaction with other new teachers	Social
	Principal	Political
	Relationship with staff (custodians)	Social
Reflection on teaching	Internal struggle to stay or leave teaching	Intuitive
	Begins taking anti-depressants	Personal
Professional development	Off-campus conferences/workshops	Intellectual
	Implements new knowledge from PD with her students	Intellectual
	Points out areas in which she still needs support (differentiated instruction, grouping, text selection, pacing)	Personal
Community involvement	Relationships with parents	Social
	Bilingual – often speaks to parents/staff in Spanish	Social
	PTO secretary	Personal
	Playground fundraiser	Personal
Political commentary	Critique of teacher preparation	Political
	Social problems (global & local)	Political
	Engaging students in discussions on current events	Social

(5) Mr. Sizemore

Category	Sub-categories	Identity Dimension
Web 2.0 and education	Web presence	Intuitive
	Read/Write web	Intellectual
	Technology integration	Intellectual
	Literacy practices mediated by the Internet	Functional
	Barriers to technology use	Intuitive
Teacher learning	Teacher knowledge	Intellectual
	Learning from other teachers	Social
	Shared cognition	Social
	Professional development	Intellectual
	Role of mentors/networking	Social
	Professional community of learners	Social
Reflection on teaching	Teacher preparation	Political
	Purpose of the blog	Intellectual
	Problem-solving	Intellectual
	Critique of his teaching practices	Personal
Curriculum and instruction	Student achievement	Personal
	Relationship with students	Social
	Resource management	Functional
	Instructional design	Functional
Role of administration	Politics of teaching	Political
	Teacher workload	Political
	District resources	Political
	Teaching assignment – multiple preparations	Political
	Issues of certification/licensure	Functional
	District Internet content filters	Intuitive

Appendix E: Dimensions of Teacher Identity



Dimensions of Teacher Identity

Personal dimension – the teacher’s beliefs, attitudes, commitments, sense of purpose, expectations (for herself and for the students), and values (Britzman, 2003; Hoy et al., 2006)

Intuitive dimension – the decision-making, judgment, discernment, intuition and confidence of the teacher (Zembylas, 2003)

Social dimension – the relationships and interactions with students, mentors, colleagues, parents and community members (Twiselton, 2004)

Political dimension – the value, challenge and allocation of work (Findlay, 2006)

Pedagogical dimension – the roles and responsibilities of teachers concerning instruction (Luehmann, 2007; V. Richardson, 1996)

Intellectual dimension – the teacher’s cognitive abilities and content knowledge (Schlager & Fusco, 2004; Walkington, 2005)

VITA

Rebecca Payne was born in Ft. Sill, Oklahoma on March 20, 1974. She grew up in Naples, Florida and graduated from Naples High School in May 1992. She attended the University of Florida in Gainesville from August 1992 to August 1998. She majored in Elementary Education and earned a Bachelor's degree in December 1996. She continued her studies and earned a Master's Degree in Education in August 1998. Rebecca taught 6th and 7th grade language arts and reading at North Marion Middle School in Marion County, Florida for three years before relocating to New York City where she served as a special teacher of reading at P.S. 175 in Harlem. Rebecca also studied creative writing at Columbia University while living in New York. She returned to Naples, Florida in 2003 to work as a district literacy specialist for the Collier County Public Schools. Rebecca began her graduate studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in January 2005. While in graduate school, she worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for Dr. Anne McGill-Franzen. Presently, Rebecca is an assistant professor of literacy education at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.