Journeys toward Becoming a Teacher:
Charting the Course of Professional Development

By Sandra Jarvis-Selinger, Dan D. Pratt, & John B. Collins

Introduction

Teacher education programs challenge students' beliefs about teaching and learning in hope of creating a pedagogical awareness that will inform teaching practices and guide the professional transformation from student to teacher (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swindler, 1993; Graber, 1996; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984; Tom, 1997; Stooksberry, 2002; Korthagen, 2004; Zeichner, 1999). The process of becoming a teacher is referred to variously as teacher development (see Burden, 1990; Gilles, Mc-Cart Cramer, & Hwang, 2001; Ingvarson & Greenway, 1984; Jackson, 1992; Raymond, Butt, & Townsend, 1992; Reilley Freese, 1999; Zulich, Bean, & Herrick, 1992), professional growth and development (see Kagan, 1992; Sprinthall, Reiman, & Theis-Sprinthall, 1996), identity development/construction (see Graham & Young, 1998; Gratch, 2000; Walling & Lewis, 2000), and/or learning to teach (see Alexander, Muir & Chant, 1992; Carter, 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 1983;

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Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Reviews of teacher development literature (e.g., Kagan, 1992; Richardson & Roosevelt, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) have illustrated the complexity involved in this developmental journey.

In most teacher preparation programs, there is a mix of university coursework and field (classroom/practicum) experience, which affords preservice teachers opportunities to be both students and teachers. Nevertheless, the aim of teacher education programs is one of professional development—for students to emerge as teachers. For example, a student coming into an education program may already have had experiences teaching in other contexts and might consider herself a teacher. Once immersed in her first-term courses, she may feel her identity is wrapped up more in a "student's role". As she embarks on her practicum, she is thrust back into a "pretend teacher's role" (Tom, 1997, p. 131), sometimes confident and sometimes doubtful about her readiness to assume the mantle of teacher. While in her practicum she may, at times, feel like a student again (e.g., when she is being evaluated or observing her sponsor teacher). Sometimes the practice teaching activities are so short that she may only "momentarily escape student status—the best the teacher-to-be can hope for is a brief role playing experience at being a teacher" (Tom, 1997, p. 136). Once again returning to the university, she may revert to a student's role, possibly holding onto some teacher identity from practicum experiences. Her first teaching position may be the first time she feels like a "real teacher" with her credentials in hand, embarking into the professional world of education. This example illustrates the recursive process inherent in the training of people to be teachers, which has emerged in the literature (e.g., Snyder & Spreitzer, 1984; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Walkington, 2005; Luehmann, 2007; Troman, 2008). But how does this process happen at the individual level? More particularly, how are identity and commitment manifested in the journey from student to teacher?

To explore these issues we studied 23 students involved in a one-year teacher education program and examined their identity changes and commitment to teaching. We were interested in how students' beliefs and orientations influenced their evolving identity and commitment to teaching. Our approach provides a grounded look at the perceptions and expectations of the very people who experienced the process in situ.

This study is based on the rationale that "a view through the eyes of the pre-service teacher is essential for all clearly to understand the personalized and contextualized journey of learning" (Walkington, 2005, p. 56). In order to better understand participant's journey, discussions of teacher identity and commitment became the underlying constructs to help tell their stories. In this way "having some understanding of how new students perceive their journey towards teaching provides valuable insight for teacher educators" (Walkington, p. 57).

This research can be shown to be both conceptually and pragmatically significant. Conceptually, it enables the development of a model of teacher identity

and commitment over the course of a teacher education program. Pragmatically, the findings can be used by teacher education programs to support, challenge, build, and enhance teachers' developing professional identity and commitment to teaching.

Understanding Identity and Commitment

There are many scholars who have defined identity (e.g., Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Beijaard et al., 2004; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Flores & Day, 2006). For example, Beijaard et al. (2004) describes identity as a process of answering a recurrent question "who am I at this moment?" Beijaard et al. (2004) posit that while researchers agree that identity is an emerging entity and process, research needs to be done to understand what that emerging process looks like as teachers move through teacher education programs. To this end, the current study draws on the discussion of how identity has been defined and draws on Luehmann's (2007) common characteristics of identity, including that it is: (1) socially constituted, (2) constantly being formed and reformed, (3) considered by most to be multifarious, and (4) constituted in interpretations of experiences (p. 827). As posited by Beijaard et al. (2004), "research on teachers' professional identity formation should focus on more ways of identity formation and that this process can be very complex" (p. 124).

Commitment to teaching is the other concept relied upon to understand preservice teachers' journeys. According to Snyder and Spreitzer (1984), in order to understand a teachers' role, understanding their commitment to the profession is also important. Becker (1960) was one of the first researchers who attempted to understand how commitment was understood by preservice teachers. Since that time others (e.g., Lortie 1975; Lacey, 1977; Nias, 1981) have continued to research this concept with teachers. Huberman (1997) identified commitment as one of the most critical factors in the future of education. For the purposes of this study, commitment is defined as the investment in a teaching career (Lacey, 1977).

How preservice teachers understand their own changing identity and commitment may be one way to shed light on how they develop as teachers (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1984). This study uses the two constructs of identity and commitment to uncover an important aspect of self-reflection on the journey to becoming a teacher.

Methods

Procedures most closely associated with grounded theory were used to analyze the interview data by relying on a constant comparative method. This method of analysis, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is useful for exploring and developing a better understanding of people's experiences, in this case, developing one's identity and commitment to teaching (Glaser, 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1997).

Participants

The investigation was part of a larger six-year longitudinal project (see Jarvis-Selinger, Collins, & Pratt, 2007) that tracked changes in the way teachers think about teaching and learning, from their preservice training through the first five years of professional development. This six-year project (and, thus, this study) was conducted at a large, public research institution with a student population of approximately 43,000 full-time students in 12 faculties or schools. Within this university, the Faculty of Education, comprised of 1500 graduate and 2500 undergraduate students, representing approximately 10% of the student body. The Faculty offered five undergraduate teacher-education options, one of which was a one-year, intensive postgraduate program. Focusing on this option allowed access to 444 students, all of whom entered teacher training after completing either a four-year degree or a postsecondary vocational certificate in a teachable subject. There were no prerequisite fieldwork courses required for entry into the program.

Potential participants for the longitudinal project were contacted through instructors who taught multiple sections of a required, first-term, adolescent development course. Each instructor introduced the study and requested participation from his or her students. Information pertaining to the possibility of being part of the smaller, in-depth study was also contained within the consent letter. All but one instructor (n=8) carried through with the introduction, resulting in 409 possible participants. Of the 409 students who were initially contacted, 211 agreed to be part of the six-year study.

From the larger group (n=211) we selected a subsample of preservice teachers to engage in a more in-depth investigation to understand how they experienced teacher training. Twenty-three students agreed to be part of the subsample study, twelve females and eleven males. Fifteen participants were Caucasian, six Asian-Canadian, and two Indo-Canadian. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 40 years (see Table 1 for a more detailed breakdown and pseudonyms). This study reports on the journeys of those 23 participants, all of whom were secondary preservice teachers.

Interviews

Participants were interviewed (by the first author) at the end of their first term coursework (November-December) and again after their practicum/student teaching (July-August). The first interview focused on exploring participants' experiences with the program related to their underlying beliefs, emerging identity, and commitment to teaching. The goal of the second interviews was to explore their practicum experiences. These interviews also allowed participants to reflect on the entire year, comparing and contrasting significant aspects of the program.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, conversational manner. A set of initial questions and probes were used to guide the conversation and elicit participants' perceptions of their personal experiences. In both interviews, there was a mix of open-ended and structured questions (see Appendix 1). Interviews

ranged from 40 to 120 minutes in length and were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were given to the participants: (1) to check for transcription errors; and (2) to give participants a chance to expand on any thoughts or experiences they felt were underdeveloped during the interview. Once interviews were corrected for any errors, or elaborations made, data analysis began.

Findings

As Merriam (1998) states, the constant comparative strategy is to "do just what its name implies—constantly compare" (p. 159). As the analysis progresses, incidents are compared with other incidents in the data set to achieve an explanation of the phenomenon under investigation. This method was employed to create data codes that were linked to larger categories, which aided in understanding participants' journeys toward becoming teachers, the challenges they faced, and any shift in their teaching commitment.

As we conducted the first round of interviews, two central themes were dis-

Table 1:
Participant Demographic Information

| Name	Sex	Age	Previous Degree	Previous Degree Specialization	Previous Career	Years in Career
Adam	Male	38	M.Sc.	Exercise Rehab.	Physiologist	12
Adrian	Male	23	B.Com.	Business	None	n/a
Beau	Male	28	Tech.Dip.	Tech. Sciences	Swim Instr.	10
Bobby	Male	25	M.Sc.	Physics	None	n/a
Buff	Female	28	B.Sc.	Biology	Lab Instr.	5
Caitlyn	Female	27	B.A.	Sociology	None	n/a
Cam	Male	22	B.A.	History	None	n/a
Carla	Female	24	B.A.	Canadian Studies	Bank Teller	2
Erika	Female	25	B.A.	Canadian Studies	Civil Servant	2
Felix	Male	25	B.Sc.	Mathematics	Optician	2
Hamid	Male	23	B.H.K.	Human Kinetics	None	n/a
Hani	Female	25	B.Sc.	Mathematics	None	n/a
Jared	Male	26	B.Sc.	Chemistry	Lab Instr.	3
Karen	Female	23	B.Sc.	Ecology	Field Biologist	2
Kiyoshi	Male	22	B.A.	Chinese / History	None	n/a
Lacey	Female	30	B.Sc.	Biology	ESL Teacher	5
Mia	Female	23	B.A.	History	None	n/a
Owen	Male	23	B.Sc.	Physiology	None	n/a
Rachael	Female	22	B.Sc.	Biology	None	n/a
Ryan	Male	24	B.Sc.	Biology	None	n/a
Stella	Female	32	Tech.Dip.	Tech. Sciences	Teacher's Aide	8
Syd	Female	40	B.F.A.	Fine Arts	Army	20
Yasmin	Female	23	B.Sc.	Chemistry	Chemist	1

cussed—identity and commitment. Participants spoke about identity in terms of how they perceived themselves (e.g., as students or as teachers). Participants discussed commitment as a level of dedication, excitement, anticipation to being a teacher. The next step for us was to use the two dimensions more explicitly to explore the preservice teachers' journeys. To aid in analysis, the two dimensions were arranged into a simplified organizing framework for describing participants' journeys (Figure 1).

With regard to the identity dimension, about half way through the interview participants were asked to create an "identity line," anchoring one side with student and the other with teacher, and then to mark on that line where they thought they were at that moment. This exercise facilitated discussions of how participants conceived their identities along the journey toward becoming teachers. Once participants made a mark, they were asked, "Why there?" Analysis of the ensuing conversation placed teachers along the identity continuum. During data analysis these marks were categorized into four levels, indicating the extent to which participants felt they had taken on a teacher identity: (1) 0-25%, (2) 25-50%, (3) 50-75%, and)4) 75-100%.

The second dimension was the participants' level of commitment to teaching; it focused on the quality and strength of participants' motivation to become teachers. Commitment was discussed in a slightly different manner during the first and second interviews. During the first interview, participants described how they decided to become teachers. In that data set, six reasons emerged that reflected different levels of initial commitment to teaching: (1) "fallback choice," (2) career move, (3) practical consideration, (4) family influence (both positive and negative),

Figure 1:
Combining Identity and Commitment
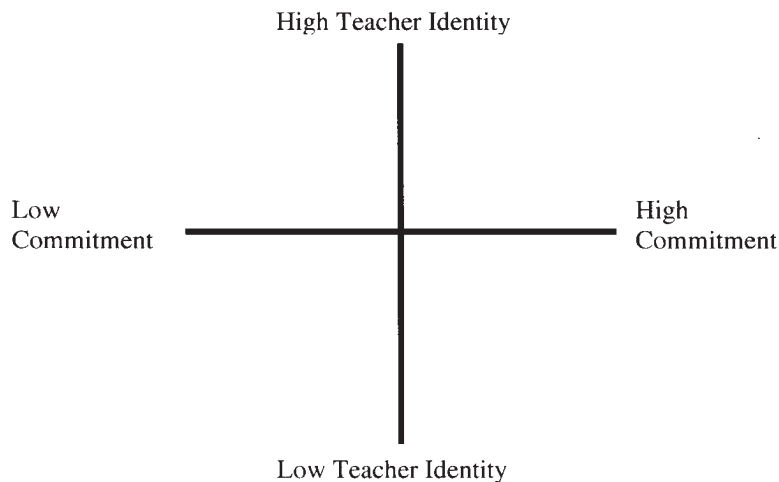
(5) feeling joy from a previous teaching experience, and (6) "always wanting to a teacher." As can be seen in the sequence, there is a pattern of a progressively more positive commitment to becoming a teacher. To interpret commitment at the beginning of the program, these six categories were grouped into four areas on a commitment continuum: (1) low commitment (low), (2) moderately low commitment (mod-low), (3) moderately high commitment (mod-high), and (4) high commitment (high). These six reasons were mapped onto different commitment levels as follows: (1) Low: fallback choice and family influence (negative); (2) Mod-Low: practical choice and second career; (3) Mod-High: enjoyed teaching and family influence (positive) and; (4) High: always wanted to be a teacher. Note that family influence was split into two subcategories that translated into either low (negative) or moderately high (positive) commitment.

At the end of the teacher education program, levels of teaching commitment were once again an important part of the discussion as participants reflected on their future plans. Interpretations of commitment at this point were based on what participants intended to do after graduation. For example, in a case where a participant wanted a full-time teaching position (whether or not he/she was able to secure one), the determination of commitment was based on his/her intention to work full time. From the data gathered at the end of the program, four types of future plans emerged. These included participants who: (1) left the teaching profession after graduation (low commitment), (2) wanted to be a teacher-on-call or substitute teacher (moderately low commitment), (3) only wanted a part-time contract (moderately high commitment), and (4) wanted a full-time teaching position immediately after graduation (high commitment).

Combining these two dimensions, we created an identity-by-commitment matrix, where each dimension had four levels (see Figure 2).

Commitment and Identity at the Beginning of the Teacher Education Program

The initial analysis focused specifically on how participants conceived their teacher identity coming into the program and their initial commitment to the profession. The use of identity and commitment was helpful in organizing and interpreting the data, but a richer understanding of participants' journeys is revealed through deeper, qualitative analysis and discussion of the data. Figure 3 as an organizing framework shows each participant's position on the 'identity by commitment' matrix at the beginning of the teacher education program.

Low Commitment—Low Teacher Identity. In this first group, participants began the program with both low levels of commitment and identity. In terms of commitment, participants' decisions to become teachers were precipitated by one of four reasons: fallback choices, second-career choices, negative family influences, and practical choices.

The first reason, fallback choice, occurred when participants chose teacher education after other occupational/academic avenues became unavailable. Felix best illustrated a fallback decision:

> I guess the biggest reason is, sort of, a process of elimination to teach. Um, originally wanting to, um, do medicine and I did a couple years of pre-med and I didn't get into any medical program. Um, I'd prefer to have done graduate work but economically I don't think it would have worked out, I couldn't have afforded it. … So like process of elimination I guess.

Other participants in this group chose teaching as a second career. For example, Adam was a displaced worker who needed to reconsider his career choices. In Adam's words:

> I was working in the rehab clinic …and we decided to cut a position and I was in charge of the clinic and decided to cut my position. My co-workers both had bought houses and were not as flexible in terms of moving as I was. We had discussed sort of what I liked about the places I worked, what I didn't like, what I didn't want and she [a co-worker] initially said, well you know everything you said points to

Figure 2:
Levels of Identity and Commitment
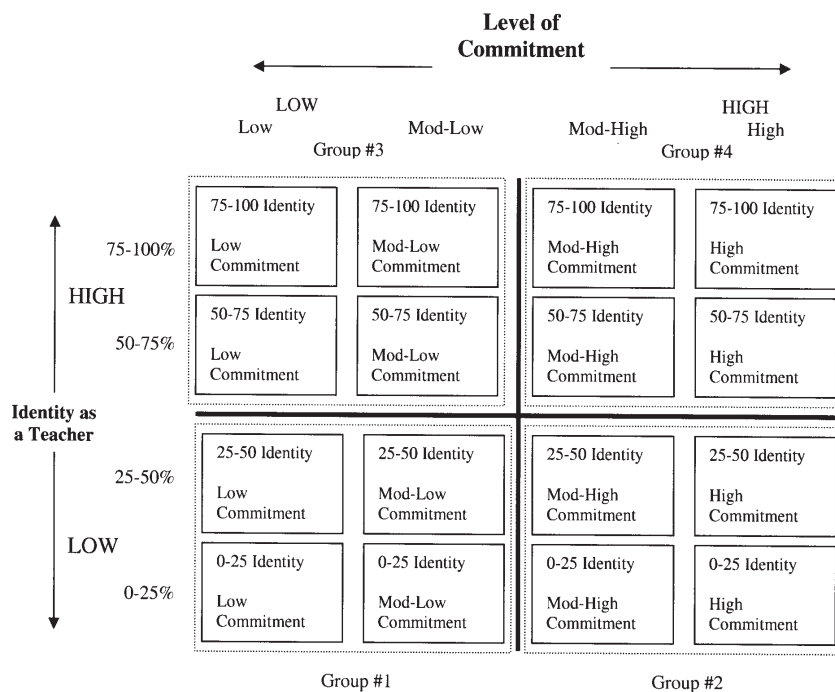
education. I thought, naw, I could never teach kids. … [but] by the time I got accepted [at the university] I was pretty confident that that was my direction.

Family influence was another reason, and for some students the choice to teach was influenced by parental pressure, rather than a strong commitment to teaching. For example, according to Buff:

I think my parents pushed me into it. … I just, ah, the career that I chose just wasn't working out and so I started working a college in the lab there and sort of felt that I could do this, so my parents pushed me.

Finally, some participants chose teaching simply based on practical considerations. For example, Beau entered the program after completing two years in a Technology Entry program at a local technical college. In his words:

I knew that there was a call for shop teachers, and I really enjoy messing around with my hands and I like teaching it to sisters, neighbours, friends, etc., doing all kinds of nifty stuff. So that led me into researching how to do it and I found out there's only one way to do that. You go through [the college] for two years and

Figure 3:
Positions at the Beginning of the Teacher Education Program
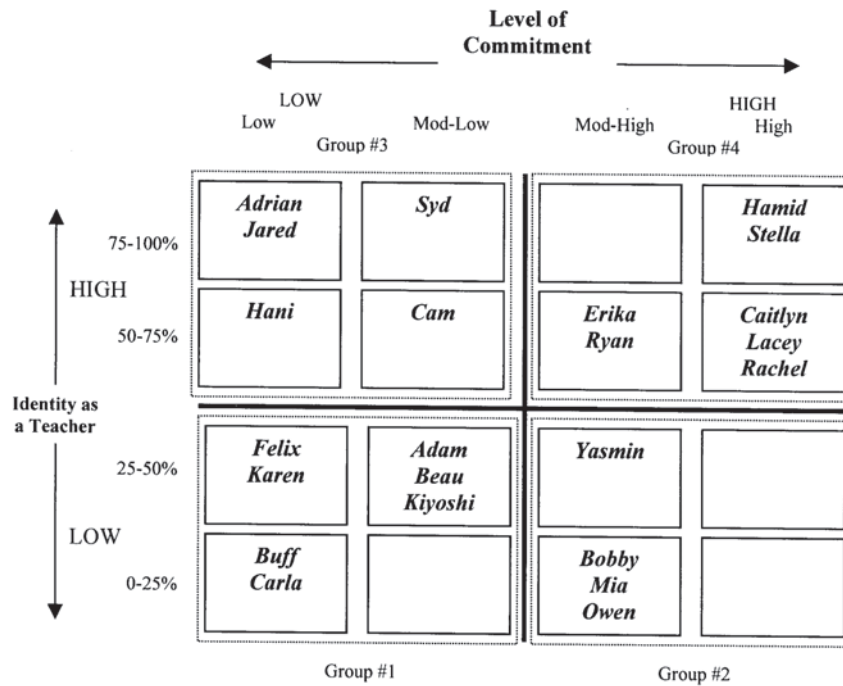
then you come to [the university]. So that's how I sort of got into the teaching, just a history that sort of lead me down a path.

Coupled with their low commitment, participants in this group also had low self-reported teacher identities. Participants gave four qualitatively different reasons for their low teacher identity. Some participants based their judgments on others' assessment of their identity. Other participants felt their low teacher identity was a perception that there is an objective teaching standard. These participants had a clear understanding, in some cases a living example, of how a teacher was supposed to look and behave; and their self-assessment was in relation to that standard. Finally, some participants had a perception that teacher development is an additive process. In these cases, their teaching identities were based on adding up all the things that make a teacher and assessing what they had accumulated. For example, Felix felt his low teacher identity was based on a lack of experience. As Felix commented:

> I haven't actually been teaching. I haven't been in the classroom and seen students like either learn or struggle and I think you can't call yourself a teacher until you've done that. I've been a student for a long time. So it just comes naturally being a student.

In sum, participants in this first group had both low commitment and low teacher identity at the beginning of the program. Not only were these participants not sure they wanted to be teachers, but they also did not feel much like teachers. While teacher education programs may logically assume that beginning students do not have a well developed teacher identity, they typically expect that these same people have an unequivocal desire to become teachers. Yet, the challenges facing participants in this group were not only to develop teacher identities but also to reconcile their ambivalence about a teaching career.

High Commitment—Low Teacher Identity. Although they did not yet see themselves as teachers, participants with this group had higher levels of commitment. These participants joined the teaching profession because they enjoyed previous teaching experiences, had positive exposures to teaching, or always wanted to be teachers. For example, when asked how he decided, Bobby focused on his previous enjoyable experiences. As he explained:

> I actually decided when I was doing TA'ing in the undergraduate levels. So I was working as a graduate student 'cause personally I thought I was gonna go into research and physics. And I was teaching the first year physics labs there and I really enjoyed working with the students and sort of saw them progress as the year went along, sort of thing. Thought that would be a fun thing to do but more sort of the high school type physics rather than a college or university, so I applied and here I am.

Another reason participants decided to teach was based on positive family

influences. For example, Yasmin's influence was her twin sister and father who were both teachers. As she explained:

> I decided to be a teacher. I got my degree in chemistry and I worked in a lab for six months and it just was not anything I was used to. Growing up, my dad's a vice principal and my other sister got her teaching degree, so she's one year ahead of me. She loves it and we grew up in playing basketball and being around teachers and coaches. I mean that's just comfortable and I saw a lot of people made a lot of difference …. and that was something that I thought I'd like to do.

Other participants began teacher education because they always wanted to be teachers. Mia felt she wanted to teach for as long as she could remember and typifies comments from others who felt similarly. In her words:

> I think my whole life I have always wanted to be a teacher. My grandmother was a teacher, my mother was a teacher and … I really I enjoyed my learning years and everything like that. So I really enjoyed learning and I figured that this is a place where I can always be learning. I really think that education has a lot of power, and educating students in certain ways can. Not to teach in a political agenda but I think empowering students in certain ways. Society can change through that, and that education can be a really huge force in making changes.

Participants' explanations for their low teacher identities were similar to those provided by participants in the first group (low commitment/low identity). For example, participants felt that their low teacher identity was based on a lack of experience. These explanations, categorized as an additive approach, reflected participants' perspectives that they needed something more to become teachers. Owen's lack of a teacher identity was based upon not having the skills he believed were necessary to be a teacher:

> And so that's probably why I feel that I'm still very much a student…. handling discipline and handling, um, people coming in late, um, people sleeping in class, those kinds of things I couldn't handle. Well I didn't feel that I had the effort to handle all this stuff at once. So it was just focus on teaching and so, um, I think when I get to that stage maybe I'll be more along this point here.

In sum, participants in this group were strongly committed to becoming teachers but felt they had not yet developed "a teacher identity." As a result, they appeared to be ready and open for the teacher education program to instruct them in how to become teachers.

Low Commitment—High Teacher Identity. Similar to participants in the low commitment/low identity group, students in this group had low commitment and decided to become teachers as fallback, second career, or practical choices. For example, Syd began her teacher education program at 40 years of age after spending approximately 20 years, as she said, "doing everything," but with most of those years spent in the army. Syd decided to become a teacher (a second-career choice)

when her career in the army ended due to an injury she sustained. Similarly Adrian commented:

> I was forced into thinking what do I really want to do and I fell back on teaching. I think a lot of people do. I would never put that on my cover letter (chuckle) to get into a school district or even into this school. But yeah, it was a backup, it was my back up because nothing else really was working out for me, so I'm here.

As ironic or even contradictory as it may seem, participants in this low commitment/high identity group started the program with strong teacher identities. Participants who rated themselves at the highest level did so because they felt they were already teachers. For example, as Syd explained:

> In relation to becoming a teacher? Oh, right here. I've always been a teacher. Just haven't been in the education teaching. I've always been a teacher. I'm here. All I'm learning now is how to teach this (secondary art).

Adrian felt the same way but took a much more cavalier approach from the very beginning of the program. As Adrian stated: "I'm going to put it right here. I am just going to circle the 'T'. I think that as far as teachers go I consider myself a teacher at this point." Adrian felt that he had nothing to learn and that completing a teacher education program was simply a bureaucratic hurdle.

Participants with moderately high teacher identities felt they still needed something more to become teachers (again, an additive approach). For example, Hani felt she needed more confidence to feel more like a teacher. She simply said, "I don't know, just, I don't feel that confident." Thus, across groups, participants with lower teaching identities had similar reasons for judging their identities. The most common perception was an additive approach, where participants felt that something more was needed (e.g., experience, confidence) in order to move towards becoming a teacher.

What distinguished participants in this group (low commitment/high identity) was an interesting combination of commitment and identity. These participants described themselves as teachers (high identity) but were not committed to the teaching profession (low commitment). At least on the surface, this combination appeared to be the most difficult to resolve, and the mismatch set up unique challenges for them as they journeyed towards becoming teachers. For example, Syd entered teacher education with very clear notions about what teaching should be and a high sense of teacher identity. This was coupled with a nothing-to-lose attitude when it came to beginning the program. For Syd, the challenge was to resolve potential tensions between her strong teacher identity beliefs and those espoused by the program.

High Commitment—High Teacher Identity. At the beginning of the teacher education program, participants in the final group were highly committed to teaching. Like participants in the other high-commitment group, their reasons for choosing the teaching profession included previous enjoyable teaching experiences and per-

sistent desires to be teachers. Caitlyn chose to pursue teacher education because she always wanted to be a teacher. She was drawn to teaching as a way of countering the negative experiences during her own education. In Caitlyn's words:

> Any time I had a teacher I always thought I wanted to be a teacher. So if I were a teacher I would never do that … I often was the kind of person that my teachers didn't, just they didn't seem to like or to get. I always thought boy, you know, I would love to be a teacher and to be able to respect each person for who they are and not have a preconceived notion of what a good person is and then say oh, there's the hopeless cases. So I always want to do that.

Caitlyn's strong commitment to teaching was also reflected in her actions during teacher education. For example, she was pregnant during most of the program and modified the timing of her practicum in order to have the baby but finished her practicum after only a couple of weeks off and completed her final term without interruption.

In summary, participants in this group began the program with a strong commitment to teaching. Like participants in the low-identity/high commitment group, these participants' positive previous experiences with teaching translated into a strong desire to teach. In addition, these participants began the program with strong teacher identities by noting that they already were teachers. On the surface, they seemed to be the ones who were the best prepared to enter teacher education. However, if high commitment and identity translate into attitudes such as "there's nothing to teach me … I'm there," then it is possible to question how smoothly these participants would move through their professional development and teacher education.

In sum, the journey analysis at the beginning of the teacher education program clearly showed that participants began with very different opinions in terms of how they felt about themselves as teachers and their commitment to the profession. In discussing the way that someone becomes a teacher, it is critically important to understand the position from which he or she started. Some participants linked the development of a teaching identity to accumulations of knowledge, skills, or experience. Participants also entered the program with widely varying reasons for becoming teachers. Contrary to positions espoused in admission letters, many participants did not enter the program highly committed to teaching. Participants with high commitment but low identity were poised to be the most willing and eager students. They had a strong desire to learn more and were committed to the profession. The most interesting combination was perhaps those participants with high teacher identity but low commitment. These students had to reconcile their initial views of teaching with those in the program while testing their commitment to teach. Finally, though seemingly well poised to succeed in the program, participants with high teacher identities and high commitment entered with stronger conceptions about teaching. The subsequent sections present findings related to how their journeys unfolded.

### *Changes in Commitment and Identity during the Teacher Education Program*

Participants were re-interviewed during their final four to six weeks of the teacher education program. By that time, students had completed their extended practicum and were returning to university for their last courses. Once again, participants discussed their teacher identities as well as their future intentions. These conversations became the indices of their commitment. The discussion that follows describes participants' identity and commitment and how these dimensions changed from the program's beginning to end.

At both time frames the identity discussion was the same: Participants were asked to rate their teacher identity and to explain their reasons for this assessment. Therefore, changes in identity are easy to compare between the beginning and end of the program. However, unlike commitment at the beginning of the program, the measure of commitment at the end focused on participants' future teaching plans. Since commitment was not equivalent between the beginning and end, it cannot be directly compared. Thus, rather than talking about increases or decreases in commitment, qualitative descriptions of participants' final intentions toward teaching are provided. Note, however, that in many cases shifts in identity and commitment were related. For example, some participants felt their teacher identity was strongly connected to the amount of experience they had gained; and they chose to be teachers-on-call as a way of gaining experiences they felt were necessary to become teachers. In the descriptions that follow, a strong interpretive connection is made between participants' shifts in identity and their teaching intentions (commitment) at the end of the program.

Low Commitment—Low Teacher Identity. Recall that participants in the first group had low teacher identities and low commitments at the start of their teacher education program. Figure 4 shows each participant's movement in teaching identity and commitment.

For the seven participants in this group, there were two qualitatively different shifts in their teaching identity, which connected to their shifting commitment. Three participants (Felix, Karen, and Carla) had a major identity shift to the highest identity rating at the end of the program. All three commented that this identity shift was due to gaining more experience, but each spoke about it in a slightly different way. For example, Felix's higher teacher identity at the end of the program was directly connected to "getting more teaching experience" during the program. As Felix discussed at the beginning of the program, it was only the lack of teaching experience that mitigated his personal rating. Felix felt that the experience he gained during his practicum moved him toward adopting a stronger teacher identity. Felix felt like a teacher and wanted a full-time teaching contract immediately after graduation. He had no hesitation in stating that he had become a teacher and now wanted to take on the complete responsibilities of the profession.

Figure 4:
Low Commitment and Low Teacher Identity Group Changes
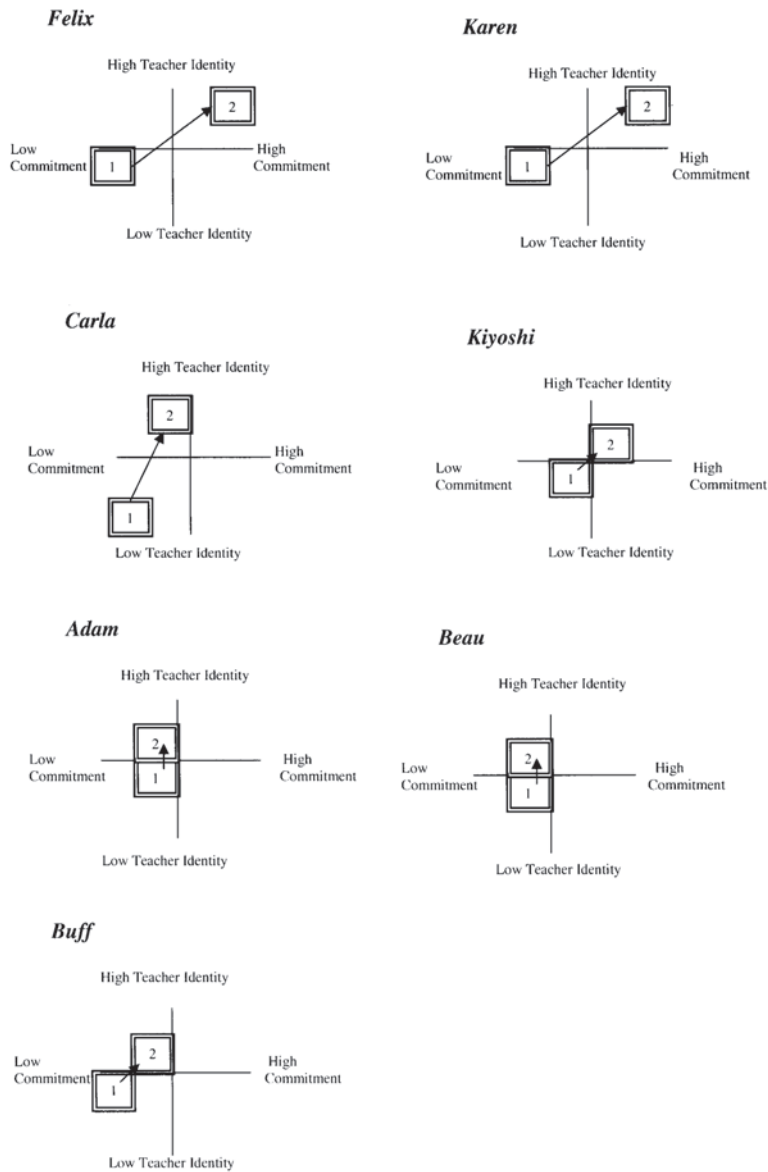
The remaining four participants experienced a second qualitative shift in teaching identity. These participants discussed beginning an identity transformation during teacher education, but in some way that transformation was incomplete. Kiyoshi explained that he still had "more things to learn" which connected to what he said at the beginning (i.e., about needing more experience). Beau, Adam, and Buff also felt teacher education provided some needed experience, but they wanted additional experience to develop a greater teaching identity. Identity assessments for this group were also directly connected to their future teaching practice (i.e., commitment). Participants wanted to either work part-time or be teachers-on-call. Rather than beginning full-time contracts, they felt being on call would give them a variety of experiences to help them feel more confident as teachers.

High Commitment—Low Teacher Identity. The four participants categorized in the second group began the program with moderately high to high commitments but relatively low teacher identities. For these students, the question was whether their identity would increase as a function of taking part in their teacher education program (while their commitment to teaching would remain strong). All four participants developed stronger teacher identities at the end of the program; however, their final commitment to teaching was more variable (see Figure 5).

For example, Bobby felt he had made a substantial identity shift toward becoming a teacher by the end of the program. However, Bobby decided to leave teaching after graduation. In a follow-up email, Bobby described his "lack of fit" with the teaching profession and felt that teaching physics in a secondary school was not something he could continue. After completing his teacher education program in August, Bobby returned to the university to begin his Ph.D. studies. Given spring deadlines for graduate school applications, it was clear that Bobby had made this decision well before the end of his practicum. By the end of the program, Bobby was the only participant in this study who felt he did not want to continue as a teacher. For Bobby, teacher education became a year to learn about a career option that he did not want to pursue.

The remaining three participants also felt more like teachers by the end of the program. Yasmin's strong teacher identity translated into a desire to secure a full time teaching position. At the beginning of the program, Yasmin had commented: "I'm not a teacher yet because I still need to learn how to control things." While she never explained her reason for pursuing full-time work after graduation, it may be that, like others who explicitly stated as much, Yasmin felt that she had gained sufficient confidence and control to succeed as a full-time teacher. Owen was the other person in this group who wanted full-time teaching after graduation because he felt that by the end of the program he had gained the experience needed to feel more like a teacher.

The final participant, Mia, wanted to be a teacher-on-call at the end of the program. Her reasons for this career choice strongly connected to her identity

judgment. Mia felt that she had begun to move more toward becoming a teacher, and her explanation was identical to what she said at the beginning of the program (always a teacher; always a learner). Mia worried that after graduation, any school where she would begin her career would expect her to justify her strong social reform/social justice beliefs, just as she had felt the teacher education program had done. She believed a mismatch between a school's expectation of her role and her own identity was imminent. Mia was the only participant in this group who did not end the program with a strong teacher identity (i.e., 75-100% range).

In sum, all participants moved toward stronger teacher identities. However, for this group, variability was present in their future teaching plans. This illustrates the multidimensional nature of participants' journeys. It was also apparent that for this group, teacher education had a differential effect on each person.

Low Commitment—High Teacher Identity. At the beginning of the program, these five participants had high teacher identities but relatively low commitments to teaching. By the end of the year, most participants maintained high teacher identi-

Figure 5:
High Commitment and Low Teacher Identity Group Changes
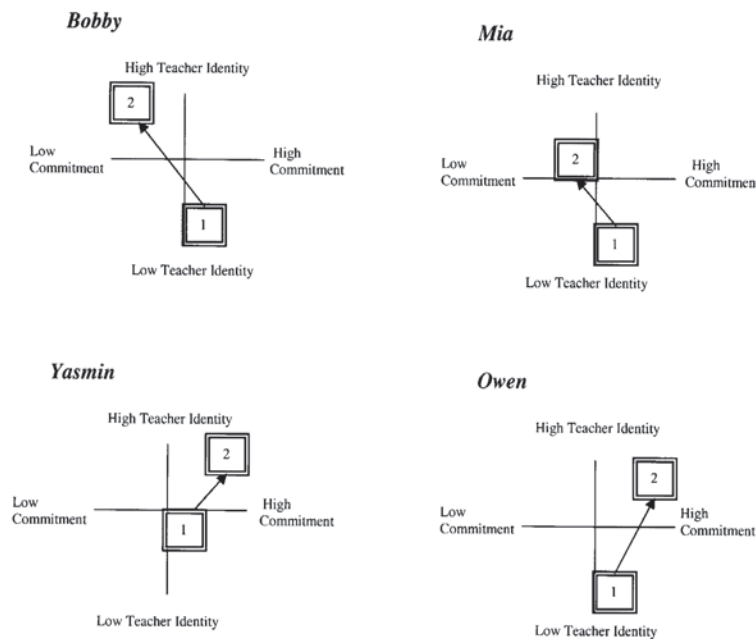
ties (see Figure 6) but commitment was variable. The exception was Jared, who by the end of the program, felt much less like a teacher then he did at the beginning. Four participants (Syd, Adrian, Hani, and Cam) continued to maintain their strong teacher identities. Syd felt ready to take on a full-time teaching contract after graduation, whereas Adrian and Hani wanted to pursue part-time work. While Adrian was

Figure 6:
Low Commitment and High Teacher Identity Group Changes
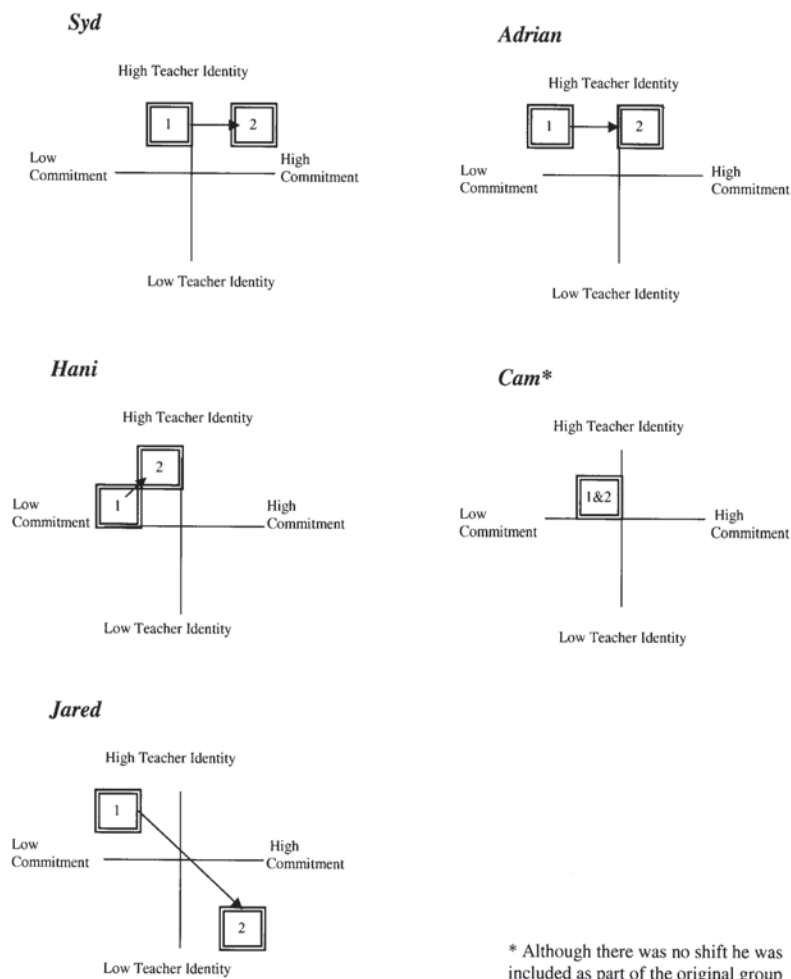
unwavering in his identity as teacher, he felt that since teaching was originally a fallback choice he did not want to commit to a full-time contract until, as he stated: "I am sure that I am where I want to be." In a sense, Adrian was still "hedging his bet." At the end of the program Cam felt that he was moving towards becoming a teacher; but, as he stated: "There was always something more I can learn." Notably, in terms of his teacher identity, Cam was one of only two participants in the entire study who made no movement between the beginning and end.

The final participant, Jared, made the most unique identity shift. Jared was the only participant who moved from a high teacher identity at the beginning to a low teacher identity at the end of the program. Jared believed his identify shift occurred because he felt the program did not treat him like a teacher. At the beginning of the program, Jared emphasized the link between his high teaching identity and his previous experiences. Jared may have been insulted when he perceived that the program did not value or acknowledge these experiences. While the program's lack of recognition affected how Jared viewed himself as a teacher, it did not affect his desire to pursue a teaching career after graduation. In fact, Jared commented that: "I will feel like a teacher again once I'm out of the program" – implying that he was a teacher before he entered teacher education, and he would be one again after he left. However, as shown in Figure 6, while in the program Jared's identity as a teacher plummeted from high to low.

High Commitment—High Teacher Identity. These seven participants, with initially strong teacher identities and strong commitment, all maintained their high teacher identities but, as in the previous three groups, showed variablity in their future plans (see figure 7).

Four participants (Caitlyn, Lacey, Hamid, and Ryan) ended the program feeling very committed to the profession and very much like teachers. Each wanted to take on a full-time teaching contract after graduation. Stella also ended with a strong teacher identity; however, her future aspirations were to be a teacher-on-call. Stella felt her high teacher identity was because there was "only 2% of teacher left to go … I'm 98% teacher and the remaining 2% will happen once I'm able to set up my own classroom."

The remaining two participants in this group maintained moderately high teacher identities between the beginning and end of the program. Like Stella, they also wanted to be teachers-on-call after graduation. For Rachael and Erika their self-reported identities at the end of the program seemed to relate to their desire to be on call. Both participants wanted to continue learning how to be a teacher and felt that being an on-call teacher would give them a variety of opportunities and experiences that would support their continued transformation.

Figure 7:
High Commitment and High Teacher Identity Group Changes
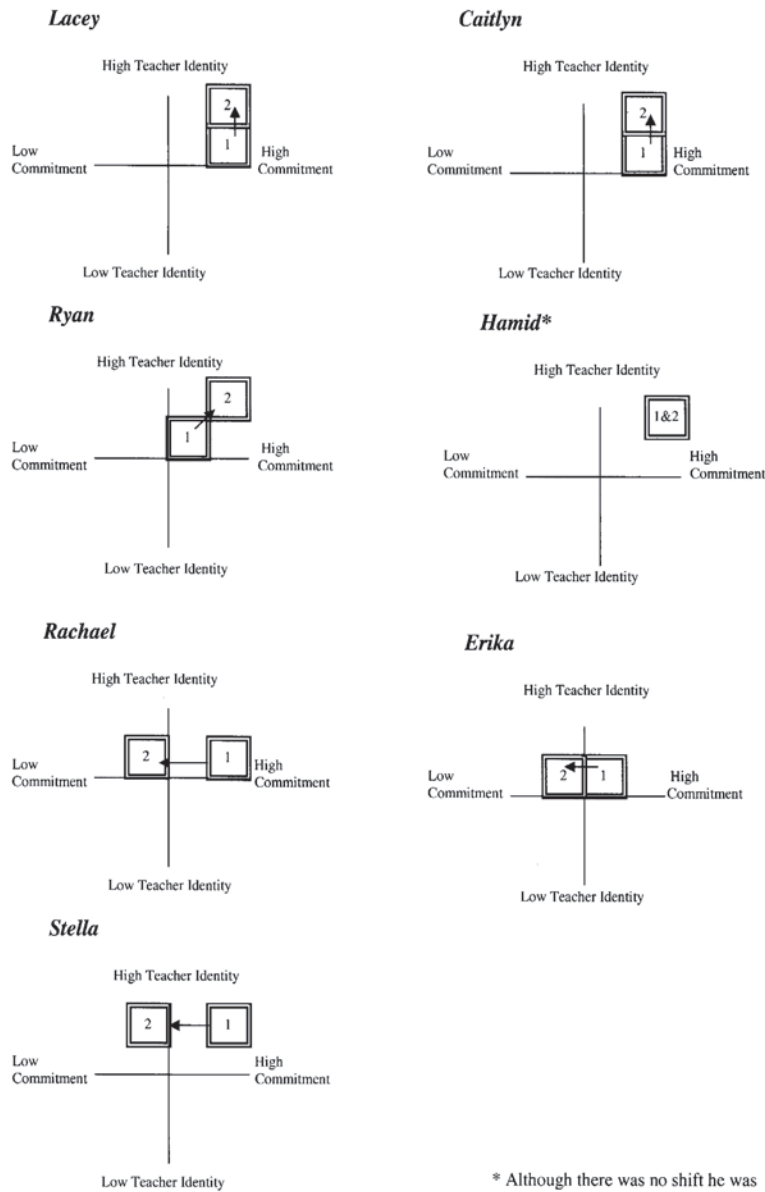
* Although there was no shift he was included as part of the original group

Discussion and Conclusions

Understanding teacher development through the eyes of preservice teachers is essential for understanding their journeys toward becoming teachers. Within that developmental trajectory it is important for teacher educators and practicum supervisors to understand the ways in which preservice teachers' develop a sense of professional identity and commitment to teaching. These may well be the links between current and future learning and may form the basis for challenging and changing ideas throughout one's professional career (Walkington, 2005).

Interestingly while most students ended with a more positive perception of their teaching identity, one student ended the program feeling entirely negative about his identity. This case of a more negative end point was more common to the concept of commitment. Some students felt the program moved them away from their initial desire to secure a full-time teaching contract and toward not strongly committing to teaching in the near future. This too may be the role of a teacher education program, that is, helping people make the decision as to whether or not teaching is for them. Overall this finding emphasizes the need for teacher education programs to be aware of how students' starting perceptions are impacted by their journey through the program.

Another implication from the study's results is the acknowledgement that for some students, teacher education is not a journey at all; it is simply a reaffirmation of something they already are—strongly committed teachers. For others, teacher education programs provide a way to move toward becoming teachers. For these individuals their journeys are tied not only to the events they experience, but also to how they understand their teaching identities and their motivations to become teachers. For students with lower teaching identities, programs have the ability to act as a catalyst for their identity transformation. Thus, teacher education needs to be increasingly aware of these variances, be responsive, and provide authentic learning opportunities that recognize these differences.

Given the variability in students' journeys, it also became clear how important reflection is for the emerging teacher. As noted by Walkington (2005),

> it would not be appropriate to suggest that deeper and reflective activity does not go on currently in professional experience, but it is evident that more often than not, the relationship is more focused upon developing functional competence than on developing the long-term professional identity of the future teacher. (p. 56)

On deeper analysis, our study revealed a picture of teacher education where the importance of reflection is espoused but little guidance is offered on how to reflect, or time set aside in which to reflect. Participants in this study began a conversation that reflected on the program's assumptions, their own assumptions, and the changes that occurred for them over the course of the one year program.

Reflection in teacher education has been peripheral or incidental to the development of becoming a teacher (e.g., Hatton & Smith, 1995; Murray, Nuttall, &

Mitchell, 2008). Historically assessing only measurable skills and competencies has been valued in understanding teacher development (Walkington, 2005). This study questions whether our teacher education program (and perhaps other programs) provides sufficient direction and support to help individuals reflect upon their evolving teacher identity and commitment. While the concept of reflection on practice is important and well documented (Bullough, 1989; Calderhead, 1989; Schön, 1983, 1987; Smyth, 1989; Ward & McCotter, 2004; Zeichner, 1981), there is little discussion of the place of identity and commitment in that process.

Most participants spoke about the program's reliance on individuals' private reflections, which create no opportunity for the public consideration of these musings. Participants expressed frustration at the program's inability to offer opportunities to publicly reflect on their journeys and to hear others' perspectives. Engaging in this type of reflection creates an opportunity for students to understand their individual journey in relation to others. This potentially helps mitigate feelings of isolation (i.e., "I'm the only one who experiences things this way"). The emergence of this type of socio-cultural view can provide context for how students experience their journey (Van Huizen, Van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005). In this way there is an opportunity to challenge the assumption that an individual's journey is unique or incomparable; and while there are many journeys one may take, there are commonalities between them that can be discussed and reflected upon.

This study's reliance on the dimensions of identity and commitment helped initiate a meaningful reflective conversation. Participants commented on the value of these conversations to help them understand the reflective process. Interestingly, most participants in this year-long study felt that being a part of this project provided them with the type of discussions about becoming a teacher that they expected, but did not get, from the teacher education program. Participants felt these conversations could be foundational pieces for the types of group discussions about teacher development, identity, and commitment that would be integral to their ideal teacher education program.

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Appendix:
Interview Protocols

Interview Questions—Interview #1 (Beginning of Teacher Education Program)

1. I'm interested in your experience, your journey if you will, from being a student to becoming a teacher. Specifically, I want to better understand the challenges you face as you make the shift from student to teacher. But let's start further back. Tell me, how did you come to decide on becoming a teacher?

2. What's it been like during this first term? Tell me about the term, in general.

3. Draw a time-line for this term and tell me about the 'markers,' those moments or incidents that stand out thus far. (remember to focus back to the central question of becoming a teacher.)

a. What is it about them that make them stand out?
b. What happened?
c. What do you think about that? Why was that important?
d. How does that connect to your journey from student to teacher?
e. Does it have implications for the kind of teacher you want to become?

4. What's been interesting or challenging this term? What might that mean for your becoming a teacher?

5. Draw a line (anchor the left side with "completely comfortable" and the right side with "completely uncomfortable"). Mark a spot on that line where you think you are right now in this program.

a. Tell me what it means to be there?
b. Why did you put the mark there?

6. Draw a line (anchor the left side with "Student" and the right side with "Teacher"). Mark a spot on that line where you think you are right now in the program, thinking whether you are a student or a teacher.

a. Tell me why you put the mark there?
b. Tell me what it means to be there?

7. Have you thought about yourself as 'teacher'? If you have, describe yourself as a teacher. How does your description compare to the picture of 'teacher' that you have been taught in this program?

8. Draw a line (anchor the left side with "perfect fit" and the right side with "no fit"). Make a mark where you feel you "fit the vision of teaching" so far, at the end of term one.

a. Tell me what it means to be there?
b. What is difficult about being there?

9. Is there anything about teaching, as presented in your program, that you take issue with or disagree with? What is it? What's important for you in that comparison?

10. Have you felt pressured to adopt a particular view of teaching? Is that view similar or different to what you thought coming into the program? How is it similar/different?

11. Is there anything we haven't discussed today that you would like to mention?

12. Usually after such an interview people tend to think of things they would have liked to say. I was wondering if you would do me one favour. In a week's time (or so), could you email me with anything that you thought of after? If there's nothing you thought of simply email me with a "nothing new" response.

13. I would also like to ask permission to email you if I think of something I might have missed.

Interview Questions—Interview #2 (End of Teacher Education Program)

As you may remember I'm interested in your experience, your journey if you will, from being a student to becoming a teacher. Specifically, I want to better understand the challenges you face as you make the shift from student to teacher.

1. What's it been like during this second term (during your practicum)? Tell me about the term, in general.

2. Draw a time-line for this term and tell me about the 'markers,' those moments or incidents that stand out thus far. (Remember to focus back to the central question of becoming a teacher.)

a. What is it about them that make them stand out?
b. What happened?
c. What do you think about that? Why was that important?
d. How does that connect to your journey from student to teacher?

e. Does it have implications for the kind of teacher you want to become?

3. What's been interesting or challenging this term? What might that mean for your becoming a teacher?

4. Draw a line (anchor the left side with "completely comfortable" and the right side with "completely uncomfortable"). Mark a spot on that line where you think you are right now in this program—and in terms of your teaching (two marks on the line)

a. Tell me what it means to be there?
b. Why did you put the mark there?

5. Draw a line (anchor the left side with "Student" and the right side with "Teacher"). Mark a spot on that line where you think you are right now in the program in terms of thinking whether you are a student or a teacher.

a. Tell me why you put the mark there?
b. Tell me what it means to be there?

6. Now having completed your practicum how would you describe yourself as a teacher. How does your description compare to the picture of 'teacher' that you have been taught in this program?

7. Draw a line (anchor the left side with "perfect fit" and the right side with "no fit"). Make a mark where you feel you "fit the vision of teaching" so far (either from the program at UBC or from your school—i.e., your sponsor teachers), at the end of 2 terms?

a. Tell me what it means to be there?
b. What is difficult about being there?

8. Is there anything about teaching, as presented in your program including your practicum and at UBC, that you take issue with or disagree with? What is it? What's important for you in that comparison?

9. Have you felt pressured to adopt a particular view of teaching? Is that view similar or different to what you thought coming into the program? How is it similar/different?

10. Is there anything we haven't discussed today that you would like to mention?

11. Usually after such an interview people tend to think of things they would have liked to say. I was wondering if you would do me one favour. In a week's time (or so), could you email me with anything that you thought of after? If there's nothing you thought of simply email me with a "nothing new" response.

12. I would also like to ask permission to email you if I think of something I might have missed.