

TEACHING MEANINGS: IMAGINATION AND THE TEACHER IN-BECOMING

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## ABSTRACT

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Imagination—broadly defined here as narratives individuals construct about experience and possibility—is integral to helping people understand their lived experiences. In the context of teacher education, imagination is an indispensable dimension of developing one’s self-conception as a teacher, and of defining what is and is not acceptable practice. Using the theoretical lens of imagination and employing interpretive methodologies with pre-service teachers interning in urban contexts, this study examines what it means for pre-service teachers to shift from pre-service to in-service teacher identities and the effects of those shifts on their practice. The study focuses on the role and effects of imagination with five participants who were learning to teach by focusing on the transition from student teacher to the self-identification as full-fledged teacher at the end of the internship, a phase of teacher development that I label “in-becoming.”

Two research questions frame this study: How do teachers in-becoming, as a function of imagination, form narratives around their experiences that constitute meaning for their practice? And, in what ways do teachers in-becoming use those meanings to imagine what is and is not possible in their practice as a consequence of how they understand themselves as teachers? Three primary conclusions are discussed in the context of the findings: first, the shaping of a self-conception as a teacher is an imaginative process drawn from narratives constructed in and about experiences. Second, imagination is essential in experiencing the effects of pre-service teaching and constructing boundaries of and possibilities for practice. And third, the becoming of a

teacher is a unique phase of learning to teach wherein the pre-service teacher assumes an identity as a teacher and independently shapes his or her practice. The study concludes with a discussion about implications for teacher education and it advocates for the inclusion of imagination more holistically in learning to teach.

For April, whose love, support, and grace knows no bounds, and  
for my children, who I hope will always pursue their dreams and each,  
in his or her own unique way, will make a better world for us all.

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I mention this here because by 2014, I had given up on the prospect of finishing my degree program. I knew that I was well past a series of institutional deadlines, and that because I was a person whose depression manifested as so-called "high-functioning depression" I felt that I had probably irreparably damaged relationships that I had cherished with people who I both respect and admire. At the time, I tried to cope with the reality that I would not finish.

Then, in spring of 2015, I received a phone call from Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen. She was doing a professional development and research project near my home and wondered if I would be interested in helping. After agreeing enthusiastically without hesitation, I asked if she'd be willing to help me figure out how to finish my program. She agreed and has been nothing short of a godsend ever since. I sincerely cannot put into words how grateful I am for her support, her knack for efficiently navigating institutional structures, her guidance, and her ability to make my writing stronger—not to mention her kindness, thoughtfulness, attention to detail, mentorship, and the myriad ways she has made me a better person, a better researcher, and a better teacher.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **Imagination and the Teacher In-Becoming**

“Tell me one last thing,” said Harry. “Is this real? Or has this been happening inside my head?”

Dumbledore beamed at him, and his voice sounded loud and strong in Harry’s ears even though the bright mist was descending again, obscuring his figure.

“Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?” (Rowling, 2007, p. 723)

This study—which draws from the theorizing about/theories of imagination and its interplay with teaching and employs ethnographic methodologies with participants in a large urban center—examines what it means for student teachers to shift from pre-service to in-service teacher identities and the effects of that shift on their practices. The technical definition of imagination used in this study is: a mental process by which meaning about the perceptual realities for an individual is created from interpreting lived experience against the conception of perceived possibilities within that lived reality. The role of imagination in the way that the pre-service teacher constructs narratives about, ascribes meaning to, and theorizes—perhaps envisions—herself as “a teacher” has a profound effect on the way that experiences are understood. As Greene (1995b) suggests, “imagination may be our primary means of forming an understanding of what goes on under the heading of “reality;” imagination may be responsible for the very texture of our experience” (p. 140). I draw on the imagination as a kind of “flexibility of mind” (Bailin, 2007; Egan, 1992; Takaya, 2007) wherein individual experiences,

contexts, and perceptions are the basis for generating new possibilities for a given context. Put more simply, imagination suggests that an individual maintains the capacity to understand the circumstances of his or her lived experience through constructing narratives (Egan, 1992), envisioning circumstances as they are or could be, and generating ideas about possible realities based on our understanding of our lived experience. Subsequently, Greene's (1995b) idea that imagination constructs the very "texture of our experience" is useful.

This study developed from my work as a field instructor and course instructor, when I saw contradictions emerge in my work with beginning teachers. On one hand, I knew that they were immersed in a teacher education program I believed to be progressive and forward-thinking, one that encouraged student teachers to take risks with their practices and identify a broad range of skills and dispositions to meet the needs of all learners. On the other hand, I became aware that much of their in-person talk was centered on what they felt they couldn't do. Too often student teachers would talk about a lesson or idea they'd love to teach but felt they couldn't. They might lament how much they would love to design a unit that addressed historical slavery in the context of child slavery today but didn't want to "rock the boat," or talk about how they'd love to design and use authentic assessments but found them to be unrealistic. Returning from their placements to the university setting, student teachers would describe how they wanted to learn something in their teacher education courses that they could actually "do" while rolling their eyes when the critical practices found in their methods courses were not congruent with what they experienced in the field. And in the process of becoming a teacher, I would hear them excitedly talk about what they wanted to accomplish in their classrooms and how they anticipated finally being teachers, yet framed their talk in the language of the way that they were once taught (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Lortie, 1975): standards, textbooks, testing, worksheets, and

lectures. Furthermore, these student teachers clearly articulated an understanding of the field of education where issues of accountability and standards increasingly de-emphasized imaginative and innovative practices (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Greene, 1995b; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Ravitch, 2007, 2010).

At the same time, I was immersing myself in the work of scholars who use the concept of imagination as a mechanism for rethinking what is and isn't possible for teaching and learning. Scholars like Maxine Greene (1995b), who advocated for the arts and literature as a means of reconceiving freedom and possibility, and Kieran Egan, whose work with imagination has interrogated metaphors that we construct vis-a-vis a "flexibility of mind" (Egan, 1992; Egan, 1997; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Takaya, 2007). Their work generated for me ideas about teaching and learning that illustrated the capacity of theorizing and research to interrogate how teachers understand their realities and what possibilities are available to them. My own practice and ideological approach are based on a conception of teaching and learning that, as Friere (1998, p. 30) puts it, "to teach is not *to transfer knowledge* but to create the possibilities for the production and construction of knowledge" [emphasis in original], and the concepts associated with imagination were as revealing as they were appealing. In the process of this study, I have become convinced that the kinds of teaching that teacher educators most desire to cultivate in pre-service teachers can only be achieved by making imagination central to our work.

Herein lies the disruption: how can these student teachers, many of them the most passionate and talented teachers I have worked with, become teachers who seemingly closed off their practice rather than opened it up? These student teachers who can talk of original, thoughtful, idealistic kinds of teaching were relegating themselves to practices that are, by their own admission, "necessary evils" in order to efficiently traverse their respective curriculums. To

put it plainly, in a program where they were given space, training, encouragement, practice, and support to imagine possibilities for teaching, the student teachers I was working with at the time continually returned to safe, normative, even technocratic practices.

The researcher part of me knows that this is not a unique phenomenon, but one that teacher educators continually struggle with and that has been the focus of numerous research studies (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). I found that even as I watched and supported those student teachers become teachers in their own right, I wondered about the relationship among imagination, teaching, and the transition that student teachers make in leaving their teaching program to set out on their own. The genesis of this study is in a desire to build on that research from the perspective of the teachers themselves, but not immersed in a teacher education program nor in their first years teaching, but how their experiences shape and were shaped by their transition to induction-phase teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). The tensions that arise among a student teacher's enacted practice, imagined practice, and the pedagogical spaces she<sup>1</sup> envisions seemed simultaneously most concrete and vulnerable in this time of transition.

Perhaps the best way to begin this study is with a memory. Not mine, but of a veteran teacher who found herself reflecting on the teacher who became for her the very image of what teaching is and should be. What began as a simple writing exercise for Suzanne Carothers' (1995) freshman writing course ended in a letter to her former teacher that provides some initial context for the relationship between teaching and imagination. She writes:

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<sup>1</sup> I recognize the inherent problematic nature of using gender-specific pronouns, as well as the importance of properly identifying gender, inclusive of, but not limited to, cisgendered, transgendered, and nonbinary individuals. However for the sake of clarity of writing, I will use some gendered pronouns occasionally. I will use "he" or "she" and the gendered variants of those pronouns interchangeably and randomly in an effort to ameliorate to a small degree the consequences of using them.

As I thought of those first 12 years, your name, face, and classroom sprang forth out of a sea of nameless faces and classrooms bare. Though I did not know it then, your classroom would be one that I would return to many, many times in years to come. No, I have not returned physically to the room, but my memories of you and your classroom are very vivid to me...from the way that you taught, it seemed that intellect was a matter of thinking, questioning, and charting one's own course to knowing. You provided many tools. You awakened a deep curiosity in each of us and helped release the confidence buried within us. I never had an opportunity to tell you these things because you died long before I finished high school, before I ever understood that I would want to say these things to you, before I even knew what I know. (pp. 32-33)

In many ways, Carothers' story is hardly remarkable. We've all had teachers in whose memory we trace a part of our professional identity, and whose actions we have both emulated and use as baseline for judging our own (Korthagen, 2010). Such a story, if nothing else, is anecdotal evidence of Lortie's (1975) "apprenticeship of observation," in that Carothers places emphasis on the "intuitive and imitative" over the "explicit and analytical" (p. 62) even as she herself has the benefit of professional training and years in front of the classroom. Her gratitude notwithstanding, the imaginative qualities of that memory demonstrate a continuity of practice.

Carothers' story resonates because even in the classrooms and teachers we knew very early in our lives we came to know ourselves as teachers and what possibilities lay before us; we found the teachers we wanted to be in the bookshelves, notes, and even relationships that formed the tapestry that was the backdrop to our everyday lives (Greene, 1978). Lortie (2002) argues that writing in the way Carothers did helps "individuals recognize some themes from what they emphasize in their recollections and the meanings that might be attached" (p. xi). Experiences



with others and in our classrooms help us cultivate meanings derived from choices, purposes, and other places and help us understand what teaching is and what it could be (Greene, 1978, p. 25). For most people, but I think especially for young teachers, Carothers' story not only enables one to reminisce about growing up in other people's classrooms but also to situate one's understanding about teaching, learning, and education; young teachers who find themselves using their remembered experiences as guideposts both to develop their teaching, and to frame their own learning to teach (Wideen et al., 1998). Despite, or perhaps because of, all of its richness, Carothers' story suggests an experience as a student in which a desire to learn is so deeply embedded in imagination that it is the foundation upon which one constructs meaning in and about teaching.

This study examines the way that pre-service teachers—those I call teachers in-becoming—imagine their practice, and by proxy, what constitutes teaching, learning, and knowing, according to them, as they enter the professional teaching field following their teacher education programs. In that awkward and unavoidable time between completing student teaching and being an (employed) in-practice teacher which the participants of this study occupy (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), we can learn a lot from Carothers' story about Mrs. Maxwell. Even though “the apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) is a very real thing, and subsequently student teachers often enter into teacher education programs with a great deal of naivety despite program goals of inviting complex and critical thinking in and about teaching (Segall & Missias, 2009), Carothers' story reminds us that even the most experienced of teachers in some way will imagine their teaching through lenses of others. This study aims to examine both the qualities of that unique time of transition as an element of learning to teach, and to interrogate the way that it positions teachers in-becoming to imagine possibilities in (and for) their practice.

We live in a time when teaching and teacher education is under intense scrutiny and public debate about teacher education is framed by how radically society must confront its failures with measures of standardization and accountability (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Ravitch, 2007, 2010). More recent studies suggest that this scrutiny and overemphasis on narrow definitions of accountability has deleterious effects on schools, classrooms, and teachers' pedagogical choices (Martin, 2014) and produces untenable expectations in school systems (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Teacher educators have increased scrutiny of the field with formal investigations and policy recommendations (e.g. Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005) that seek to develop a robust discussion about what should constitute teacher education (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2012; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Those debates have become increasingly polemic and based on competing principles of teacher education and accountability measures (Santoro, Mayer, Reid, & Singh, 2011). What is interesting for the purposes of this study is the degree to which that discussion revolves around the structures and epistemologies over which teacher educators have the greatest control, such as content of coursework, course requirements, and field experiences—all of which are how formal learning to teach occurs, but also lie outside the pre-service teacher's ability to control.

This is the environment in which the participants in this study are learning to teach. They are cognizant of the social politics that surround their career choices just as they are the regulatory effects of their teacher education programs. This study is situated within this context and, building on recent research that attends to both social studies teacher education and the apprenticeship of observation (Hawley, Crowe, & Brooks, 2012), seeks to contribute to the body of research that examines the nuances of how pre-service teachers experience their learning to

teach and the effects it has on their practice. Specifically, this study addresses a unique aspect of learning to teach in the identities and practices that new teachers take with them into their career from the experiences in learning to teach.

### **Imagination and Learning to Teach: A Primer**

*Imagination* and its associated terms are problematic. To be sure, when one says “I used imagination” in an everyday context, one has a general sense of what that means. Egan (2007) notes this plainly when he reasons that “everyone recognizes a capacity that allows us to call up mental images, think about things that are not present, or consider things that do not exist” (p. 3). However, what one understands imagination to consist of in a colloquial setting might differ sharply from person to person. Furthermore, when one appropriates the term in academe, a different set of assumptions must be conquered in order to understand how, and toward what ends, such a term is being used. To be sure, imagination is broadly applied to a range of subjects and ideas including religion, history, literature, and philosophy (Stevenson, 2003).

The term *imagination* can be, at best, described as a theoretical construct that is supported by a rich, diverse, and sometimes conflicting body of theoretical and empirical research (see, for example, Egan, Stout & Takaya, 2007 or Greene, 1995b). It can also, at best, be described as a function of mind that enables one to both understand his or her experiences and envision possibilities. The dualistic conceptualization of the term might be understood better if one assumes that to conceptualize what imagination is or how it might be made manifest, it must also be embodied (Bailin, 2007). Eliminating the differentiation between imagination as a theoretical construct and imagination as an enacted practice is not the purpose of this study, and dealing with that distinction remains an epistemological reality for any scholar who undertakes such

theories. Here I recognize that there are inherent multiple modes of using the term and simply try to acknowledge that in practice what form of the term is used depends on the context.

Imagination, at its core, is a means of understanding lived reality and the possibilities that arise from it (Greene, 1995b). It is a form of thought and a concept of mind that is contingent, complex, and wholly constructed as a form of understanding better who we are, what we can and can't do, and how to locate ourselves in what we understand the world to be. Imagination, for all of its complexity, conflation, and uncertainty of meaning, suggests that humans have the capacity to understand their perception of their experiences in the world—what we might call “reality”—which then shapes perceptions about what we can and can't do. It is a continual process, shaped by experience, tethered by perception, and formed around individual narrative that constructs a sense of self-conception, of agency, and of possibility. Imagination, in this form, is often utilized as a means of forming understanding of both past and present conditions, and of describing the parameters of how and why future acts might occur. Such an orientation of imagination is intuitive, if slightly more refined than the creative sensibility on which the term is often predicated.

Imagination operates as a lens through which one might better understand the participants in the study, and one that enables me to deeply analyze how they come to know their day-to-day realities. Imagination, as I use it here, is an operation by which the participants in the study come to understand their world and shape their perceptions about what is and is not possible.

Imagination is simply the name that we give to the processes for which humans ascribe meaning to their highly contextual lives, and therefore is a way of accessing the manner in which they can operate within their world(s).

Fundamentally, the term *imagination* can be thought to work at the intersection of three parts: imagination as a noun describing a theoretical approach to understanding constituted possibilities, imagination as a noun describing a mental construct that resides in and is utilized by human beings in their lifeworlds (van Manen, 1990), and imagining as a verb that describes the acts therein (with other language variations of the term [e.g., imaginative, imagined, imaginable, imaginary] acting as descriptors of these ideations or processes). As a consequence, although there appears to be a cavalier appropriation of the terms related to imagination writ large, it is important to note that scholars who utilize those terms typically do so not to conflate terminology but rather to use terms in ways that more precisely articulate the issue being discussed.

For example, one might only look to some of the scholars whose work is featured prominently in this study. Frein (2007) spends a great deal of time looking at the historical representations of the term, including its treatment by Enlightenment and Romantic era thinkers, as well as more contemporary scholars such as Dewey, Greene, and Egan. In his study, Frein points out that Dewey is careful to use very specific language in and where he references imaginative acts. He notes that, “Dewey is careful about his use of words – using ‘image’, ‘imagery’, ‘image-making power’, and ‘imaginative’ more often than ‘imagination’” (Frein, 2007, p. 123). Greene (1995b) argues that imagination “permits us to give credence to alternative realities” (p. 3) and that the role of imagination is “to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (p. 28). In short, Greene’s usage of the term deeply associates imagination with the idea of possibility and conjures connotations of the promise of freedom and agency. Her usage of the term is something quite broader and includes associated words, like *image*, *imaginative*, or *imagined*, holistically within it. Although there are many ways to use the

term imagination, I wish to simply illustrate here that even using the base term *imagination* is problematic, not to mention making intellectual space for all of the associated terms that derive from it.

I find that the most clearly articulated description of each of these terms is derived from Casey's (2000) phenomenological study of imagination (see Appendix B: Table 1). Casey, in the development of his ideas, was particularly careful to describe the exact usages of the key terms associated with imagination. In doing so, he developed a series of ideas surrounding imagination that are particularly helpful in using the term(s) associated with imagination in a specific way that addresses particular mental operations. Consequently, my aim is effectively to allow readers to understand that when a term is used, it is used for a specific purpose and was selected intentionally. Casey's (2000) uses of the terms align most closely to how they are used within this study.

There are two scholars whose work primarily informs imagination within this study. The first, Maxine Greene, was influenced by progressive educator John Dewey and focused her attention on the necessity for opening spaces of aesthetic education. In this and other regards, she has appropriated imagination as a theoretical construct wherein an individual is invited "to regard things as if they could be otherwise" (1988, p. 45). Her use of imagination is predicated on the idea that what we know to be real is based on our interpretation of experience and that we are enabled to envision what is possible and unfamiliar (Greene, 1988; 1995b). Such a view, while not contrasted by, is somewhat different than the other scholar whose work plays a significant role in this study, Kieran Egan. Kieran Egan's scholarship varies across cultural, educational, and cognitive psychology domains, but focuses primarily on the role of imagination in education, particularly as it applies to the experiences of children. Egan argues that

“Imaginativeness is not a well-developed, distinct function of the mind, but is rather a particular flexibility which can invigorate all mental functions” (as cited in Takaya, 2007, p. 23) and as such, a person has the capacity to envision possibilities. Locating imaginativeness within education by way of learning to teach reminds us who have chosen to be teachers that our varied purposes and projects in becoming teachers are not simply there but constructed and contingent on our own biography. Greene (1978) captures that relationship:

There came a time, finally, when we began thinking about teaching as a way of spending our working lives. Like all other human beings, we could not but “future,” in some sense, think about what might be. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, our behavior is not only determined by our relation to “the real and present factors which condition it,” but by “a certain object, still to come, which it is trying to bring into being.” And Sartre went on to say, “This is what we call *the project*”...we are trying to become what we are not yet by acting on perceived deficiency, or on perceived possibility. (p. 26)

Formulating our purpose as a teacher in-becoming constitutes and is constituted by our learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Wideen et al., 1998), and the manner in which we imagine ourselves *as teacher* is reified by the narratives that we construct about our biographical experiences on which we formulate our sense of self, and by the sense of what possibilities might arrive out of solving the problem of “the project” such that it becomes embedded in our perceived sense of self, purpose, and role as teacher (Greene, 1973, 1978). Greene is particularly powerful in capturing a relationship between imagination and learning to teach in the evolution of the narratives that enable a teacher’s understanding of his or her craft. For the teacher in-becoming, the education is multifaceted, occurring at the university, in the field, from those within the educational communities that are encountered in learning to teach, and indeed, one’s

own range of experiences. Yet, although the teacher in-becoming is less likely to give credence to institutionalized learning obtained through formal teacher education (Lortie, 1975; Wideen et al., 1998) and the resulting “accretion of views, sentiments, and implicit actions...only partially perceived by the beginning teacher” (Lortie, 2002, p. xi) make invisible the dispositions cultivated in learning to teach, the education that provides both context and expertise for imagination to flourish is the same sort of education that is more likely to help make beginning practices visible and beginning teachers more willing to attempt a range of pedagogical alternatives in their practice (Lortie, 2002).

### **Terminology Used in the Study**

In making the determination to become a teacher, the imagination is fundamentally employed, not just in creating images or scenarios of life in front of the classroom, but also in the course of understanding the conditions of one’s life that permit such a career choice to be sought out at all. In imagining what it might be like to become a teacher, not just the individual’s perception must be taken into account, but also how that perception is manifest in the narratives that the individual creates that demarcate her known lifeworld (van Manen, 1990). Put another way, before a person ever decides the reasons why he becomes a teacher, and underlying any imagining about what being a teacher would be “like,” he creates narratives—stories, myths, ideations, and the like—that construct his understood reality. It is within such perceived reality that imagination operates to “tell” us what we can or cannot do, or what possibilities are available to us. Further, while it might then be argued that the questions relating to teacher education are more important than ever under those conditions, here too I argue that such studies would be preemptive until, as is the basis of this study, the perceived imagination by the individual is recognized and analyzed. A study that locates as its interrogatory lens from the



standpoint of teacher education is more concerned about the systems and messages that the institution constructs for its students; this study asks the opposite question: what messages, ideas, and experiences are perceived by the student teacher and how does that allow them to imagine their practice? The former seeks to understand the systems and conditions under which a student participates in learning to teach; the latter seeks to understand how the pre-service teacher experiences that lived reality.

**Imagination and teacher perception.** Imagination is, and perhaps always has been, a component of education, but often does not get the recognition as such. However, this study uses a narrow definition of imagination. By contrast, while there are many ways to interpret the relationship between imagination and education, how the term imagination is used tends to vary widely. It is difficult to draw the associations between education and imagination without falling into either the epistemological or logical traps that occur with historical representations of the term “imagination” (for a more detailed history of the term and its varied uses, see Frein, 2007), and to do so at this point in the discussion would be deleterious at best. Therefore, I will make every attempt to avoid such representations while trying to describe the most contemporary connections between the two terms. This section aims to draw attention to the forms under which imagination and education are linked, and how that helps situate this study.

Undergirding this study is a notion that to understand imagination and its impact on the way that teachers in-becoming use it to formulate their sense of what is, what is not, and what is possible in their teaching, the perception of the teacher in-becoming is sacrosanct. In effect, a teacher education program could explicitly state that a particular kind of teaching is the most beneficial form of teaching and both structure and model their program around that kind of teaching and it would be absolutely irrelevant if the student teacher perceived conditions counter

to that message. Further, in the course of a cooperating teacher or university supervisor's interactions with the student teacher, what ultimately matters is not what message is conveyed but rather what message is received by the student teacher, and more importantly, how that message is imagined. To be sure, both earlier forms of research I describe would be both interesting and useful to scholars of education (and might be essential for future research in imagination as it pertains to teachers in-becoming), but it needs to be stated clearly at the outset that such studies are only important if we first understand the manner in which imagination plays a role in the discourses constructed by the teacher in-becoming. Such is the aim of this study. By situating the perception of the participants as the basis of the study, I am better able to attend to the manifestations of imagination in the course of how they think about what is and isn't possible in their practice. Teachers in-becoming have undergone a cognitive shift where the past experiences of student teaching and the expectations of teaching to come converge with their perceptions of their past and present experiences, to create and temper the narratives about their teaching. The focus of this study is to try to understand how imagination plays a role in that cognitive process, and why the participants of the study understand their capacity to teach as they do.

**Framing participants in their learning to teach.** A second set of terminologies that needs to be addressed is what to call prospective teachers. Prospective teachers are referred to by a diverse and varied nomenclature. Sometimes they are called "interns," sometimes "student teachers," and sometimes even "pre-service teachers," among other titles. Sometimes student teaching is just that and sometimes it is learning to teach. I wish to be clear about how I am using these, and similar terms, throughout the study. While I recognize that each of these has its own theoretical identity, I believe that it is important to be as inclusive as possible with regards to the

process of becoming a teacher, at least as it pertains to the function and direction of this study. Since this study is ostensibly about understanding the way that teachers in-becoming imagine teaching at a very particular point in their teacher education, and in that orientation, does not attempt to make broad claims about teaching, teacher education, or learning to teach beyond the dimensions in which the participants in the study exist, I believe I have some leeway in situating the nomenclature that describes the participants in this study. In as such, readers will note that I will almost always use either the term “student teacher” or “pre-service teacher.” To maintain congruity, I occasionally will use the terms “student teacher” and “intern” interchangeably.

For purposes of clarity, I use nomenclature within this study in a generalized way. For example, the term “pre-service teachers” within this study denotes a prospective teacher who is not yet in service as a teacher, and might then be used interchangeably with “student teacher” or “intern.” Furthermore, references to “learning to teach” or “teacher education” will refer to aspects of the participants’ training. “Learning to teach” will reference all aspects of becoming a teacher, including the relationship that the participant has with others in the field, whereas “teacher education” will refer only to those institutional demands in which the participants partake as a function of their teacher education program.

### **In-Becoming as an Aspect of Learning to Teach**

Among the stages of learning to teach and/or teacher education that are most often described within educational research, two stand out as particularly important to this study. Being a teacher in-becoming means that you are situated between student teaching and the induction phase of teaching. Literature pertaining to “pre-service teacher learning,” is most often situated within a teacher education program and is comprised of the formal and informal learning processes and curricula undertaken by teacher education programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2012;

Putnam, Feiman-Nemser, & Calderhead, 2002; Wideen et al., 1998). The participants in this study had recently completed their teacher education programs, and therefore understanding this literature supports the phase of teaching known as in-becoming.

The participants of this study have not yet entered the induction phase of teaching. But as a researcher, I felt it important to attend to some literature pertaining to the induction phase as it refers to a teacher's first year (or first few years) teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Putnam, Feiman-Nemser, & Calderhead, 2002; Wideen et al., 1998), or the phase of teaching upon which the participants' imagined practice was situated. Although the participants had not yet entered this phase, because it is often marked by uncertainty, survival, limitations of knowledge and pedagogy, and regression to pedagogical strategies that are both authoritative and situated in traditional forms of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), all of which are also issues facing the teacher in-becoming, being attentive to those conditions in data analysis supports fidelity to the field. Still, many researchers describe this phase as both inevitable and necessary in the mastery of teaching. For example, Feiman-Nemser (2012) argues,

No matter how good a pre-service program may be, there are some things that can only be learned on the job. The pre-service experience lays a foundation and offers practice in teaching. The first encounter with real teaching occurs when beginning teachers step into their own classroom. Then learning to teach begins in earnest. (p. 119)

Feiman-Nemser advocates for strong system supports for teacher learning that will both ameliorate many of the negative conditions associated with induction, and will create more complex and dynamic learning environments for students (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Putnam, Feiman-Nemser, & Calderhead, 2002). Both the induction phase and pre-service teacher learning are indispensable to learning to teach, but there remains a gap—one I call “in-becoming.”

It is somewhere between the training practices of teacher education and the rigors of learning to teach in the induction phase where transition (and perhaps transformation) occur—the shedding of the label “student teacher” and assuming the self-identification as teacher—that this study seeks to investigate. Maxine Greene (1995b, p. 65) refers to the space the participants in this study occupy as living “in what we experience as an interlude between a lived past and what we conceive to be some future possibility,” not surprisingly heavily contingent with respect to our sense of identity and self. The teacher in-becoming lives in experiences that are demarcated by the narratives she creates about experiences and sense of self, learning to teach, and promise of autonomy, all of which is underscored by her profound desire to teach. Neither a novice nor an expert, neither a student nor a teacher, but the teacher in-becoming deeply understands how the process of learning to teach has changed her, and that she is still being changed. The teachers in this study live in an uncertain time, where becoming a teacher means learning to work under the regimes of evidence and standards in the so-called accountability movement, where imagination is de-emphasized and eschewed in favor of outcome-based best practices (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Greene, 1995b; Ravitch, 2007, 2010). The participants come to the study as teachers in-becoming, between the lived experiences of their teacher preparation and the hope that they possess for the possibility of fully wearing that badge: “I am a teacher.”

To be in-becoming is to demonstrate through one’s acts and identity a perception of attainment without the physical presence of doing so. It is both a noun and a verb, both a state and an act. To become is to come into being, and as a verb—an act—the process of coming into being is one demarcated by an alteration of state. To be in-becoming, a person moves from an earlier state to a newer one, often denoting a change from something less refined to something more robust. In this verb form, to be in-becoming denotes an active process in which the

individual is intricately, and perhaps intensely, engaged. To be in-becoming necessitates a condition wherein those for whom the act is undertaken maintain a degree of agency in their life experiences, if only in the formation of how they come to understand themselves within those experiences. It is a process that is presently underway. It denotes no ending, no beginning, and no state of actualization. It simply associates the act of becoming as one that a person is currently undergoing. All word play aside, this study makes the distinction that the participants are “in-becoming” because it reflects the true state in which they are presently learning to teach.

Teachers in-becoming, whose cognitive processes transform them from student to teacher, and whose experiences in learning to teach create a much different potentiality of and for teaching than of either the experienced teacher or the novice student teacher entering the classroom for the first time have unique imaginative qualities that drive their teaching. Even the most experienced of teachers theorizes teaching as a consequence of how he constructs meaning out of experiences in classrooms and with other teachers. How a young teacher, like Carothers in Mrs. Maxwell’s room, imagines his practice by making sense of, understanding, and forming narratives around the experiences that result from interactions in learning to teach form a foundation from which he draws in the course of his becoming of a teacher. The moments student teachers must be receptive to negotiate meanings within the context of those experiences are among the formative ways that they measure their learning to teach and formulate their identity<sup>2</sup> as a professional in the field.

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term “identity” here to denote the way that people construct who they are at a particular place and time (Gomez, Walker, and Page, 2000). As with Gomez, Walker, and Page (2000), it is noted that identity is not a fixed construction, but rather “nonunitary, evolves within the multiple, shifting contexts in which we live, and is produced within discourse...[where] the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which we find or locate ourselves play a key role in shaping how which of the available I’s which compose us are showcased at any particular moment.” (p. 1; footnote). It is for this reason that, although I will occasionally use the term “identity” in this way, I instead will use the term “forming a self-conception” more often in the rest of this study as it more clearly articulates the process and relationship between the self and the constructed sense of who a person is at a particular place and time.

## **Study Overview and Layout of Dissertation**

The study draws from interview data of five pre-service teachers, three women and two men, in a large Midwestern metropolitan area as they successfully completed their student teaching field experience. I analyzed these data using methods of interpretive practice (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Each of the participants was primarily a social studies teacher in his or her placement and completed an eight-month field placement teaching secondary students. In that placement, they assumed increasing classroom responsibility, eventually taking on all of the roles of the teacher as a lead teacher for up to 12 weeks prior to completing the program.

Two research questions frame this study:

1. How do teachers in-becoming, as a function of imagination, form narratives about their experiences that constitute meaning for their practice?
2. In what ways do teachers in-becoming use (or do not use) those meanings to imagine what is and is not possible in their practice as a consequence?

These research questions inform and are informed by the participants' construction of understanding of and about their experiences. I use these research questions to explore the effect of imagined teaching practices from the vantage point of the lived reality of the participants in the study during a phase of learning to teach that I refer to as teacher in-becoming. I am interested in the perceptions of teachers in-becoming at a moment in their learning to teach where they are experiencing a high level of transition. One might be overwhelmed by colloquialisms that describe that transition (e.g., "taking off the training wheels," "without a net," "setting the birds free," and on and on), but in any case, the transition from student to teacher is one that is marked by a high degree of change, one that is even formally celebrated. Thus, the

research questions that this study answers reflect the cognitive processes that demarcate that transition as well as my desire to fully understand how that experience is lived.

After this introductory chapter, chapter two provides a literature review of the relationship among imagination, becoming a teacher, and learning to teach. In that review, the concepts introduced here are given greater texture and situated within learning to teach.

Chapter three explains the methods and methodologies that employed in this study. Chapter three examines those processes with greater depth and positions the study within research method traditions. Each participant is also introduced with descriptive detail.

Chapter four addresses research question one, or how teachers in-becoming form narratives about their experiences, and how those as a function of imagination constitute meaning for their practice. Participants teaching is framed by the narratives they create about their experiences in learning to teach. Consequently, the messages that they receive help them imagine forms of teaching that are deeply embedded in both the metaphors that they create because of their experiences, which are often described by normative assumptions about what schools are and the participants' perceived role within them. Attributes of fear and lack of real contexts in which to situate their learning to teach are discussed.

Chapter five addresses research question two, or how teachers in-becoming use, or do not use, the meanings and narratives to determine what is and isn't possible in their teaching practice. It further explores the role that epiphanies and fears have on shaping their understanding of what is possible as teachers. The participants' self-described behavior—and by extension what they believe they can and cannot do as teachers—contributes to an understanding of the participants' self-conception as teachers, and the context of being a teacher in-becoming is analyzed.



Chapter six provides a discussion of the findings of the study in the context of the scholarship on teacher education and the field of education broadly focusing on the phenomenon of in-becoming and its relationship to imagination. This chapter grounds the findings of the study in the literature, as well as addresses areas for further research and the study's limitations. Implications for policy and practice and the educational significance of the study are addressed. In addition, the concept of vulnerability is posited as a disposition that can and should be implemented into teacher education in an effort to cultivate imaginative practices that support learning to teach.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to further develop our knowledge about what the relationship between imagination and a particular phase of learning to teach I refer to as being a teacher in-becoming, as well as how that imagination affects the practices of those who enter classrooms as teachers. Imagination is how we understand our realities. Imagination, as a human function, constructs the perceptions and narratives of experience under which the participants of the study understand reality and positions them to conceptualize what is and isn't possible. For the teachers in this study, they strive to understand themselves as teachers, to understand what teaching is and can be, and imagination is how they have delineated the boundaries of that reality.

At a time when American education is under intense public and political scrutiny and change (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Ravitch, 2010; Wilson, 2014), it is critical to better understand not just the vision of teaching that teachers in-becoming have of teaching and learning, but how they imagine themselves as teachers and purveyors of curriculum. As these are the teachers who will occupy our classrooms for the foreseeable future, I believe that it is imperative to fully appreciate the forms of education that dominate their

imagination, and what some of the consequences of those constructs might be. Therefore, this study is, or should be, of significance to anyone who is interested in very new teachers, those who I label “in-becoming,” and how they approach their practices. It should be of interest to those who are charged with the preparation of teachers, to school leaders who employ beginning teachers, to policy makers, and to teachers in-becoming themselves. This study is integral to the body of research on learning to teach as it builds on the concept of apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and addresses the experiences of pre-service teachers at a point where they have ostensibly completed their teacher education. Further, this study reinterprets the call that teacher education needs “research that uncouples the impact of preparation from that of teachers' entering characteristics” and “research that explores the interrelationships of teacher education strategies and arrangements” (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 302) by addressing those aspects of learning to teach through a theoretical lens of imagination and where learning to teach has a high degree of transition enables a better understanding of how the participants' lived reality operates to inform their everyday practice.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Being In-Becoming: Theoretical Strands of Learning to Teach and Imagination**

Everyone has some preconception of what constitutes imagination. It is an inexorable facet of our vernacular, and it is used regularly in everyday life to describe a variety of mental processes. The aim of this chapter, then, is to first clarify the lens for understanding imagination by laying a common foundational discourse for the purposes of this study, then situate its use in the body of research that seeks to understand the processes and dimensions of learning to teach. It is therefore helpful to begin with some thought experimentation (Rescher, 2005): imagine yourself speaking to someone who you think of as a teacher. The task is simple, if for no other reason, because we have the desire and capacity to imagine. We also have a human instinct to seek to understand our relationships with others, even those to whom we have been estranged, through imagining the manner and consequences of an event that is not imminently occurring. To imagine an interaction with someone who you think of as a teacher might be simple on its face, but questions abound upon even a cursory examination. Who is the person that you imagine? What is your relationship? Where were you? How did you communicate? Did you notice sensory details (sounds, scents, tactile perception)? Why did you think of that person (surely there is more than one person who you think of as a teacher)? What was the outcome of the imagined interaction? These questions, among so many others, begin to dominate the texture of that imagined scenario. The qualities that comprise the outcome of individual practice of the exercise, which is to say *what you imagined*, both characterize your understanding of the scenario that you envisioned and are also likely to be markedly different from the scenario envisioned by someone else. The practice of participating in the exercise isn't just about creating

an imaginary scenario, but must also have something to do with the qualities and character of that which you find worthy of imagining. The thought experiment originally so simple begins to grow in complexity.

The very idea about what even constitutes what you imagine in participating in this exercise is at question. Is the image you create just that, an image? Perhaps a fleeting image like a scene on a movie screen, observed from afar and with some degree of detachment? Or does the interaction that you imagine have a deeper and more realistic quality? It could be, in fact, that you imagine that you've met a family member in their home who is, or was, a teacher, perhaps one you were once close to, replete with the smells of food cooking the kitchen and the shafts of light streaking through heavy drapery in an otherwise dim room. It could be that you imagine an interaction that can never be, such as speaking with your favorite teacher growing up who died suddenly some time ago. In each of these and countless other cases, the means by which one even conceptualizes imagination is markedly different (Byrne, 2005; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Modell, 2003). In one case you invoke an imagination predicated purely on images, others in the use of sensory and meaning-making qualities, still others in seeking to construct possibilities. In whatever case, imagination as a conceptual frame operates differently depending on the context by which the individual operationalizes it. Our previously simple exercise, then, is anything but simple. It is marked by conceptual, epistemological, and consequential qualities that delineate its usage; it is in these qualities that one comes to terms with what imagination is and how it operates.

Ultimately, the outcome of deconstructing a simple exercise in invoking imagination is to illustrate that the conception of imagination is not unproblematic. If asked, "what is imagination?" one might very well have a tacit, even visceral, understanding of imagination in

practice. After all, given its predominance in everyday settings, imagination becomes the proverbial elephant in the room; a recognizable quality that is omnipresent and under- or mis-acknowledged in humans' everyday comings and goings. We might know instinctively that Picasso utilized imaginative qualities in painting *Guernica* (1937) just as we might understand the role that imagination plays in the athlete who is able to creatively apply her talents to win a game. Yet, to claim that we somehow “know” imagination is as problematic as it is superficial. The manner in which people generally operationalize the concept of imagination—at least in the colloquial sense—points to a significant problem that must be confronted first and foremost in this investigation: imagination is, at best, a contested term (Bailin, 2007; Frein, 2007).

Imagination is used differently by scholars and laypeople alike to represent a variety of mental capacities which operate similarly but with very different frameworks and outcomes. The consequence of this is that the term—and all the similar forms of the term along with it—is rendered intellectually erratic and effectively subjective in its usage. There continues to be great variety among scholars' interpretations of what is meant by “imagination.” Sutton-Smith (1988) identifies at least seven different ways that imagination has been erroneously appropriated by scholars, philosophers, and artists across human history. Among these, each seemingly more problematic than the next, includes the idea that imagination operates as an irrelevant, playful state of mind. Stevenson (2003) teases out a full 12 variations on the use of the term, each assuming a different aspect of how imagination operates. Finally (or rather, not so finally), Gendler (2011) in his article for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* details a range of philosophical applications of imagination on and in scholarly research comprising no fewer than 24 subsections of the chapter, each discussing a different aspect of imagination. This list of uses only touches on the uses found in scholarly settings. Not surprisingly, given the range of topics,

there is very little overlap among these, and what there is tends to be concentrated on the uses of imagination where fantasy, fiction, and thinking of mental images are the dominant components. Even so, it must be acknowledged that to effectively work with imagination as a theoretical construct some narrowing of focus is essential to avoid an atmosphere where scholars attempt to communicate with one another about imagination from fundamentally divergent stances on what constitutes it, lest it lead to axiological confusion in operationalizing the term(s). In this literature review, the following sections will constitute the empirical and theoretical foundation upon which this study is constructed. First, I will explore the relationship between imagination, learning to teach, and the phase of learning to teach I call in-becoming. Then I will lay a theoretical foundation for the relationship between lived experience and imagination, focusing first on Dewey's contributions in their historical context, and then a deeper exploration of imagination and its constituent parts. I will then return to the concept of imagination and its relationship with the teacher in-becoming by exploring the concepts of possibility and boundaries as an aspect of imagining in becoming a teacher. Finally, I will discuss becoming a teacher in the context of learning to teach.

### **The Teacher In-Becoming, Imagination, and Learning to Teach**

It's helpful here to deviate from a much deeper discussion of imagination to locate this study within learning to teach, and to address how the concept of a teacher in-becoming is an important set of cognitive processes that facilitate transitions at a particular point in the process of learning to teach. In addition, having that discussion first supports understanding for the purposes of making the rest of the discussion about imagination anchored in a more concrete milieu, especially given the propensity for theories of imagination to be deeply theoretical, esoteric, and too often abstracted.

**Imagination and the teacher in-becoming.** The cognitive processes associated with being in-becoming in learning to teach allows teachers in-becoming to imagine themselves at a unique point “between past and future” (Greene, 1995a) in that they have completed the requirements of their teacher education programs—and consequently self-identify as teachers—but have yet to be deployed into the everyday rigors of being classroom teachers (Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). For whatever their experience in their student teaching field placement, teachers in-becoming were always, to some degree, protected from the full responsibilities and realities of teaching (Britzman, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Glass, 2012; Hong, 2010; Sydnor, 2014). Even those who, by request or by requirement, assumed the myriad duties of being a teacher in “an age of accountability” (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Montgomery, 2012), there were always formal and informal barriers to the realities of being a teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2016; Feiman-Nemser, 2012), and numerous ways that teaching was situated as a technocratic task rather than a craft. Sometimes it was simply not being the teacher of record, while in other cases it was not being an integral part of broader school initiatives, such as school improvement teams, parent-teacher councils, and matters to which a union attends; teachers in-becoming have been largely shielded from some of the more stressing realities of what it means to be a teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, teaching is center stage in broad social contexts of teaching and schooling, whether dealing with the technocratic realities of the so-called accountability movement (Darling-Hammond, 2010, 2013; Day, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Montgomery, 2012; Ravitch, 2007, 2010), the increased pressures that create contradictions and sometimes insurmountable challenges for teachers (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Day, 2013), and the policies that have contributed to the narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy, overworking teachers, and

diminishing the sense of professional satisfaction that leads to attrition and very good teachers leaving the profession (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Flores, Carvalho, & Ferreira, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Issues associated with teacher education add further texture to the cognitive processes where imagination and being in-becoming converge. Whether it is in the complex network of forms of teacher education and the consequences of their implementations in the field (Britzman, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2016; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Wilson, 2014), or the “power differentials [that] create special problems for the interns” (Danielewicz, 2001, p.37) where they must negotiate the authority and institutional history of their mentor teachers, and still develop authority to be teachers in their placements (Cooper & He, 2012; Cuenca, 2011; Zeichner, 2002), or in the perspectives of important skills and dispositions to convey, learn, and master in learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Glass, 2012; McLean, 1999). Still, there is profound agency in developing the self-conception of being a teacher that is a hallmark of being a teacher in-becoming. “In treating someone who wishes to be a teacher *as* a teacher (even though he or she is not yet), we acknowledge and reinforce the claim, making it more and more real for the individual” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 39) and in that act the formation of self as a teacher is both sustained and given a space for development. For that to occur, the lived experiences, contexts of experiences, and how those are perceived and translated into pedagogies have a demonstrable impact on how and why young teachers develop as they do (Britzman, 2003; Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

For my own part, I believe Greene (1995a) encapsulates this dynamic best, and helps lay the foundation of what a teacher in-becoming faces in this way:



Everything depends on the ways in which individuals *experience* what lies around them.

It is not a matter of conceiving the surrounding society as a system of impersonal or invisible forces working upon them, raising obstacles, determining from outside what they can do. It is rather a way of being in the world as someone reaching toward community, trying to understand, feeling interest and concern. And it may be part of the practice of a teacher to open the door to this way of being in the world. (p. 69)

Being a teacher in-becoming is about experiencing a cognitive shift in one's development as a new teacher where she has successfully navigated the pitfalls and emotional vacillations of the student teaching experience to emerge as an approximation of an experienced teacher, with experiences and a self-conception as a pedagogue (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). At the same time, the realities—the benefits and responsibilities alike—that come with having your own room and a job as a teacher are still elusive. They are close, and they create an anticipation for the next phase of their career, but they are not yet come to fruition. This creates a unique space in which to imagine what is and isn't possible as a teacher, and produces an architecture for considering one's practice that is unlike any other phase of learning to teach.

**Education and imagination.** It is necessary at this point to turn to a more general discussion of the relationship between education and imagination. To be sure, being a teacher in-becoming occupies a unique phase of learning to teach, but understanding why that is the case can only be discerned in relation to and with broader discussions of education, teacher education, and imagination. By incorporating this concept throughout the text below will offer a greater degree of clarity and better situate this study.

Fettes (2005) attempts to address the link between teacher education and imagination in a structural way in discussing an approach to imaginative education conducted at Simon Fraser University. In that model, Fettes describes how a teacher certification program utilized teaching strategies that attempted to elicit creative pedagogical methods within classrooms, but also how those methods enabled teacher candidates to imagine themselves as teachers as a result. Significantly from Fettes' work is the acknowledgement that "the process of becoming a teacher and aiding others to become teachers, is in part a journey of imaginative development" (p. 3). He argues that the process of learning to teach might require that teacher candidates explicitly work with the concept of imagination to "transform" what is possible in their teaching. While his initial work arrives at no conclusions on this topic, I think that what is clear is that the relationship between education and imagination is as influential in the process of becoming a teacher as it is for a K-12 student in a classroom. By conceptualizing the student teacher aspects of learning to teach as a student learning process, imagination then becomes central to that process in the same way as it does for students of every ilk. A student teacher is a student, attending to learning the qualities, skills, and dispositions of the craft of teaching, and is therefore engaged in the educative process. It is not surprising that this process is most often referred to as learning to teach, since there are inherent educative qualities of learning associated with becoming a teacher.

Locating imaginativeness within education by way of learning to teach reminds us who have chosen to be teachers that our varied purposes and projects in becoming teachers are not simply there but constructed and contingent on our own biography. Greene (1978) captures that relationship:

There came a time, finally, when we began thinking about teaching as a way of spending our working lives. Like all other human beings, we could not but “future,” in some sense, think about what might be. As Jean-Paul Sartre as written, our behavior is not only determined by our relation to “the real and present factors which condition it,” but by “a certain object, still to come, which it is trying to bring into being.” And Sartre went on to say, “This is what we call *the project*.”...we are trying to become what we are not yet by acting on perceived deficiency, or on perceived possibility. (p. 26)

Formulating our purpose as a teacher in-becoming constitutes and is constituted by our learning to teach, and the way we imagine ourselves *as teacher* is reified by both the narratives that we construct about our biographical experiences on which we formulate our sense of self, but also by the sense of what possibilities might arrive out of solving the problem of “the project” such that it becomes embedded in our perceived sense of self, purpose, and role as teacher. Greene’s capture of this moment is particularly powerful in conceptualizing a relationship between imagination and education as it pertains to learning to teach because it states very plainly the evolution of the sorts of narratives that enable a teacher’s understanding of his or her craft. Thus, in learning to teach, like education generally, the absence of a locatable school does not diminish the need for learning, becoming educated, in order to imagine one’s place as a teacher. For the teacher in-becoming, the education is multifaceted, occurring at the university, in the field, from those within the educational communities that are encountered in learning to teach, and indeed, one’s own range of experiences.

Egan begins his 1992 *Imagination in Teaching and Learning: Ages 8-15* with the following statement: “It seems generally agreed that imagination is a good thing and that it ought to be stimulated and developed in education” (p. 1) which continues a line of thinking that has

historically drawn a connection between education and imagination since at least the time of Socrates (Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Egan, Stout, & Takaya, 2007; Frein, 2007; Greene, 1995b). The idea that imagination, in all of its various forms, is somehow directly linked to the concept that humans need to learn in order to develop and that learning might be formalized within schools has been nurtured in many forms across the centuries. Indeed, we know that schools have taken a variety of forms across time and have incorporated myriad methods in helping children achieve educational purposes. Among all those forms, depending on the time and orientation of the schooling, the degree to which imagination is made central to that purpose vacillates in its various forms. Put plainly, it appears that imagination has some connection to education, but that connection is only as tacit or overt as it is made within the discourse of the schooling, and those discourses vary widely.

Imagination is, and perhaps always has been, a component of education, but may not get the recognition as such. Centering the present discussion, however, is that the form of imagination this study is concerned with is one that is narrowly defined. By contrast, those who would invoke the use (or name) of imagination, especially in educational contexts, vary widely in their use of the term. It is difficult to draw the associations between education and imagination without falling into either the epistemological or logical traps that occur with historical representations of the term “imagination.” Therefore, I will make every attempt to avoid confusion while trying to describe the most contemporary connections between the terms imagination and education.

Imagination is often under-recognized as having the capacity for enhancing and providing value in educational contexts (Egan & Nadaner, 1988), and “not some desirable but dispensable frill, but that it is at the heart of any truly educational experience” (p. ix). Underlying

that is the belief that imagination has the capacity to help individuals place order on/in their known world. In effect, these (and other) theorists place a high value on the role of imagination and imagining in educational discourses.

Frein (2007) examines the various historical-social aspects of the way the term imagination has been used to draw conclusions about its necessity in educational contexts. Romantic thinkers are largely responsible for discourses of education and children in which the concept of imagination is saturated (p. 117). These thinkers, for lack of a better word, romanticized the childhood experience and celebrated the individuality of the child (Egan, 1988; Frein, 2007). Consequently, imagination became closely tied to creative acts, and was situated not in educational processes but rather as fiction and play that lacks credence in many forms of schooling (Sutton-Smith, 1988). However, Frein (2007) claims that imagination in education is something akin to a phoenix rising from the ash—a great death and rebirth of a concept that provides credence to educational endeavors and opens spaces where education might reach its highest functions. What we call education, and what we value as a function of education, requires that humans make sense of their experiences in their world to situate new forms of knowledge. In that way, education and imagination may very well be inexorably linked.

Imaginative acts, like educational values, are highly contingent and determined by social, cultural, and historical conditions. Imagination in the context of schooling requires one to be attentive to the social, cultural, and historical contingencies, if for no other reason than schooling is where these associations are both reified and constructed (Takaya, 2007). Consequently, imagination becomes the mechanism by which one comes to terms with one's place in social contexts. Recalling Dewey's (1938) statements about the relationship between education and experience, because schools are places where education formally takes place, they also dictate to

students what constitutes school, schooling, and learning. Schools, and the educational endeavors of which they partake, then become a primary location where students come to imagine the structural and relational mini-societies that are constructed under the heading “school.”

Schools are not the only formal places of learning. Ostensibly when one speaks of school, one also speaks of education; when one speaks of education, one must be “schooled.”

Imagination, however, addresses these ideas somewhat differently. Learning might take place in educational settings such as schools, but might also be found in one’s experiences with the world writ large (Dewey, 1934; Dewey, 1938; Greene, 1995b). Consequently, education takes on a much more dynamic quality, one where the context of the school itself is one function of perception, but that one’s place and self-conception outside of schools is equally educative.

When it comes to imagination, education will include the totality of experiences in and out of school, present and past, whereas when we imagine school, and its verb form schooling, we denote the forms of education that are formalized within the walls of the place we know to be school. There is a tacit relationship between imagining and education that underlies understanding, whether it be in the capacity of forming new knowledge or in the construction of narratives that describe our experience. Greene (1995b, p. 25) describes the relationship as: “the point of acquiring learning skills and the rudiments of academic disciplines, the tricks of the educational trade, is so that they may contribute to our seeing and the naming.” Imagination requires one to continually form new knowledge in order to adequately name and construct meaning of that which we imagine. Only through that process of learning, knowing, naming, and imagining can we attribute meaning in and for that which we both experience and learn. Such a tacit connection between education and imagination both aligns with, and continues a tradition in Western education (Takaya, 2007, p. 39).

**Imagination in the context of becoming a teacher.** I freely acknowledge that coming to terms with imagination and how it's used to understand perceived realities and experiences for the teacher in-becoming can become a tedious venture; I'd like to avoid that. Thus far, I have only established that imagination is a highly recognizable idea, is a major function of being human, is a complex and problematic term, and has close ties to how humans understand education, learning, and schooling. Therefore, the rest of this chapter I will devote to attempting to clarify *what* imagination is, *how* it relates to education and learning to teach, and *why* it's important to understanding what it means to be a teacher in-becoming. Because answers to those questions conceptually overlap rather promiscuously, I will attempt as much clarity and organization as these topics can withstand.

Narrative construction, or storytelling, is not a new discursive practice in teacher education. It is formalized in our teacher education courses as assignments, a function of good field instruction that helps emerging teachers formulate sense-making of their day-to-day practice, and is an integral aspect of learning from more experienced teachers whom beginning teachers seek to emulate. "Stories provide a vehicle by which to problematize beginning teachers' interpretations, and gradually help them question the adequacy of their views..." (McLean, 1999, p. 82). For teachers in-becoming, the primary trove of experiences from which to draw in describing what they value and understand about teaching comes from their learning to teach field experiences (Britzman, 2003; Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; McLean, 1999; Sydnor, 2014). But those stories—the narratives created about the experiences that they have—tend to be inchoate and fictive. They are generated about a time and a place that resides in memory, and described in a way that is intended to shape perspicacity about what they are experiencing (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001). In other words, the

stories they tell are not simply just-the-facts retellings of what happened, but like the histories the teachers in this study are charged with retelling, are told to structure a series of events in a way that helps illuminate the unique experience that an individual has in becoming a teacher. It is a construction of self, designed to assimilate a host of moments into a narrative, and as a narrative help the teacher in-becoming construct a sense of self within the realities that he or she reside (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; McLean, 1999). But when we recognize those narratives of experience as constructions of self-conception are mediated by social and cultural contexts, we move to push back against our tendency to “reinforce static, predetermined, and resolved versions of our selves and work” (Miller, 1998, p. 151).

Of course, not all experiences are the same, nor should we think about experiences as linear in nature. Put another way, experiences do not occur as one after another after another after another, and so on until we die. We do not live a life where every experience is the same and where we are continually creating bold narratives of every moment that we breathe. Rather, lived experience has the marked characteristic where some experiences are more significant to us, some less, and we come to know that significance based on both how we’ve come to know previous experiences and whether there are elements of the experience which we perceive as particularly important to us (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1995b). Rather having *an* experience has specific qualities and those qualities are what help us understand our relationship to the world. “For Dewey, life is a collection of histories, each with their own plots, inceptions, conclusions, movements and rhythms” (Leddy, 2016). An experience is both conscious and instructive for how we perceive ourselves in our social worlds. Dewey (1934) explains:

...all *conscious* experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of the live creature with



its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new with the old *is* imagination... (p.283)

Choosing an experience upon which a narrative or meaning is constructed occurs organically, and is always held in the context of how an individual perceives himself in his reality (Cooper & He, 2012; Glass, 2011; Sydnor, 2014). In Dewey's (1938) argument about the relationship between education and experience for students, schools are places where education formally takes place. They also dictate to students what constitutes school, schooling, and learning. School is where students come to understand what "school" is. For the teacher in-becoming, "school" is a place where they come to understand new identities as a teacher, but also one where they understand themselves as a learner. It is a paradox of where they're located in their learning to teach, where their self-conception is dependent on a dialectic of identification, one where they define themselves in ways that signal the emerging identity of teacher, but also bolstered by those who signal that they *are* teachers (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 39). "Although they're not clear exactly about what being a teacher entails, they are aware that the decision to teach may have significant ramifications not only on what they do as adults but on the sort of person they become" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 47). The choices that teachers in-becoming make about the experiences upon which to form narratives have everything to do with how they see themselves as teachers now—after they've survived student teaching, but before they have anywhere else in which to situate their understanding of being a teacher.

The teacher in-becoming forms narratives in and about his or her experiences, and the way that he or she understands the versions of self that are engaged in the work as a teacher operate to reinforce his or her understanding of teaching in this unique phase of teacher education (Cooper & He, 2012). The narratives are imaginative, and their significance is determined in the way the teacher in-becoming thinks of his practice as a consequence. Whether it is telling a story about an experience or, as in the case of many of the participants in the study, describing the boundaries by which he or she works—and the significance of the work with and for students—the framing of the ecosystem of teaching as it is understood is an operation of imagination. This is not to suggest that a teacher in-becoming is conjuring fantasy in the retelling, but rather that he or she is actively fashioning a storyline, one that takes the elements of experiences and provides a backdrop upon which to set values as a human and as a teacher. Through imagining, the teacher in-becoming can articulate a dynamic conception of self as a teacher within the perceived realities of experience; a fictive act that is central to their transition from student teacher to teacher.

### **Dewey, Experience, and Imagination in their Socio-Historical Context**

**Imagination in its historical context.** Among scholars for whom imagination is a central construct or emphasis of study, there is a growing consensus that term is applied too broadly to apply to a simple taxonomy (Gendler, 2011). While some scholars of imagination ascribe to Western philosophical traditions, particularly as they have been influenced by Romantic Era thinkers<sup>3</sup>, the term has been equally applied to those who consider its implications in a variety of

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<sup>3</sup> I understand that the usage of the term “Romantic” (along with other labels representative of particular eras of thinking) is inherently problematic and wish to express that I’m using the term in a limited fashion only to express the general qualities of a group of thinkers. I agree with Frein (2007, p. 23) who argues that the term Romantic is “the best word we have for a group of writers, artists, and poets of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries who shared, on the most general level, certain subject matter interests and a certain philosophical and literary heritage. Close

other fashions (Sutton-Smith, 1988; Casey, 2000; Egan, 2007, Frein, 2007; Gendler, 2011). As Stevenson (2003, p. 238) so aptly put it, “the topic sprawls promiscuously over philosophy of mind, aesthetics, ethics, poetry, and even religion.” Given the propensity of imagination to “sprawl promiscuously” it is not surprising that arriving at a particular usage is so elusive. In his phenomenological study of imagination, Casey (2000) distinguishes between the treatment of imagination in psychology and its treatment in philosophy. This distinction has particular importance because in distinguishing between the two categorizations of imagination is it clear that there are fundamentally divergent underlying structures depending on the convention. This allows us to honor without taking up the project of psychological applications of imagination such as Vygotsky (2004, pp. 9-10), who said, “imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike...the entire world of human culture, as distinct from the world of nature, all this is a product of human imagination and of the creation based on this imagination.” To be sure, the present study is more interested in the philosophical ramifications of imagination. According to Casey (2000, p. 14) “it [imagination] suffers from...two sorts of mistreatment: confusion with apparently allied acts such as memory, fantasy, and hallucination; and denial of importance.” Any study that places imagination at the center of study must then contend with not only with assumptions about the meaning of imagination that might derive from other intellectual traditions, but also how one might utilize earlier thinking on the concept to render meaning from what is otherwise meaningless across domains. Unlike Casey who contends a certain degree of futility, I am more optimistic on this point.

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scrutiny of any period distinction in intellectual history usually leads to the collapse of those period distinctions and the generalizations about similarity between work of individuals within those periods.”

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two traditions most prominently had addressed imagination and did so in such divergent ways that it caused fundamental issues with the term itself.

Enlightenment thinkers thought about imagination in one way, focusing on the relationship between perception and experience, and later Romantic thinkers thought about imagination in a completely different way, focusing on emotive and generative aspects of the term. This ultimately created a void that served to alienate people interested in studying imagination from one another. The consequence of the incongruity between those thinkers effectively enabled people to characterize and use the concept of imagination imprecisely, further intensifying the disconnect.

Entering into the Progressive era in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Post-Romantic thinkers attempted to bridge that chasm by rethinking the way in which imagination might act in our lived experience. They chose to address areas of agreement between the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions as well as by turning their attention to an undertheorized aspect of imagination: the role of possibility (Frein, 2007). It was a philosopher of education who made the first inroads in reconstructing a meaningful use of the concept that was not only intellectually rigorous, but accessible to scholars and lay folk alike.

**Dewey's imagination.** In Dewey's seminal 1934 work *Art as Experience*, he developed a theory of imagination that is predicated on its relationship to experience. Operating from a pragmatic point of view, which is interested in not just the conditions of experience, but also the consequences of the array of choices that stem from experiences (Cherryholmes, 1999), Dewey attempts to reconstruct an operational use of the term imagination that can be utilized not just in the aesthetic sphere but also in individuals' day to day lives. Understanding Dewey's imagination begins by understanding that when one has an experience that experience occurs

with relation to previous experiences. Not unlike Kant's (2008) earlier claim that experiences construct concepts on which new understanding takes place, in Dewey's form of imagination, experiences do not exist in discontinuity to each other. However, it is the rather subtle distinction that Dewey later makes in *Education and Experience* (1938) regarding experience that makes his construction of imagination particularly intriguing. According to Dewey (1938), what constitutes an experience more clearly is that it includes two criteria: continuity, that every experience modifies or impacts all future experiences, and interaction, that every past experience relates with the unique qualities of present circumstances to give meaning to experiences. Put plainly, to understand the world, the person having the experience assimilates new with old experiences in order to make meaning.

Dewey distinguishes experiences from an experience. For Dewey, all humans have a range of experiences, or some form of understanding and/or knowledge that is derived from interacting with one's reality, but that not all experiences are the same. Some experiences have a greater effect on a person than others. Greene (1988, p. 49) reminds us that for Dewey, the imagination acted as a "gateway" through which meaning about our lives is derived from the way previous experiences, experiences that are somehow significant, are filtered through present experiences. To that end, then, Dewey's connection of imagination to an experience—one that carries significance and meaning—conveys meaning in our lives.

All experience, even that which seems to have no conscious significance, is in part imaginative. Dewey's use of experience with respect to imagination is important to understanding how he argues the imagination functions as a meaning making structure of mind. Reflecting on Dewey's "gateway" metaphor, Greene (1995b, p. 20) clarifies his point that "it is against the backdrop of those remembered things [experiences] and the funded meanings to

which they gave rise, that we grasp and understand what is now going on around us.” To appreciate the world and to construct narratives of understanding for our relationship to our conscious reality, Dewey (and with no small amount of clarification on Greene’s part) assert that experiences—those remembered things—and the multitude of temporal bearings within them are those which help us orient ourselves in the world and give meaning to what we presently know and are engaged in. It is those *remembered* things that give our lives meaning. Yet, Dewey doesn’t suggest that it is necessarily only conscious memory that defines the imagination’s capacity, at least not how we typically think about the term “conscious” as a readily accessible cognitive function. Rather, he reminds us that experience becomes an act of imagination when meaning is ascribed to that experience:

...all *conscious* experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of the live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new with the old *is* imagination...all conscious perception involves a risk; it is a venture into the unknown, for as it assimilates the present to the past it also brings about some reconstruction of that past. (Dewey, 1934, p. 283, emphasis in original)

The problem is that we may not consciously ascribe meaning to an experience. Indeed, there may very well be unconscious meaning ascribed to events that are not at the forefront of memory.

The terms “intentional” and “unintentional” might be more helpful here. If we equate the term “intentional” to “conscious” and “unintentional” to “unconscious” then there appears to be

a much more cogent parallel of Dewey's use of experience as it pertains to imagination. Whereas, intentional meaning-making of an experience constitutes an imaginative act, so too does an unintentional meaning-making of an experience. Both intentional and unintentional meaning-making, because they are conscious in that they constitute a perceptive act of humans' sensory interactions with his environment (Dewey, 1934) also constitute what Dewey would call *conscious* imaginative acts. The aforementioned "remembered things" might not actually be remembered in the intentional sense but rather act as previous perceptions wherein both intentional and unintentional aspects of understanding experience act to construct a meaningful narrative about how those experiences occurred, how to understand them, and how the individual might use them to better understand new perceptive experiences.

A second aspect of Dewey's work with imagination calls attention to the lived experience of the individual. For Dewey (1934, 1938), experience always occurs within a particular perspective as interpretation is situated within the unique association of contexts (culture, power, relationships, etc...) of each individual. Thus, experience encourages both the individual and that which is being interacted with to intermingle, and from that interaction derive and construct new meanings in and about our perception and orientation to the world. The interaction with experience is at once both associated with meaning-making for the present, but also then in deriving what we perceive as possible for future actions given the way that we understand the world based on those meanings. Here the distinction between experiences and an experience becomes central. Dewey would recognize that through the social interactions with the lived world of the individual, both experiences (or, the interactions of the world that intentionally and unintentionally give rise to funded meanings about that world) and an experience (or, an interaction of the individual with the perceptual world for which the individual ascribes both

salient and meaningful connotations of the experience) ultimately participate to construct a narrative around what is perceptually possible and impossible given present circumstances. For the former, experiences, because they possess continuity and interaction, create a texture on which to measure that experience. For the latter, an experience, defined by the same qualities of continuity and interaction, operate as salient measures on which to base choices, action, and meaning for a given lived situation. In both cases, for Dewey, the lived experience of the individual is the central mitigating factor in how an individual perceives a given lived experience, the function of which is to orientate one's relationship to (the) experience.

**Dewey's legacy on imagination in the teaching context.** In its continuous qualities, prior experience creates the conditions of perception and understanding the present one(s) and situates what is possible given the bounds of their individual contexts. Perception, then, is paramount. In perception of how one will interact with a situation given the role of past experiences, the capacity to imagine becomes highly contextual, relying on one's ability to negotiate and interpret past experiences against the backdrop of the present conditions in the interactive qualities of the experience(s). Simultaneously, the individual must bring both affective and cognitive domains to bear on the temporality of the present. From a Deweyan perspective, the act of making meaning of the present as contingent upon the old is a significant aspect of imagination. Imaginative acts become constituted acts. It involves risk as acting imaginatively within a given context will no doubt force the individual to reorder and to rewrite the narratives already constructed of experiences had with relation to the new experiences to be encountered. To do so requires one to operate in an intersection where what is understood presently must coalesce with the possibilities that arise from present circumstances (Greene, 1985).



In order to understand *what* imagination is and *how* it operates in the day-to-day lives of teachers in-becoming, this section identified the relationship between imagined realities, or how we understand the world around us, and the role that experiences play in developing the architecture upon which we construct narratives about our realities. Dewey's influence on that lived encounter cannot be understated. When meanings are constituted by lived experiences, we have the ability to describe our perceptual reality. This gives humans both the language and conceptual framework for understanding not only what imagination is, but how it operates in our lives.

### **Imagination, Imaging, and Image**

Further discussion of imagination must be mitigated with how humans create images. Images, and our ability to create mental images, lies at the core of how imagination has traditionally been studied. Indeed, the use of images in imagination to some degree might be unavoidable (Bailin, 2007) since they are so typically associated with imaginative acts. Nadaner (1988) goes even further by suggesting that the mental images is the plausible basis for imagination and focusing on that relationship helps to demystify imagination (p. 198). Images are a central component of how imagination is typically thought. As intuitive as the conjuring of images might seem, there is some degree of complexity in how it actually operates.

Casey (2000, p. 41) argues that imaging cannot exist in a sense-neutral form, but rather that imaging always occurs with respect to the inclusion of multiple forms of sense perception, including those we might refer to as "sense modalities" such as taste, sound, color, texture, or smell. Arnheim takes this idea further by drawing the connection between perception and image (as cited in Nadaner, 1988). "The image is never a complete record of perceived reality...yet it appears complete to the subject because it contains the features that are relevant to the subject"

(Nadaner, 1988, p. 199). In creating a mental representation, that we might otherwise call a mental image, or more colloquially “an image,” the representation of the image is not in the image itself, but rather lies in the significance that we place on the image that we’ve formed. As Sartre (1991) states,

An image is nothing else than a relationship. The imaginative consciousness I have of Peter is not a consciousness of the image of Peter: Peter is directly reached, my attention is not directed on an image, but on an object. (p. 8)

When a teacher in-becoming imagines a person or place, like their classroom, her attention is not directed at the image of the person or place, but in the consciousness that she maintains of her relationship to and with that person or place. Thus, the mental image that she’s created is understood, and signified, only through that lens, wherein the perception of the imager reigns supreme.

Imaging requires not only the formation of mental images, but that those images are intricately and inexorably tied to sensory data (Casey, 2000), experiences (Dewey, 1934), and affective mental domains wherein images are linked to feelings and meaning (Bailin, 2007; Egan 1992). However, Egan (2007) and others (e.g. Stout, 2007) situate the act of imagining and its relationship to imaging within both affective and cognitive domains. That is, how we think about an image as well as how we feel about it, have a profound effect on a person’s capacity to imagine. For some (Egan, 1988; Egan, 1992) this implies that there is an integral affective component to mental imagery that ties it to imagination. In discussing the relationship of image to oral cultures, Egan (1988) points to the propensity of images to conjure within mental states affective “mental worlds charged with vividness and emotional intensity” (p. 117) of which the concept of image is intractable. These cultures are far more entrenched in the affective

relationship to imaging (Egan, 2007) but it is the capacity to conjure rich imagery that reifies the perceptions and ideation that is possessed in imaging. This reliance on mental imagery points to a special degree of efficacy in human thought to substitute symbolically and wholly more interpretative means of understanding the subject of imaging than is possible utilizing purely language-based methods of understanding (Shepard, 1988). It is at least partly through the use of mental images that humans are able to orient our perceptions, and to construct meaning based on sensory and affective relationships to what is imaged. Imaging then takes the form of accessing mental representations, but only to the extent that those representations have already attached connotations of meaning associated with them based on the earlier perceptions and experiences of the imager.

The concept of mental image, and the concurrent act of imaging, is both conceptually and pragmatically limited. If this mode of thinking about mental images is true, then mental images are only meaningful to the extent that we place meaning upon them based on our perceptions, our experiences, and the feelings that we associate with them. Images, and the act of imaging, does not exist in and of itself, but is instead tied to the manner in which we imagine a relationship between the image and meaning, or at the very least in the way that we imagine a relationship between the image as a representation of reality and the manner in which we understand reality itself. To that end, imaging can only go so far. Even in the act of creating mental images of creatures or scenarios that deviate sharply into the realm of fiction, those mental images only exist to the extent that the imager places significance upon them.

Furthermore, there are several other forms of imagination that don't have a close relationship to or with mental imagery, including "imagining-that" and "imagining-how" (Casey, 2000, p. 42, 44), description and generativity (Bailin, 2007), and introspective reports of non-

verbal processes (Shepard, 1988). While mental images might be, to some extent, unavoidable in imagining (Bailin, 2007), the degree to which they have any effect or influence can only be based on the meanings that the imagination associates with them in the first place. Images, mental images, and imaging, while powerful acts, do not, and cannot, encompass the range of narratives, emotions, forms of perception, and understanding that are manifest in imagination. Rather, like rich, descriptive imagery in a poem, aid to give imagination texture and condition, rather than representing writ large and being conflated with imagination.

The role of imagination in the way that the pre-service teacher constructs narratives around, ascribes meaning to, and conceptualizes—perhaps envisions—him or herself as “a teacher” has a profound effect on the way that experiences are understood (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Greene, 1978, 1995a, 1995b; Segall, 2002). Consider for a moment the hypothetical teacher in-becoming that I described earlier. Her reality was built upon images of herself as a teacher, and those images were given texture and condition by the meanings that she created in and about them. Her image of her future classroom wasn’t based in an actual reality. She would have no idea what her classroom would structurally consist of, let alone where the classroom would be geographically. Yet, her image of her classroom is structurally founded on her experiences in every other classroom she has experienced as both a student and teacher, and conceptually founded on the meanings she has attributed to those images and the underlying philosophies about what her self-conception of a teacher is based upon. As Greene (1995b) suggests, “imagination may be our primary means of forming an understanding of what goes on under the heading of “reality”; imagination may be responsible for the very texture of our experience” (p. 140). I draw on the conception of imagination as a kind of “flexibility of mind” (Egan, 1992; Bailin, 2007; Takaya, 2007) wherein individual

experiences, contexts, and perceptions are located in the ideation and generativity of new possibilities for given circumstances.

Put more simply, imagination suggests that an individual maintains the capacity to understand the circumstances of their lived experience through constructing narratives (Egan, 1992), envisioning circumstances as they are or could be, and generating ideas about possible realities based on our understanding of our lived experience. Subsequently, Greene's (1995b) idea that imagination constructs the very "texture of our experience" is not one that is far-fetched. For if an individual is constructing narratives around, creating images of, and generating meanings for not only the experiences that he or she *is* having, but the experiences that he or she *could* have has a profound effect on our ability to make meaning of those experiences once they, *if* they, come to fruition. In this manner, what is conceived of as real is given composition and substance in the way that we perceive, and construct meanings around, our experiences.

As pre-service teachers begin to have the kinds of experiences that Dewey (1938) describes as possessing the criteria from which to make meaning, then some attention must be paid to how those experiences fit with the manner in which pre-service teachers have already begun the process of adding texture to reality. Did the pre-service teacher imagine him/herself in front of a class of enthusiastic students capturing their attention and creating "a-ha" moments like a hero from a Hollywood movie? Did the pre-service teacher imagine the student or students that he had always found problematic in their encounters in the classroom to make his teaching a miserable experience? Did he imagine that something—technology, a fire drill, some unexpected disaster—would prevent the lesson from ever being taught? And at the root of it, how did the pre-service teacher conceptualize the lesson to begin with, and why did he bring it into the curriculum in the manner that he did? Ultimately these are but a few of the myriad of imagined

possibilities that could exist for the pre-service teacher. The imagined experience is not just one of envisioning, but one wherein the emotions, modes of speaking, even the scent of the room, have some preconceived qualities that must be negotiated in the context of the lived moment. Thus the experience that he or she actually encounters is given context and meaning, not only from previous experiences and the meaning that he or she has constructed around them, but the ways that he or she imagined that experience to occur. What becomes real is not only *what* happened, but how the pre-service teacher makes sense of it.

### **Operationalized Imagining for the Teacher In-Becoming**

Up until this point, the way I have argued that imagination should be undertaken in the context of learning to teach consists largely of broad parameters and a number of essential components that seem to operate within the context of creating meaning out of experiences and perceptions. It cannot be ignored however that a secondary (by my definition at least) function of imagination transcends understanding present conditions, and instead focuses on what Bailin (2007) calls “generativity” (p. 102, though it should be noted that this concept appears elsewhere in the literature). This section describes the ways in which generativity, possibility, boundaries, and other conceptual markers works with the teacher in-becoming to formulate assumptions about their experiences that impacts what they imagine they can and cannot do as teachers.

**Generativity and possibility.** Stated plainly, generativity is the ability of imagination to create new ideas, objects, possible conditions or scenarios, and reasoning. The concept of “generativity” is a better means of engaging imagination and imagining, than say using terms like “creativity” or “critical thinking” (Takaya, 2007), as it both provides interrogative characteristics and better encompasses the multitude of ways that imagination is made perceptible (Bailin, 2007; Byrne, 2005). Byrne (2005, p. 102) reminds us that generativity

“involves generating possibilities, thinking of things as other than they are...imagining possible futures and so having some possibility of changing the course of events, imagining other people’s situations and so having empathy and tolerance, or imagining new ideas and so having the possibility of creativity and originality.” The effect is that the generation of images or ideation is encompassed in imaginative practices and subject to the consideration of possibilities, consequences, and contradictions that are evident in human imaginations (Frein, 2007, p. 158). Greene (1995b, p. 3) states, “of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions.” Takaya (2007, p. 23) follows Egan’s earlier definition of imagination, which states that imagination is “a flexibility of the mind...that a person has the ability and tendency to think of things in a way that is not tightly constrained by the actual, such as conventions, cultural norms, one’s habitual thought, and information given by others.” In each of these, and many other, cases, imagination possesses qualities of possibility and of habits of mind that are oriented toward future and/or fantastical acts. It cannot be denied that virtually every major contemporary scholar who works with imagination is, at least to some extent, concerned with the role of generativity as a mechanism of imagining.

Flexibility of mind makes possibility possible in imagination. However, the role of possibility is ultimately highly contingent on one’s perception with and to reality. Thus, the flexibility of mind then employs the consciousness orientation of mind (Dewey, 1934; Sartre, 1991) where an individual utilizes both image and ideation to transform present and past conditions of understood experience into constituted meanings of a perceived reality that enables one to envisage new constructions and possibilities. The flexibility occurs in that consciousness and perception of circumstance that is appropriated in the meaning making process. In as such,

imagination is fluid and contextual, contingent on the perceptions of the individual and reliant on the consciousness derived in constructing meaning of and in one's world. For example, a teacher in-becoming might think of what is possible for being a "good teacher" in relation to his successes and others that he has observed. Alternatively, he might envision what he can do instructionally based on either his own experiences as a student, or in what kinds of teaching served him well as a student teacher. In order to ideate some possibility, one must come to terms with the very fact that any possibility is linked to the experiences that we've had, our perceptions of self and place in the world, and the way we construct constituted meanings in and for those experiences.

To conceptualize possibilities, one must draw, at least in part, from what is already imagined, known, understood, and experienced. The known experience forms the foundation upon which imagination derives the capacity to create possibility. Imagining interrogates experience and is open, active, construct-ive, and perceptive, bringing to life possibilities for the future. Imagination, in this way, can be thought of as "modes of action" (Greene, 1988, p.48) since action is what opens new possibilities in conceptualizing new domains beyond ordinary awareness (Greene, 1988). Through this process, imagination attempts to consider future alternative conceptions, differentiating between what is and what *could be* (Greene, 1977).

**Imagination and the realities of teaching.** To place this theoretical discussion in the real world of teachers in-becoming, who are seeking to pursue a career as classroom teachers, and whose understanding of their practice and ideals is formulated in relation to their lived experiences as pre-service teachers, we might remember Greene's (1988, p. 48) call for "a kind of education that recognizes imagination as fundamental to learning to learn, essential to the feeling that life is more than a futile, repetitive, consuming exercise," where pre-service teachers



are invited into teaching that Friere (1998, p. 30, italics in original) suggests “is not to *transfer knowledge*, but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge.” Such a characterization requires that pre-service teachers be oriented with not only agency to embody imagined roles as educators (Eisner, 1985), but also the space to make explicit the subjectivity and interrelations that define how they situate their pedagogical aims within their particular contexts. This task is difficult given the professional obligations that are expressed or perceived as components of the “professional teacher” (such as standards, administrative tasks, etc...) that affect teachers’ everyday work (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Jackson, 1990; Lortie, 1975), and which are inclusive of the already tenuous strands of how we have come to prepare teachers for life in the classroom (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Herbst, 1989). When the lens of imagination is applied to the space and context of the pre-service teacher’s experiences in learning to teach, what is most readily apparent is the possibility inherent in the exchange of social relations and individual subjectivities for the construction of new pedagogical paradigms.

To imagine what is possible as a teacher in-becoming, she is active in the process of theorizing and creating narratives about what happened to and around her as a student teacher, and to identify ways in which she might have agency in altering her pedagogical choices in the future (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1978, 1995b). The commonalities of experience among pre-service teachers has the propensity for those same pre-service teachers to emerge with the apprenticeship of observation intact (Lortie, 1975). Yet, if imagination enables one to break free of the actual (Greene, 1995b), then there must exist a place where the pre-service teacher, operating as teacher on one hand, makes it possible to create authentic spaces of learning for his students, but at the same time, as a teacher in-becoming, developing dynamic modes of knowing

what constitutes teaching. Teaching, in the form that it directly impacts students, has the potentiality to open possibilities where imagination helps students make meaning in/of the(ir) world and take steps to appropriate their own abilities in reaching toward the possibilities that arise out of imagination (Greene, 1995b).

The same concept is equally applicable to how pre-service teachers approach their learning to teach. Only where the interrogation of experiences in learning to teach—of classroom context, of pedagogy, of curriculum, of teacher education—is made central can imagination seek to open up possibilities in the perception of pre-service teachers, regardless of whether or not such measures were ever enacted. This might well place a premium on the continuing education and exposure to more and varied experiences of pre-service teachers so that they might have more on which to draw their meaning-making in and of their world (Takaya, 2007). Generating ideations from and in practice enables a consciousness be brought to educative interactions (Greene, 1988)—in the case of the pre-service teacher, as both student in the university, and as a teacher in their field classroom—and from them to generate new possibilities for practice, however contingent. Greene (1995b, p. 23) reminds us that, “only when the given or the taken-for-granted is subject to questioning, only when we take various, sometimes unfamiliar perspectives on it, does it show itself as what it is...once we see our givens as contingencies, then we may have an opportunity to posit alternative ways of living and valuing and to make choices.” In moving from the taken-for-granted, the teacher is open to envisage the possibilities for curricular and pedagogical practices and to engage meaningfully in the worlds of their students.

For teachers in-becoming, what Greene (1995b) describes as “taking initiatives; it signifies moving into a future seen from the vantage point of actor or agent...they are interested

in beginnings, not endings” (p. 15) is the position of that transition between the context and content of the abstracted teacher education methods coursework and the possibilities of engaging students in real world classroom contexts (Cooper & He, 2012; Sydnor, 2014). Field and Latta (2001) suggest that this envisioning allows for the pre-service teacher to obtain “a carnal, embodied understanding of how the different collective patterns of action play themselves out in...specific situation[s]” (p. 888). Though they do not engage imagination in the same way as most of scholars described here, their assertion that the mindful embodiment of experience engenders authentic teaching processes that “involves re-tuning and re-lating to one’s circumstances differently” (p. 889) is helpful in developing an understanding of how pre-service teachers are attuned to previous experiences that help them construct an understanding of their own capacity for possibilities in their teaching practices. For those pre-service teachers, imagination that is conceived of in and about their practice is one of future mindedness predicated on their understanding and reorienting of experiences with and in classrooms and teaching that informs their ability to develop the kind of teaching that they privilege in their own learning to teach, however idealistic, as it exists in the possibilities of the future classroom context (Cooper & He, 2012; Hong, 2010; Sydnor, 2014).

Greene’s (1978) representation about why we learn to teach further accentuates the tension for the teacher in-becoming:

We who choose ourselves to become teachers obviously have an "interest" when we do so. As has been suggested, that interest arises out of our biographical situation, as much as it does out of a sense of what we are trying to bring into being... I am speaking of the interests that appear to motivate persons when they decide to enter into teaching, interests that may be refined or eroded or totally

transformed in the course of teacher training, but that remain present in the individual's historical situation, no matter what happens in his or her everyday.

What happens, of course, when we have our initial experiences with teaching in public schools, is that we become sharply aware of limits, of structures and arrangements that cannot easily be surpassed. No matter how practical, how grounded our educational courses were, they suddenly appear to be totally irrelevant in the concrete situation where we find ourselves. (p. 27)

Greene effectively articulates the developmental crises that face those who are learning to teach, and how they find themselves situating their experiences. The reasons that pre-service teachers choose to enter into the classroom, and the imagined ways of interacting in that educative environment, do not always meet with the lived realities of our first teaching experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2012, Hargreaves, 1994). How we make sense of that disjunction is also intricately connected with our learning to teach.

**Seeing boundaries as a teacher in-becoming.** A particularly troubling aspect of imagination however is the way humans create real or imagined limits on the way that they understand their reality. In establishing those limits, which I am calling perceptual boundaries, a person is effectively using perceived negation in order to structure his or her understanding of reality. The effect is to describe one's reality, not in relation to what can be done but in relation to what cannot be done (Greene, 1978, 1995b). Perceptual boundaries are a function of imagination that humans use to demarcate their reality.

Perceptual boundaries function as a component of imagination in which the individual imagining set limits about what he or she can't do, regardless of external stimuli, but based on the perception of one's relationship to and with the social world. It is in this way that socio-

cultural identifiers become a salient function of what one can or can't do, just as one functions to delineate possibilities based on prior experiences, regardless of present conditions (Cooper & He, 2012). Perceptual boundaries act to police our behaviors so that they align with our conceptions of reality, and operate to develop cognitive and emotive conditions under which imagined acts are understood. Ultimately, it might be productive to think of perceptual boundaries as the functional antithesis of the capacity of imagination. If imagination asks, "what is possible, given my understanding of my place in the world?" then perceptual boundaries temper the answer to that question with, "what can't I do?" The effect is in part to negate some aspects of imaginative thinking, but it also has a positive aspect as well. The perceptual boundaries, despite their propensity to close off, rather than open up, possibilities, also help to structure imagination such that the way that one understands reality is functionally normative, so that one understands what is and isn't possible with regard to scientific norms, if not social or legal norms. In imagining, perceptual boundaries create the backdrop upon which we base our understanding of the role of possibility.

Being a teacher in-becoming comes along with the idea that one might have to attend to new dispositions and ways of knowing, and teachers in-becoming do these things with a different sort of importance, and frame their sense of self differently than they might at other stages of learning to teach (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001). Whereas, later in their "student teaching" field experience, a pre-service teacher might recognize becoming a "professional" as learning to expect "that learning to teach [means] taking up a new and often uncomfortable identity...[which requires] engaging in acts of forgetting, discarding, silencing and ignoring" (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996, p. 78) and having to face and manage aspects of vulnerability in learning to teach (Bullough, 2005; Palmer, 2007). The act of becoming a teacher means

renegotiating the production of self in ways that are fundamentally painful to the psyche and rely heavily on the perception of the pre-service teacher in coming to terms with the production of self-conception as a teacher instead of a student teacher (Danielewicz, 2001; Cooper & He, 2012; Hong, 2010; Mantas & Di Rezze, 2011; Sydnor, 2014). Through a range of experiences largely limited to the student teaching experience (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), the teacher in-becoming begins to juxtapose experiences previously situated within his personal self towards the imagined teacher in-becoming; opening the door for the pre-service teacher to experience the range of emotions and inherent sense of vulnerability (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Cooper & He, 2012; Mantas & Di Rezze, 2011). This is because although a teacher in-becoming views learning to teach as a past practice, she still embodies all of the characteristics of being a student teacher, encountering becoming as an emergent process—a process that is just beginning, not one that is or has been going on throughout her learning to teach (Cooper & He, 2012; Mantas & Di Rezze, 2011). Ultimately teachers in-becoming are left to attend to the awareness inherent in their experiences and to the meanings that are constructed from them (Cooper & He, 2012).

**Imagining in the context of learning to teach.** Cultivating the landscape in which teachers in-becoming can break through the imagined boundaries they have constructed is not just a function of personal development of a self-conception as teacher, but one of institutional concern as well. There is a wide variety of formulations of teacher education, arguing the import of institutions of higher education, schools, and various educational (and quasi-educational) organizations work together to create high quality and sustainable learning to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Flores et al., 2013). For student teachers embedded in present systems, the familiarity of schools serves to foster feelings of competence (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 169), a particularly troubling aspect of teacher training because of its

relationship to the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and the “prevailing mentalities of teacher training...which concentrate solely on subject knowledge and classroom practice” (Tickle, 1999, p. 136). Both these aspects of teacher education work to perpetuate norms of practice (Cooper & He, 2012; Tickle, 1999), rather than actively enabling student teachers to interrogate their practices and support their conceptions of teaching in ways that open up possibilities for their imagined selves. Recognizing that “making it one’s own in student teaching is not the same as learning to teach or being a teacher...Just because experiences seem plausible does not mean they are trustworthy” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 175) is an intermediary response to the boundary phenomenon, and one that presents conceptual promise for understanding the relationship between conception of self, teacher education, and being a teacher in-becoming. McLean (1999) argues:

Images of self-as-person and self-as-teacher are critical to the process of becoming a teacher because they constitute the personal context within which new information will be interpreted, and are the stuff of which a teaching persona is created. But not all self-images are of equal worth in terms of imagining the possible or creating pathways to attain it. The “child redeemer” (Grumet, 1983) or “Lady Bountiful” (Stonehouse, 1988) image occasionally may bring a warm glow of satisfaction that one is “doing good works,” but such images do not help a beginning teacher imagine herself coping with ambiguities, negotiating conflicting demands, managing the inevitable dilemmas, and picking a path through the minefield of power relationships that together constitute the working environment for teachers. (p. 58)

McLean goes on to describe multiple approaches to teacher education in which self-conceptions can be developed, ultimately arguing that to understand the teacher in-becoming means

embracing the paradoxical elements of teacher education and the student teaching field experience, while addressing the contexts in which the self-conception of teacher is constructed (pp. 85-86). In whatever case, though, it is evident that teacher educators can and should have an active role in supporting the teacher in-becoming (Cooper & He, 2012; McLean, 1999).

The teacher embodies the imagination as it is used in this study. The teacher imagines what it means to teach, and to be a teacher, based on the experiences that he or she has, both in the field and in his or her life holistically. This former operation of imagination in education then creates the conditions under which one thrives in his or her day-to-day perceptual experience (Greene, 1995b). In this imaginative capacity, the teacher conceives of and constructs understanding of who she is as a teacher in relation to her experiences. It is in this former capacity that perceptual boundaries take form. Given the issues that teachers face—from standards to evaluations to lesson planning to parent and community interaction to pressures from school, district, state, and federal policies to the not-so-simple day-to-day operations of managing an effective learning environment (to name a few) (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Flores et al., 2013; Hong, 2010; Montgomery, 2012; Sydnor, 2014), all of which have implications for imaginative or innovative practices—they form meanings around those parameters and in turn construct perceptual boundaries as a consequence (Cooper & He, 2012; Dewey, 1938; Greene, 1995b). As one of my colleagues once said, “with all of the limitations that are placed on teachers, why would we create more?” (K. Brugar, personal communication, April 27, 2011). And yet, we do (Flores et al., 2013; Hong, 2010; Sydnor, 2014). Teachers construct perceptual boundaries according to imagined relationships within the social settings that constitute teaching and learning. Greene (1978) states the problem in this way:



What happens, of course, when we have our initial experiences with teaching in public schools, is that we become sharply aware of limits, of structures and arrangements that cannot easily be surpassed. No matter how practical, how grounded our educational courses were, they suddenly appear to be totally irrelevant in the concrete situation where we find ourselves...when we first enter into classrooms for which we are responsible, or when we confront groups of students who are resistant or undisciplined or inept, we long for rules or for someone to tell us “what to do at 9 o’clock.”...It is difficult to gain the capacity “of going beyond created structures”...There are obstacles that inhere in the organization of the public schools... (pp. 27-28)

For Greene, the perceptual boundaries that are imagined are supported, if not outright constructed by, very real discourses and policies within schools. To be a teacher that imagines that field trips are not going to be a part of his or her curriculum might not be a perceptual boundary because the teacher reads the political and cultural markers of the social settings in school, but because the teacher has in his or her hand a memo written from an administrator that expressly forbids field trips. Yet, the effect of the boundary, whether real (as is the case with the memo) or perceived (as is in reading political and cultural markers), is the same in imagination. It creates a limit point (Friere, 2000), a place in one’s understanding of his or her experience that demarcates what is and isn’t possible. Recognizing that teachers in-becoming have “some degree of freedom in accepting or rejecting identities available to them, they cannot construct identity positions themselves” (Danielewicz, 2001, pp. 85-86) does very little to prevent the teacher in-becoming from experiencing “too many constraints and seen very few possibilities” in which to sustain positive self-conceptions of teaching where imaginative practices can be nourished and mature. Within these boundaries pre-service teachers must constitute their own meanings of

experiences so as to imagine how they might engage in (or resist) particular visions of schooling that engender the best educative experience possible in their own learning to teach and construction of self-conception as a teacher.

## **Conclusion**

At the outset, I noted that the aim of this chapter is to first clarify how we understand imagination by laying a conceptual foundation from for the purposes of this study. Then the task was to situate the use of imagination in the body of research that seeks to understand the processes and dimensions of learning to teach. I argued that imagination has two distinct but interrelated operations that create understanding and meaning for individuals in their world. The first is that imagination aids in the construction of narratives and metaphors about lived experiences, that allow individuals to understand their experiences, both actual and perceptual. The second is that the imagination is the primary means by which humans construct ideas and possibilities, and from which people can conceptualize beyond their own lived experience and see the world as it could otherwise be. The former, allows us to make sense of personal realities which are contingent and contextual and ever in flux. That imagination, which is oftentimes more accessible to individuals, informs the latter, where we can see beyond our own experiences and think about what could be, or have been. The conception of imagination here represents what I believe is an epistemologically cohesive representation of the concept, and therefore better suited for understanding the teacher in-becoming.

It is important to remember that teachers in-becoming are not student teachers. This is a hard habit to break when discussing the theoretical strands that inform this study. They have left student teaching and I'm describing the phase of in-becoming as independent of the student teaching practicum. However, the literature is almost exclusively situated as being pre-service or

student teacher oriented, or investigating the induction phase of teaching. Both contribute significantly to the realities of the teacher in-becoming, but at the same time there are some marked differences. I want to end this section by reiterating that the concept of being a teacher in-becoming is different from these other phases of learning to teach, but because both have attributes and dimensions that are substantially similar, the research in those areas is congruent with the present study. This study then contributes significantly to fill a gap that I see in the literature that specifically addresses the transitional processes between student teaching and in-service teaching. In the chapters that follow, that idea will demonstrably affect participants.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Method and Methodology**

The intention of this study is to better understand the role and effects of imagination on versions and visions of teaching with pre-service teachers. During the phase of teacher development that I label “in-becoming” two research questions frame this study:

1. How do teachers in-becoming, as a function of imagination, form narratives about their experiences that constitute meaning for their practice?
2. In what ways do teachers in-becoming use (or do not use) those meanings to imagine what is and is not possible in their practice as a consequence?

These research questions inform and are informed by the participants’ construction of understanding of and about their experiences. I use these research questions to explore the effect of imagined teaching practices from the vantage point of the lived reality of the participants in the study during the phase of “in-becoming.” The research questions that this study is founded upon reflect the nature of that transition as well as my desire to fully understand how that experience is lived.

Denzin and Lincoln differentiate qualitative research from quantitative research by arguing that “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the research and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (2005, p. 8). They argue that qualitative researchers are bricoleurs, quilters of social setting interpretations, who “stress the dialectical and hermeneutic nature of interdisciplinary inquiry” that “tell stories about the worlds they have studied” (2005, pp. 5-6) from their own personal, gendered, historical, raced biographies that lie in relation to those that they study. The

position of the researcher and the researched even as the researcher undertakes the theory, method, and analysis that underlie qualitative research. Holstein and Gubrium (2005) remind us that “for some time, qualitative researchers have been interested in documenting the processes by which social reality is constructed, managed, and sustained” (p. 483). Their approach to social research “shows that stakeholders have a choice in how their troubles are construed as well as the options for construing them in particular ways” (p. 501). In both of these descriptions of qualitative research practices, the elements of interpretative social research are situated with relation to the researcher and the researched in real world contexts.

I had this positioning of qualitative research in mind as I constructed the framework for data collection and analysis for this study. I make every attempt below to identify and be cognizant of my own lenses and biases as a researcher because the set of assumptions that I bring to the project as well as the analysis upon which it is constructed better orients the results of the analysis beyond the mechanical application of methods and analysis. However, beyond methodological considerations, qualitative research might engage in a variety of methods that are markedly similar in structure despite the variations in methodology and interpretation that take place later in a given study (Hatch, 2002). In as such, it is less the application of methods to a qualitative study that lies in question, but rather in the selection of appropriate ones that, in analysis, provide appropriate avenues for interpretative practice. Fine and Weis (1996), for example, argue that “methods are not passive strategies. They differently produce, reveal, and enable the display of different kinds of identities” (as cited in Fine, Weis, Wesen, & Wong [2002, p. 119]). Consequently, both the methods employed in the study as well as the analysis of them must be aligned with the broader methodological considerations.

This chapter details the reasons that particular methods were employed as well as

attempts to interrogate some methodological concerns associated with undertaking this qualitative study. Following Creswell (2003, pp. 5-6), I structure this chapter to align with the processes he lays out for developing research studies: knowledge claims, or the assumptions and ideas about inquiry of which the researcher is predisposed (sometimes thought about as philosophical assumptions about ontology and epistemology); strategies of inquiry, which provide specific direction for procedures in a research design that are predicated on the knowledge claims of the researcher; and, methods of collection and analysis, which outline the specific methods used in the study. Such an organization is designed to both clarify the research project as I conducted it, but also to help unify the methodological and method considerations upon which the study is constructed.

### **Role of the Researcher**

At the outset, I think it makes sense to insert myself as both a researcher and teacher into the narrative that follows. Following van Manen (1990), the story of who I am and how I live the research should be not only included, but significant to the discussion that follows. For that reason, I have made some choices to write in first person when it is appropriate so I may better tell the story of the participants' experiences and relationship to the study authentically. There are times, of course, where I might be considered an interloper in the narrative of the participants, and others where my presence is more tacitly held; each narrative style was chosen carefully to allow the story of these participants' experience as teachers in-becoming to flourish. But, nonetheless, I, and my own experiences, imagination, and proclivities are undeniably omnipresent, and the text that follows is imbued with that positionality. I make no apologies for that, but rather view it as a necessary and integral part of the research process, where the construction of new knowledge in education relies on how the researcher knows and understands his craft.

Sometime in the Spring of 2007, Dr. Susan Melnick introduced me to the term Tikkun Olam. With its origins in Jewish Kabbalah, Tikkun Olam in its contemporary usage broadly refers to taking action to repair the brokenness of the world, and is a moral and religious basis for social justice activism. At the time, it was powerful, if unconventional, way of conceptualizing the work of teaching. In that metaphor, our role as teachers and teacher educators was not to transmit information, nor was it about the mechanics of pedagogy. Rather, our goal was to, in whatever small way that we can, attend to the brokenness of the world and act to mend it. For teachers, this could manifest through our pedagogy, the choices that we make in curriculum, the relationships that we form in our teaching, and in our choices to be active in addressing the social, political, and cultural realities in which we find ourselves. It became not only a heady concept in which to mull, but a revelation for those seeking permission to be activists in their classrooms (Kaur, 2012; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007).

For me, it acted as an epiphany. I had left the K12 classroom for reasons of yearning to be a part of an undisclosed something, and sought out graduate school in an effort to discover what that something was, and to perhaps open doors that would allow me to be a part of something larger than myself. The introduction of Tikkun Olam to me gave voice to that unsettledness that I had been experiencing, and provided a location in which to transition my practice as both a teacher, and as a researcher. To be sure, I found in the concept of Tikkun Olam a way to conduct research that sought out places to repair the world through understanding what made the world broken, and in imagining mechanisms that teachers could use to mend the world on their own terms. As a teacher, it gave me a voice to challenge myself and my students through acts of intellectual vulnerability and in pushing ourselves to embody the best versions of ourselves. Through both of these identities that took, and continue to take, shape, I discovered in

myself an independence that gave me license to seek to understand the brokenness of the world on my own terms, and to effect change to repair the brokenness in my own small ways. Put plainly, my journey and my work was mine, and inexorably a part of who I am as a researcher and teacher.

I translated that epiphany into the work I had with emerging teachers in guiding them through the process of shedding preconceived ideas of what a teacher is and should be to take on a much more complex notion of what a teacher does and could do. I continue to believe that, like the transition into induction phase teaching, young teachers venturing into pedagogical autonomy includes a “shift in role orientation and an epistemological move from knowing about teaching through formal study to knowing how to teach by confronting the day-to-day challenges” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 120). While many emerging teachers cling to idealistic and theoretical beliefs about teaching, they often do not fully grasp the possibilities for change that they possess as professionals in their rooms. Cultivating the opportunity for emerging teachers to change the way that students look at the teacher’s discipline and the world became, and continues to be, a major focus of my work as a teacher educator.

Teaching is how I choose to make the world a better place, and is a major part of my own self-conception. Troubling the matter further was the fact that I was, and am, embedded in a process of deep examination of the issues in and about education, and exploring their relationship to the lived experience of teaching, learning, and schooling; separating myself from that space is an exercise in futility. Thus, a challenge for me, or really any researcher who considers teaching an important part of his or her expertise, is to be able to set aside the learned knowledge and the dispositions to interrogate beginning teachers’ practices to improve them, in favor of openness and understanding. As I stated earlier, I came to this project with the



observation that the young teachers with whom I was working tended to speak about their experiences in negative terms. My responsibility was to hear them instead of myself. It is how this project can in some small way contribute to making the world a better place.

### **Knowledge Claims**

Creswell (2003) reminds the researcher that he or she undertakes all research with certain assumptions and ideas about inquiry. He continues:

Stating a knowledge claim means that researchers start a project with certain assumptions about how they will learn and what they will learn during their inquiry. These claims might be called paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 1998); philosophical assumptions, epistemologies, and ontologies (Crotty, 1998); or broadly conceived research methodologies (Neuman, 2000). Philosophically, researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the processes for studying it (methodology). (p. 6)

I agree with Segall (2002) that a study is more than the sum of its methods, but instead significance lies in the study's methodological considerations and in the way that the researcher brings him or herself into the study. I came to this study first because I began to see contradictions emerge in my work with young teachers. On the one hand, I knew that they were immersed in a teacher education program that I believed to be progressive and forward thinking—one that encouraged student teachers to take risks with their practice and to identify a broad range of skills and dispositions to meet the needs of all learners. Yet on the other hand, I became aware that much of their in-person talk was centered on limitations rather than possibilities. I value the reality that becoming a teacher is both fluid and dynamic, and along with

learning to teach, the transitions and the in-between spaces of being a teacher in-becoming is an area which demands further research. It is an “interlude between a lived past and what we conceive to be some future possibility” (Greene, 1995b, p. 65) where meaning about who you are as a teacher and what pedagogical imperatives drive you emerge. The research questions that drive this study were derived from a desire to better understand the significance of the cognitive processes that participants undergo as teachers in-becoming, and to highlight the role that imagination plays in allowing teachers in-becoming to substantiate what they believe is and isn’t possible as they embark on their careers as teachers.

It is at the intersection of experience, imagination, and narratives where teachers in-becoming can finally articulate who they choose to be (Greene, 1973, 1995b), shaping their lived experience through narratives, reflecting back on experience through their stories and capturing, however minutely, the very essence of what their mind understood at the moment of experience (Greene, 1995b, p. 75). If we are to bring theories of imagination to bear on understanding what it means to be a teacher in-becoming, then there is the capacity to begin to untangle the complexity and messiness of both the social worlds in which teachers in-becoming reside, and perhaps more importantly, how they understand those worlds. Imagination becomes the lens through which teachers in-becoming understand the “texture of their experience,” even as new questions are raised of how alternatives, boundaries, and consequences operate in constructing their notions of experience, reality, and the possible. Possibilities, or the range of practices that teachers in-becoming perceive to be available (and not available) to them, require methodological considerations that necessarily interrogates those qualities.

Pragmatism, in particular critical pragmatism, is the intellectual vehicle that I believe best drives the production of knowledge for that project. Pragmatism’s definitions, meanings, and

applications are widely varied (Langsdorf & Smith, 1995). Despite that, pragmatism is at its very core a discourse on the consequences of thinking—effects of which “frame the range of meaningful performative possibilities and effective practices for persons, institutions, and human organizations” (Macke, 1995, p. 158). In Cherryholmes’ (1999) description of pragmatism, he argues that the pragmatist project is attentive to ascertaining, developing, and considering the implications (consequences) in/of possible outcomes. In that process, the pragmatist is interested in shaping the most desired outcomes. Articulating the “texture of experience” in a way that shapes what is and isn’t possible can only be done in an environment where the consequences of thinking and deeply considering multiple outcomes are placed centrally in the research project. Even at its core, pragmatism’s similarity to the practices embedded in imagination provides the constituent rhizomatic qualities that permit consequential interrogation of experience, which remains a foundational element of the present study.

In a study where imagination is an interrogatory lens, drawing from critical pragmatist theories where “the construction of reality [acts] as a struggle between conflicting discourses and competing definitions of the situation” (Vannini, 2008, p. 160) aids in understanding the manner in which discourses are evident in the practices and enacted imagination of the participants. Put another way, being a teacher in-becoming positions the participants uniquely between a professional past and a professional future and because “experience and interaction are the sites where knowledge takes shape” (Vannini, 2008, p. 162), understanding what it means to be a teacher is in large part an act of imagination. Critical pragmatism is helpful in tracing the possible versions of reality for the participants, how those are socially constructed through their experiences, and what are the consequences of their thinking on their practice. To do so means investigating “one point of intersection among imagination, subjectivity, and power”

(Cherryholmes, 1999, p. 33) where the participants, facing transition and uncertainty, must not only understand, but be able to navigate how their self-conception both opens up and constrains what they believe they can and can't do as teachers. The consequences of those narratives on thought and practice is central to the present study.

Further, critical pragmatism engages in these kinds of investigations with respect to temporal and critical qualities of lived experience. Kadlec (2007) views the potentiality of lived experience “in a world defined by flux and contingency” (p. 138) as a means of engaging in questions of critical import. To that point, she argues that understanding lived experience is not the superficial reflection of ideology, but rather lived experience can be understood not only in terms of a participant's own perceived reality, but also in terms of how that participant's experience positions him or her to pursue (or not to pursue) forms of teaching that are critical, democratic, and/or socially just. For these reasons, understanding the consequences of thinking on/about the lived experience of the participants raises methodological questions about the kinds of teaching practices that are imagined in light of the experiences that participants had. Because pragmatism demands attention to consequences of thinking and the circumstances that surround their production (Cherryholmes, 1999), the teacher that each participant imagines he or she has become is deeply embedded in his or her experiences and subjective conception of self. The role of critical pragmatism then is not to say that this study is a “critical pragmatist study” but is to illuminate the consequences of those experiences and raise questions about the practices that emerge from them. Critical pragmatism, by virtue of its constituent characteristics, is a orientating practice in both devising the methods for data collection and for the production of knowledge from the data that was collected.

## **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

Primary data collection for this study was conducted over a two-month span near the end of the participants' student teaching experiences. Two months is a relatively narrow span of time; however, the methods selected for data collection in this study reflect the narrow time frame available to ensure that the participants were immersed in the very particular life conditions that I am using to define the transition between student teacher and teacher. Indeed, even before the final interviews were conducted, some of the participants were already interviewing, weighing job offers, and making plans to settle into their new career (others, as it turns out, would not receive job offers for the school year following the data collection). From a methods standpoint, this is problematic as there is a very narrow window in which to capture the thinking and perceptions of the participants. I was attentive to making sure that the methods were spaced appropriately to capture elements of student teaching along with elements of the teacher in-becoming without being so close together that the participants would feel any sort of redundancy in the topics of our conversations. In short, in developing an appropriate set of methods to support this study's framework, I was assiduous in maintaining a structure that reflected the primary functions of this study: first, that the structure must capture the perceptions and narratives of the participants such that aspects of their imagination might be illuminated; and second, that structure interrogates the cognitive processes of marked transition that underlies what it means to be a teacher in-becoming. Both of these considerations must be made central to the methods employed by this study.

Participants were volunteers from a social studies methods course at a college of education at a large Midwestern university. All students enrolled in a social studies methods course during their student teaching experience were invited to participate in the study through a

class-wide introduction and description of the study, as well as both group and individual follow up conversations conducted in person and via email. The course was taken congruently with the student teaching field experience and broadly addressed practical and theoretical dimensions of social studies education and their implementation in real world settings. Selecting participants from the same program controls for variance of teacher preparation regardless of current teaching context. That is, if all of the pre-service teachers in the sample all came from the same teacher education program, regardless of their individual satisfaction with or even, experience in (with) the program, it is likely that the coursework within the program is similar enough due to pedagogical and ideological similarities across a given program.

The selection of participants in this way helped to accommodate control of particular components of the learning to teach experience, including both the instructor at the teacher education institution and the general area where the pre-service teaching took place in the field. Thus the interpretation of data can be attributed to other factors rather than the interpretations of the data being attributed to different programmatic experiences. Conversely, within this structure, epistemological similarities among the student teachers in the sample can be traced to the teacher education program. Following Maxwell (1992), the intent here is not to mechanically control for specific threats to validity nor to claim empirical truth, but rather to suggest that considering the ways to address kinds of threats to validity within the qualitative study helps in interpreting the implications of an account within the context of the contiguity of that which the account describes (or is related to) (Maxwell, 1992). That all of the pre-service teachers in the study are from the same program provides a similarity for the learning to teach context of the participants in the study.

Five participants from a single social studies methods course at a large Midwestern

university volunteered for the study—three women and two men. All five participants were in their early twenties, white, and come from middle class or upper-middle class backgrounds (more detail about each of the participants and his or her teaching setting(s) will be described later in this chapter). All five participants taught social studies courses as part of a student teaching field experience within a teacher education program. Further, each participant conducted his or her student teaching in a secondary school found in a metropolitan area around a large urban center. All five participants were members of the same methods course during their student teaching and had been in courses with one another previously in their teacher education and general education coursework.

All five participants also grew up in the metropolitan area surrounding the large urban city Ellington, the area in which they served during their student teacher field experience. Ellington is a major U.S. urban center in Norris County, with a population of about 700,000 people and whose metropolitan area totals more than 4 million over a 2,000-square-mile area. After the boom of industrialization brought population and economic security to the region, it has suffered a long economic downturn, population diaspora, and the emergence of socio-economic indicators associated with urban blight. Currently, while still dealing with major social, political, and economic issues, the city is enjoying a renaissance of sorts that has brought tech companies, artisans, and service start-ups back into the city center to support the already thriving sports and entertainment industries.

However, the city still has a long way to go. Poverty is a significant issue in Ellington. The average yearly salary is well below the national average and fully one in three residents lives in poverty. The city is over 80% African American, followed by Whites (10%) and Hispanics (8%). Two thirds of all African Americans in the metropolitan area reside within the boundary of

Ellington. Ellington remains highly segregated and the region is best characterized by the qualities of “white flight” (Kantor & Judd, 2008). Ellington remains a major urban center with strong roots in industrialism and a focus on diversifying economic enterprises with respect to emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century ideals and resources. Even as that journey continues, the population—the people who comprise the lifeblood of the city—continues to struggle economically and to feel the very real effects of racial and economic disparity that accompany poverty and de facto segregation.

**Participants’ teacher education program.** All of the participants came from the same teacher education program at a large, Midwestern university. The program itself, provided a learning to teach experience that I characterize as intensive, progressive, and addresses critical needs in schools and classrooms through a strong pedagogical theory component, immersive field experiences, and scaffolded support mechanisms that are designed to sustain teacher development. While it ostensibly provided the characteristics and dimensions that define contemporary teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), the approach of the university was to provide a teacher education experience that was both unique and deeply engaging. Participants took a series of courses that investigated aspects of teaching and learning from cognitive psychology, multicultural education, working with students with special needs, to subject specific methods coursework and subject based literacy, each of which provided both theoretical and researched best practices for pedagogy. Participants also were given multiple opportunities to work with students in the field across several years of coursework, taking on increasing responsibility and implementing a range of pedagogical techniques in all of the field-based contexts in which they were embedded. The student teaching, or internship, experience was immersive, spanning a full year and taken congruently with masters-level courses designed to



support student teachers' needs and experiences. Participants were exposed to a wide range of theorists and research across their coursework and were asked to demonstrate real-world applications of their thinking and learning in a wide variety of assessment techniques. They were steeped in best practices for both their specific subject area and teaching writ large and were required to practice their emerging craft with feedback by education experts. In short, the general parameters of their experience were as one might expect of not just a responsible teacher education program, but one that might very well serve as a model for programs across the country.

In my observations of the teacher education program the participants were completing, I noted several characteristics which have some degree of relevance for the purposes of this study. This is not to say that these are unique to the teacher education program in question per se, but that these characteristics were present for the experiences of the participants, and therefore have some bearing on how the data is shaped across the study. First, I believe the program in question is progressive in the sense that the concepts of equity and equality for all children are deeply embedded in the curriculum and culture (Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Furthermore, prospective teachers in the program are encouraged to take risks, to be creative, to adopt constructivist and critical representations of pedagogy and curriculum, and to be innovative in the way that they shape educative experiences for learners. All of these qualities of the teacher education program are substantiated through various program documents, handbooks, and data collected, including for accreditation. Prospective teachers within the participants' program are also encouraged to be leaders in their respective careers—that is to assume leadership roles, present at professional conferences, and to model excellence in others through their own professional expectations, obligations, and mores. The teacher education program viewed theory

as an integral component of praxis and that theorizing practice is an important part of developing teaching. These are just a few of the many salient qualities that emerged from working with the participants embedded in this particular teacher education program.

While some of these characteristics might be evident in other teacher education programs outside of this study, the manifestation of the qualities I describe here are robust and emblematic of high quality teacher education programs. I mention them here to illustrate that there are some general parameters, and dynamic ones at that, under which participants' becoming teachers is situated. It is somewhat helpful to think of these parameters in terms of what they are not: participants were not expected to follow formulaic, rigid practices; they were encouraged to be creative and innovative and take risks. Participants were not asked to use standards and textbooks to help them understand curriculum; they were asked to engage in pedagogical practices that sought to question the structure and effect of those devices on a student's experience. They were not asked to simply emulate their mentor teachers nor follow a particular script in executing their lessons, but were encouraged to seek out their own voice by trying different forms of teaching and engaging their students. These dimensions of learning to teach, and the research on teacher education that underlie them, are codified in the program's structure and guiding documents.

As I've noted elsewhere, this study is not about the teacher education program that trained the participants in learning to teach. It is not an investigation of its qualities and policies and the real and potential consequences of them on the ability of young teachers to learn how to be teachers. Such a project would be a different study. This study is about how the participants imagine what it means to be a teacher as they transition from student to practitioner. What I hope that this section illustrates however is that the participants were emerging from a teacher

education program that, at least in the most overt sense, actively encouraged the participants to become the best versions of themselves as teachers. The degree to which that did or did not emerge as a component of either the imagined teaching practices or the perceived experiences of the participant however should be contextualized by the descriptions herein.

**Data sources.** A series of three interviews for each participant were used as the primary data collection mechanism for this study, each lasting between one and two hours, taken at the end of the participants' teacher education program. Outlined in greater detail below, the interviews were deliberately framed in both timing and structure to maximize the quality of the data generated in the interview. The structure of methods used was designed to scaffold the issues discussed by participants in a meaningful way and would allow for the interviewer to gain the trust of the participants in an efficient, but personal, way. Further, the choice of interviews as the primary means of data collection allows the participants to reveal aspects of imagination in a way that provides rich data without necessarily requiring the participant to focus on whatever they conceive of as "imagination." Put another way, a particular challenge of addressing issues of imagination is to allow participants to access and discuss aspects of their imagination in their everyday practice, primarily because once you ask them to "imagine" something then the participant is immediately predisposed to articulating what they expect you to mean by that word, which is, of course, highly dependent on the participant's ideation of the term (Bailin, 2007). By utilizing interpretative interviews that are embedded in the ethnographic and phenomenological traditions, imagination is more authentically revealed through everyday talk, thus the reason for employing that specific method.

The interviews were scheduled to be congruent with the experiences associated with what I label "teacher in-becoming." The two months that encompassed primary data collection creates

conditions to best understand the cognitive processes of the participants wherein the characteristics of what I term “in becoming” are evident. During this two-month span, participants transitioned from assuming all (or nearly all) of the day-to-day responsibilities as the classroom teacher in their field placement to leaving their field placement as a student teacher and completing their teacher certification program. The characteristics associated with transitioning from student teaching to full-fledged teaching, including that the participants are near to or have ended their student teaching experience, have begun transitioning to thinking about and/or actively seeking employment as a teacher, and self-identify as teachers, highlight the cognition significant to the choices in methods.

Each interview followed a semi-structured format that utilized a series of standard questions (see Appendix A) that all participants were asked, but allowed me as the researcher to participate in “active interviewing” practices (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002) that allowed me to probe for more in-depth responses, explore tangential issues as they emerged, and to allow for collaborative engagement with participants within the interview. There was no set minimum or maximum for the length of time for the interview, instead the study relied on the interview protocol and clarification questions to dictate the course of the interview; however, each interview lasted a minimum of one hour and a maximum of two and a half hours. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim prior to analysis.

Finally, I believe it’s important to note here that I was fastidious about using the word imagination in very limited ways during the collection of the data (see Appendix A). The truth is that imagination is a term that is more often than not used colloquially (Egan & Nadaner, 1988) and even in my observation of how it’s used in educational literature is used without a dedicated theoretical lens (Stevenson, 2003). If I had used the term frequently, or as a major element of the

questions that I used in the interviews, I would have no doubt have seen the use of the term earlier in the data, but it would have been largely a placeholder whose meaning was, at best, fluid rather than something that would meaningfully contribute to the study. I didn't want participants to use the term fluidly—and had I used it in the course of the interviews, the participants would no doubt have defined it in their own way. Consequently, I made the methodological decision to obscure the term itself from the interview questions in order to illuminate its constituent parts within the responses from the participants.

***The initial interview.*** Initial data collection occurred through a single semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview. Following active interviewing principles “involving respondent and interviewer as they articulate ongoing interpretative structures, resources, and orientations with what Garfinkel (1967) calls ‘practical reasoning’” (as cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 119) and utilizing techniques described by van Manen (1990) to “stay close to experience as lived” (p. 67), the initial interview was devoted to getting to know each participant, identifying salient themes and ideas in his or her experience, and allowing the participant to describe qualities of his or her experiences as naturalistically as possible. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was designed to engage the participant meaningfully in these qualities, but to do so in a way that allows the researcher to invite the participant to explore alternate perspectives and ideas in the process, which further invites the production of knowledge (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002).

Interviews were conducted according to the participants' schedule within the general constraints of the dimensions of learning to teach under investigation (Dahlberg, et al., 2001) so as to invite the participant to actively engage in a more equal researcher-participant relationship, while recognizing and respecting the inherent problematics of that relationship (Britzman, 2000;

Segall, 2001; Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong, 2002). As I had no prior working relationship with the participants and to the best of my knowledge had not, and did not, maintain any institutional authority or influence over them, I am comfortable that I afforded for a productive researcher-participant relationship. The initial interview took place approximately five to six weeks before the completion of the participant's year-long student teaching experience. Further, in an effort to develop open reflective dialogue (Dahlberg, et al., 2001), and to provide a place for the interview in which the participant is comfortable, the initial interview was conducted in the field at the participant's school placement and at a time and place determined by the participant.

Consequently, the initial interview took place within a school context, but in locations as varied as the participant's placement classroom, to a corner of the library, to an empty classroom in the school annex.

Conducting the interview on-site provided for an important methodological consideration as well in that it allowed for me to familiarize myself with the school context so as to more fully understand what participants were discussing throughout the interviews. While I assiduously attempted to design methods that provided for the production of knowledge to be located primarily with the participant, visiting the school site enabled me to have a frame of reference for understanding what—and where—participants' discussion emerges. It is an important methodological consideration to not cloud data analysis with my own interpretations of site and/or other individuals with whom the participants interact as much as possible, however as a logistical matter, conducting initial interviews on-site enables me to be able to know where the teachers' lounge is, for instance, or to know how and why a classroom is set up. Further, it allows me to add texture to the descriptions provided by the participants without unduly providing my own analyses of the sites.

***The think-aloud interview.*** The focus of the second interview was the concept of unit and curricular planning as the platform to interrogate visions and versions of the participant's teaching. Participants were asked to share a curricular unit they had created prior to the interview, then use that unit as the basis for participating in a Think-Aloud activity. The interview—the data collection—occurred following the activity.

The second interview took place approximately one week either before or after the completion of the student teaching experience. As with the initial interview, interviews were conducted according to the participants' schedule within the general constraints of the dimensions of learning to teach under investigation (Dahlberg, et al., 2001). This interview was conducted at an off-site location within the metropolitan area of Ellington in a private room. Further, the interview consisted of a single semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview that followed the participant participating in a Think-Aloud activity. The Think-Aloud activity, described in greater detail below, was not used for data collection for the purposes of this study, but instead was used as a focusing activity to situate the discussion during the interview.

Developed by Erickson and Simon (1993) in cognitive psychology and relying on Information Processing theory (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Sasaki, 2008), Think Aloud Protocols (TA or TAP), also referred to as protocol analysis, are a method of investigating the cognitive processing that occurs in participants performing a task or in making a decision. TA has been utilized in a scholarly capacity across a number of domains including reading and literacy (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), second language and language acquisition (Sasaki, 2008), consumer judgment and decision making (Kuusela & Paul, 2000), and historical thinking (Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg & Martin, 2008).

TA is well suited to the study of imagination. TAs enable the participant to access not

only the cognitive processes that are occurring from moment to moment, but taken as an evolution of thinking across the whole of TA, it also documents the process of ideation utilizing artifacts that are constructed—the “hems and haws,” the “false starts,” thinking at its most raw (Wineburg & Martin, 2008). The ideation and generativity required in the creation of a product such as a unit aid in the use of TA as a means of accessing imagination, especially given the socially constructed nature of the data.

In recognizing that good unit planning often takes a long period of time that might be fragmented into smaller components, and in recognizing that constructing unit plans are a necessary and commonplace requirement in becoming a teacher, I asked that participants provide to me a written unit plan that they completed. No other directives were given to the participants and they were free to provide as many or as few materials as they desired. I previewed the unit plans in order to familiarize myself with the contents of the unit, then I printed the submitted materials so a copy could be provided to the participant during the activity. Following the protocols outlined by Ericsson and Simon (1993), participants participated in a Think Aloud Activity wherein the participants commented on how they arrived at the pedagogical and curricular decisions that they did for the unit in question, highlighting the contextual components that delineated that decision making process (see Appendix A for a complete TA prompt).

Engaging in the TA prior to the data collection enabled the participant to use a highly personal artifact to engage in what Liljedahl (2007) refers to as the creative problem solving process so as to actively engage the participants’ imagination. This act of “storying” is an active representation of imagination as it is revealed in self-talk throughout the TA process (Liljedahl, 2007, p. 70). The consequence is that during the subsequent interview, the participant is conditioned, if pre-disposed, to both the imaginative “storying” that occurs in self-talk and using



that self-talk experience to ground his or her discussions of ideas rooted in the interview protocols.

Consequently, the interview protocols were designed to use the TA artifact as a means of engaging in broader questions about the participants' practice, particularly with respect to planning. Using a unit as basis for the participants' discussion provided for a concrete artifact in which to refer. Using the concepts of units and planning as vehicles to discuss broader questions of practice, such as what obstacles or unexpected consequences were evident in their practice or how units can reflect pedagogical imperatives, helped the participant frame his or her ideas more explicitly within a singular real life narrative of experience. Ultimately, positioning the participants in a particular way through the TA activity opened up rich spaces for data collection through focused methods that align to/with principles in both imagination and learning to teach.

***The final interview.*** The final interview, as with previous interviews, followed the conventions of semi-structured interview protocols and was designed to allow me as the researcher the freedom to behave conversationally to ask follow-up questions pertaining to the participant's experiences in learning to teach. The content of the interview protocol was centered on concepts of becoming a teacher, versions of imagination, and experiences in teaching practice that are salient the participants. In addition, follow-up questions about data originating from earlier interviews were explored as necessary to fully elaborate on the themes and ideas that emerged from earlier interviews.

The final interview was conducted approximately ten to fourteen days following the completion of the participant's teacher education program. As with the previous interviews, interviews were conducted according to the participants' schedule within the general constraints of the dimensions of learning to teach under investigation (Dahlberg, et al., 2001). This interview

was conducted at an off-site location within the metropolitan area of Ellington in a private room in order to facilitate active interviewing (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002) and the concept of safe spaces (Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong, 2002).

This latter element was of particular concern for this interview given the highly personal nature of the questions used in the interview protocol. Participants were asked to reflect on experiences where they were highly emotionally, intellectually, even physically vulnerable. In addition, they were asked to describe aspects of their identity, to critically examine their own learning to teach, and to be free in revealing the most significant details of their lives. It is important to this researcher that the participants were invited into a space where these conversations might occur, where there were no other voices, no others who might be watching or eavesdropping. Whereas Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2002) discuss the concept of safe spaces as places where a researcher is invited into displacements, revealed or otherwise, in the lives of participants, I turned that concept around and instead invited my participants into a safe space where “individual dreams, collective work, and critical thoughts are smuggled in and then reimagined” because of my “willingness to write and to testify to those aspects of community life that the media ignore, that stereotypes deny, that mainstream culture rarely gets to see” (pp. 122-123). The creation of a safe space where the door can be closed and what is said can be said in the sanctuary of that silent room created the conditions under which the participants were invited to speak freely, not just because the concluding interview had qualities of finality, but because the texture and content of the conversation was designed to reflect the most personal qualities of what it means to become a teacher.

**Data analysis.** According to Creswell (2003, p. 13), “the researcher brings to the choice of a research design assumptions about knowledge claims...that provide specific direction for

procedures in a research design.” Less about specific procedures, Creswell’s “strategies of inquiry” provide the conceptual framework upon which the methods of a qualitative study are built. In qualitative research, the methods of analysis are often blurred and multiple, drawing from the traditions that best engage analysis of data collected. This section details the conceptual reasoning for choosing ethnographic and phenomenological procedures in the study, the praxis of which are detailed in the section on methods of data collection and analysis.

Studying the manifestation of imagination in pre-service teachers during the cognitive shifts in self-conception and agency associated with the concept of “in-becoming,” and to do so in a way that addresses the research questions that frame this study, it is necessary to understand that this investigation must primarily address the lived experiences of the participants. These are best attended through phenomenological methods, but methods of data collection and analysis also must be attentive to the discourses and socio-cultural realities in which those lived experiences occur, which are best attended to through ethnographic methods. Following strict interpretations of what qualifies particular qualitative strategies of inquiry becomes inherently problematic.

It is a function of this study to attempt to problematize the social and cultural systems in which the participants reside (Creswell, 2003; Segall, 2001). To be a student teacher in a particular place and time and in particular conditions inherently creates a socio-cultural tapestry upon which the participants placed their perceptions of reality. Critical ethnographic discourses provide a way to interrogate those perceptions in a way that helps the researcher better understand the qualities of imagination and the teacher in-becoming that “reveal[s] the cultural knowledge working in a particular place and time as it is lived through the subjectivities of its inhabitants” (Britzman, 2000, p. 27). For that reason, elements of ethnographic research are

employed in this study. Each of the participants' experiences in becoming a teacher must be understood in relation to their subjectivities in order to understand how and why a teacher in-becoming imagines his or her practice in the way that he or she does. Since imagination is predicated on what and how one constructs narratives about his or her reality based on perceived data, including how experiences are perceived and cognitively reconstructed, investigating the sites of participants' lives following strictly ethnographic techniques would limit the investigation of qualities of participant perception. Instead, qualities of perception and of lived experiences—which are ostensibly the locus of this study—would be replaced by the researcher's analysis of the cultural and social markers of the site.

When it comes to investigating the lived experiences of the participants, my preferred strategy of inquiry lies within the interpretative line of phenomenology established by van Manen (1990). van Manen describes this process as “conducting thematic analysis” where the researcher is “making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure,” so that the “themes may be understood as the *structures of experience*” (1990, p. 79, emphasis in original). For researchers employing phenomenology, it is imperative to be able to not only identify the essence of lived experience and the realities in which participants inhabit (referred to as lifeworld), but to be able to allow the participants' own descriptions and discussions of their lifeworld to illuminate and provide the texture for those lived experiences. However, this strategy of inquiry too is somewhat limiting. It does not enable the researcher to either identify how, or why, that lived experience operates in a broader social context, nor does it, as critical pragmatism suggests, allow the researcher to address the consequences of that lived experience and raise questions about how the participant positions and is positioned by his or her practice as

a result.

The strategy of inquiry for this study was constructed using an analytics of interpretive practice (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Analytics of interpretive practice contends that qualitative social research must have a means of reconciling, while at the same time interrogating, both large-scale discourses that operate on individuals and societies that positions individuals in particular ways as well as individual constructions of reality that govern how individuals encounter experiences. Both orientations of inquiry into social worlds—ethnography and phenomenology—because they attend to the reflexivity of discourse, operate simultaneously, for which researchers must have the means to access and interpret both for a given social setting. They argue that “a hybridized analytics of reality construction at the crossroads of institutions, culture, and social interaction” (p. 492) enables researchers to vacillate between understanding how social reality is experienced and constructed among individuals and how social reality is experienced and constructed as a consequence of systems and institutions operating on/with/in individuals.

I was highly cognizant of how I organized, analyzed, and represented the data in order to be faithful to the experiences, perceptions, and imagined realities of the teachers in-becoming. The strategies of inquiry that underlie the analytics of interpretive practice, provide an intellectual vehicle for bridging the epistemological divide between ethnographic and phenomenological inquiry. The analytics of interpretive practice provide the strategy of inquiry that best enables the research questions to attend to both the social construction of reality as it is experienced by the participants while at the same time the critical analyses associated with the participants’ experiences being embedded in particular socio-cultural transitional conditions.

In order for an analytics of interpretive practice to maintain validity researchers

participate in what Holstein and Gubrium term “analytic bracketing,” which like phenomenological bracketing, is a process of consciously attending to specific operations in the course of analysis. Successful analytic bracketing occurs when the researcher provides for constant and conscious interplay that attends to the realities and subjectivities that are constructed in/at the sites of our everyday experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Analytic bracketing serves as an analytical routine that the researcher undertakes in understanding the data collected for a particular study. In practice, the researcher may set aside analysis of socially constructed sites of experience in favor of analysis of how individual participants understand those experiences, or vice versa, in order to understand “everyday realities as both the *products* of members reality-constructing procedures and as *resources* from which realities are constituted” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 496, emphasis in original). In the present study, to address the research questions, applying the analytic bracketing process to the data to explore the ethnographic practices opened up spaces to discuss the role of the social contexts in how and why participants imagined their practice was they do, while exploring the phenomenological considerations of how their lived experiences are rooted in the ways they imagine their practice. This strategy of inquiry allows the researcher to address the research questions with greater complexity and freedom.

Given the strategies of inquiry and the knowledge claims associated with this study, data were analyzed using an interpretive framework aligned with Hatch’s (2002) approach. Hatch argues that interpretive analyses are inherently problematic given that all qualitative research is in essence interpretive and further argues that qualitative researchers should adapt his framework in order to meet the specific needs for investigating particular research questions. Drawing from Holstein and Gubrium’s (2005) work, data analysis was conducted by modifying the interpretive

framework provided by Hatch to address both phenomenological and ethnographic methods within what they refer to as the analytics of interpretive practice. In the course of that analytical process, the interpretive framework advocated by Hatch, along with the modifications described here, subsequently allowed for multiple methods of investigation and analysis that specifically addressed the research questions associated with this study.

I conducted each of the interviews, as well as audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim each interview prior to analysis. Analytical steps that were taken were as follows. Following transcription, I began analysis by reading the data as a whole (Hatch, 2002) and identifying themes that align with the participants' lived experience following van Manen (1990). While reading the data, I also listened to the audio-recordings in order to fully embed myself in the context of the interview. The initial open-approach reading of the data orients the researcher towards the themes and ideas of experience helping identify what data is meaningful for further analysis. Initial open-approach data included themes of boundary setting, moments of personal insight and clarity, the significance of relationships, and the development of an imagined self-conception as a teacher. In synthesizing the whole of the phenomenon as the participants experienced it and based on the meaning units identified in the analysis of the parts in this way, the researcher is able to identify the essence (van Manen, 1990) of each lived experience. The essence is checked for structural integrity of understanding using "free imaginative variation" (van Manen, 1990). In this process, the researcher will be able to identify and describe how the phenomenon is understood by the participants, but also how that understanding lends structure(s) to the universal experience of the phenomenon. Notations were made on the data as themes emerged.

Following the initial reading of the whole, I employed analytic bracketing to shift my

focus deliberately between the social and cultural systems that may be identified in the data and the lived experiences perceived and described in the interview transcripts, especially with respect to the themes that had emerged during the initial reading. I used notes made during the interview to help address contextual issues and to make notations within the data regarding impressions I had of the data (Hatch, 2002). I also began noting areas identified by the participants within the data that pointed to the social and cultural systems in which they were embedded, as differentiated from their lived experience. These were noted in the transcribed text as statements of thematic topics and developed in bracketing writing about the data as I encountered it. Further, initial connections across participant data sets were made according to topic.

Next, I participated in developing interpretations of the data expressed in memos and bracketing writing. Following Hatch (2002), I was attentive at this point to draw connections between individual data sets and the data as a whole to maintain veracity of claims. During this phase of data analysis I was both attuned to the claims already being generated in early iterations of analysis while simultaneously attempting to identify new interpretations of the data that address key elements of the research questions under investigation. Consequently, data became organized along interpretive lines that addressed both strategies of inquiry (ethnographic and phenomenological considerations), as well as along thematic lines associated with emerging interpretations of data both individually and across the data sets. Specifically, the organization of the interpreted data further developed the initial codes (boundary setting, moments of personal insight and clarity, the significance of relationships, and the development of an imagined self-conception as a teacher) as significant to the understanding of dimensions of being a teacher in-becoming, as functions of imaginative practice, and, as the process of analysis became further extended, the role and consequences of vulnerability as a function of learning to teach.



As data analysis continued, this process became both iterative and recursive. It was iterative in the sense that continually occurred throughout analysis, with interpretations and thematic elements becoming more and more focused, contextualized, and fully developed throughout the analysis of the data. The goal was to get as close to the participants' lived experience as possible while still being able to provide deep context of and for the social sites in which the participants resided. It was recursive in that the process of analyzing the data required me to participate in a process of writing and rewriting, as well as coding and re-coding, in order to hone the interpretations of the data so as to both reflect the lived experience of the participants and the socio-cultural sites in which they were embedded. Throughout, following Hatch (2002), I consciously cross-referenced claims and interpretations with substantive evidence from and within the data sets. It was from these that the final discussion found here was created.

### **The Participants and Where They Teach<sup>4</sup>**

Two of the participants in the study, Jack Moriarty and Carolyn Dunkel, completed their field placement at a large public high school in downtown Ellington called Douglass Preparatory Academy. Douglass Prep, as it is known, is a newer, tall, sprawling campus in an older part of Ellington that resembles more of a modern college than a high school. It is a magnet school serving 2,400 students that draws its population from all over the city. School leaders, faculty, and community members affiliated with Douglass Prep considers it to be highly rigorous and acceptance to the school is determined by merit, based on test scores. The students at Douglass Prep are able to craft their own education by focusing in on one of several specialty areas during their four years at the school. The school population is over 90% African American and over

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<sup>4</sup> Readers may note that I have made the narrative choice here to write largely in present tense. The participants are, of course, no longer in their placement, but in my analysis, I discovered that their vitality and passion—as well as their relationship to the research questions under study—can often be best expressed in the present tense.

60% female. Jack and Carolyn taught social studies next door to one another on one of the top floors of the school building.

**Jack.** Like most things about Jack, when you ask about him you will almost certainly get the résumé version of his life. Went to parochial high school. Student government and sports. Teaching was always appealing, so he went to university for it. Now he's student teaching. Didn't expect to be at Douglass, but glad he is now. He teaches sociology and American history. He likes it. He likes his mentor teacher. And on, and on. In a way, it's exhausting to listen to. I learned quickly that you have to press him, almost annoy him, to get anything substantive out of him. It is exceedingly unlike him as I have come to know him which leads me to think that he tends to only give as much information as is minimally necessary. There's a distinct formality about how he talks about himself and his practice; it is as if he may not want people who don't know him to know him. But every once in a while, he opens himself up just enough for you to see into him.

He states rather matter-of-factly that his parents were divorced the previous year after more than 25 years of marriage; he adds no further commentary. He is the middle child of three and grew up in a middle-class bedroom community to the south of Ellington. His community was non-diverse (as he describes it). But it was as a high schooler, attending an affluent parochial school where he began to see social stratification and cultural differentiation in real life because so much of the school community was centered around church oriented activities, which tended to juxtapose with how he saw the neighborhood he grew up in. Perhaps this is why Jack is so intent on knowing the context in which he's operating before opening himself up.

His classroom is a wonderful blend of his personality. It is formal and rigidly organized. There are procedures in place that students know and abide by. The desks are in rows, but mostly

out of necessity as there are a lot of students to attend to. His desk sits front and center and a portable projector casts well developed notes, videos, and presentations onto the board behind him. Within that structure, the atmosphere that he cultivates is relaxed. He is relaxed, and jokes with a dry sense of humor with students as they come and go. When he teaches, he works the room, moving about and interacting with students. In many ways, he is more himself in front of his class than he is outside of it.

**Carolyn.** Carolyn is the child of ministers who moved around the suburbs and city of Ellington as she grew up fostering in her a sense of family, of service, and of being adaptable. She's the "middle" child of four—she has an older brother and younger twin brother and sister—and the importance of school was omnipresent growing up. She reminisces that having intelligent and meaningful conversations was a fixture in her family. They watch the news together, and would spend hours discussing the day's events or books that they were currently reading. Books were everywhere as well, and if they weren't spending time together, chances are they were reading voraciously. While teaching runs in the extended family—a few aunts and a cousin are also teachers—she reflects on the fact that her minister parents produced three teachers; besides herself, her twin brother and sister are also teachers. But it was more the support of learning that instilled in her the desire to teach, not as an intellectual exercise, but to serve others.

One of the things that impresses me most about seeing Carolyn as a teacher is that commitment to service. Her room is a cramped space, students crammed in nearly beyond capacity and narrow rows where students have to bob and weave to get to their seats. Yet she has worked to make it as homey and functional as possible, and nestled among the various posters and planted strategically near the door are fliers for colleges both nearby and from around the country. She's had a challenging year which has come at her like a full-on roller coaster ride.

She's had profound lows, having to face a difficult mentor teacher, Mr. Baxter, as well as students who had to drop out of school and, near the end of her student teaching, the death of a student. She's also had some remarkable high points, including feelings of making a difference as a teacher and as a coach, and students who still contacted her after she left her student teaching and tearfully told her that she'd given them hope. It's not surprising then to hear about how Carolyn has been a camp counsellor for years at a camp for students with special needs, including her cousin who is on the autism spectrum. Advocacy for special education is an area that she has great passion for, but doesn't speak about very often in the context of her placement. Yet, it is an omnipresent way in how she interacts with kids. She said it best, "I want to be able to help kids, as many kids as possible."

**Allen.** Allen Marks teaches at Marshall High School, a public high school in the nearby town of Blanchard, Blanchard adjoins Ellington but prides itself on its independence and diversity. Marshall High School might indeed be called a diverse campus, as it is evenly balanced between males and females, and while African American and White populations are at about a 2:1 ratio, other racial and ethnic groups balance out the student population. Blanchard Community Schools draws its population from three other area towns in addition to Blanchard. Marshall High School is a traditional high school with the wide range of curricula and extra-curricular activities one would expect of a prototypical American high school.

Allen teaches social studies in a converted science room in the "new" section of the building which was completed about fifty years previous, and subject to subsequent renovations. The room itself is long, narrow, and has a view of identical Roebuck bungalows along the tree-lined street outside. There is the standard science room sink, and some assorted outdated computers along what formerly had been experiment tables. At the front of the room, Allen and

his mentor teacher had cobbled together a passably contemporary technology component including a projector and a good sound system that filled the room. Even though the rows of desks were necessarily narrow and long to accommodate the number of students in the space, students would frequently use the tables and other materials at the rear of the room during free time.

Teaching is something that Allen has long wanted to do, and he was actively encouraged to pursue teaching throughout his youth in an upper-middle class suburb of Ellington by family and teachers alike. Perhaps it was involvement in music and the various collegiate music organizations of which he was a part, but he likens the rhythm of teaching to a kind of song of which he enjoys being a part.

Interestingly though, social studies came about relatively late in his academic career, not until he entered college. It was in science where he had always had success, and had even entered college with the intention of being a professional scientist. His parents both were in the medical field, and his siblings both had careers in science as well. One was studying physics while the other was an engineer. Science was everywhere around Allen growing up. But he had memories of his high school social studies teacher discussing with him his passion for teaching and there was a little voice in the back of his head nagging him to consider it. Then, one day he had a realization that he had no desire to do science, let alone teach it, every day, day in, and day out, for the next thirty years. He followed his interests to the social studies program. Though he could never really articulate why he had a passion for it, he simply knew that social studies was his path.

**Camille.** Still farther away from Ellington is the town of Meadow Grove where Camille Henderson teaches social studies at Meadow Grove High School. The school has several wings,

each extending from a central area where the school offices, cafeteria, and media center are located. Meadow Grove High School was originally designed based on an open campus concept, one where there were fewer walls to separate students. The open campus concept was ultimately abandoned and the district constructed walls to create traditional classrooms. The effect of the remodeling however created a labyrinth of rooms connected to each other through doorways, offices, and storage rooms. Meadow Grove High is a moderately sized school in a large district; the district serves over 30,000 students at more than 35 schools while Meadow Grove High School serves about 2,500 students. Meadow Grove High School is over 95% white, and has a free and reduced lunch population of less than 10%.

Camille and I chat as she leads me through a labyrinthine series of back hallways, offices, and connecting rooms that serve as a sort of shortcut for her between the various rooms she uses as a teacher. As an intern, she has two mentor teachers, Mr. Sugden and Mr. Perkins, both social studies teachers and both coaches. Coaching is a major concept and activity in Camille's world. She is a swimming instructor outside of her placement at a local gym where she has grown from a young swimmer to now, an instructor. Camille mentions it frequently. Her coaching is one area of her life where she feels grounded, safe, and successful. While her teaching placement has been something that she takes great pride in, her coaching is omnipresent in her life.

She even coaches on the same team that her youngest brother swims for; an opportunity she relishes. She laughs that she's a "soccer mom in training" with how she's always out there yelling advice and cheering him on. She goes on to say that she never watches the end of a race, that instead she's always cheering until the very end where she turns away because it's too much for her. She mentions casually that he was a little bit of a miracle, since her parents had been trying for a third child for some time and had endured several miscarriages. It drew them all

closer—she to her brother, the middle child, and to her youngest brother, whom she adores. The only time that Camille shows any emotion that isn't first masked by sarcasm is when she talks about her family.

She comes from a family that lived the American Dream. Her father was from a working class family and worked his way up to be a division chief at a large multinational company. Her parents have been married for 25 years and, she gushes, they love each other more today than ever. Now they live and work in a nice suburb of Ellington, and Camille is enjoying being back home for some time. She laughs that it's weird for her to drink a glass of wine with her mother, even though she's 22 years old, and even though her weeks are consumed with teaching, she loves seeing them and being around them on the weekend. Her upbringing, which included regular messages about the importance of work and integrity, frames her experiences coaching, and now teaching, with parents and students of wealth. She describes working at several country clubs with a great deal of irony because the “privileged, elitist, entitled, and hoity-toity” members never realized that she was the daughter of their boss; a father who kept her grounded because she saw things like the tears streaming down his face when he was able to buy her a car and send her to college. In her family, “you earn what you have, you don't flaunt what you have.”

So, watching Camille move us around the school through a series of back doors and hidden hallways, like a speakeasy come to life, I see a certain appreciation on her part that she is so much a part of the staff that she *can* show off her knowledge of the school. She has an overt sense of bravado in her behavior, as she is nearly showing off for me. Even as we enter her room, she has a flourish and a gravitas that demonstrates her authority. The room itself is a converted choir room with a stepped floor where desks fit precariously on their ledges and bare walls, save

for a few posters of the Core Democratic Values, and aging chalkboards with music staves permanently etched on them. She passes by a darkened office, not much bigger than a closet, her mentor teacher has claimed for teaching, but mostly coaching. His desk at the front of the room is bare, hers, next to it, is a few inches shorter and covered with piles of papers and her computer. She goes into teacher mode as the students come in.

**Amy.** The drive from Foster River where Amy Cassady teaches social studies and math at Foster River Middle School into downtown Ellington would take some time, though Amy never had the need to do so. Foster River is a moderately affluent bedroom community some 35 miles from Ellington that prides itself on its small-town feel in a large metropolitan area, despite a growing population within the city. Foster River Middle School is more racially diverse than many of the surrounding schools, more so than the city itself even; two thirds of the student body is white, while African Americans and students of Asian descent are the two largest minority groups within the student body. The school uses “pod” architecture to separate students into age groups and learning units, but also maintains several adjoining trailers to accommodate overflow populations.

The oldest of four kids, Amy has been working since she was sixteen years old and mostly paid her way through school. The suburbs have been good to her growing up, but her fierce independence is what helped her sense of self sufficiency. She considers it a manner of pride to be self-reliant and enjoys modeling that disposition for her younger siblings. Although she lives at home to save money during her student teaching, she looks forward to her imminent independence.

Amy has one mentor teacher, but splits her time between math and social studies. She primarily thinks of herself as a social studies teacher, where her mentor teacher has given her



essentially free reign over the curriculum and her teaching, but she can't help but also enjoy the intricacies and logic of teaching math. Yet, it's special education students that have her heart and her passion. She herself is dyslexic<sup>5</sup> and she admits that it was a major reason for her reluctance to enter education. Even though she wanted to be a teacher, she was worried about the potential issues from being dyslexic. But, when faced with her second choice, hospitality business, having inherent "sucking up to people" as part of the job description, she decided to pursue education despite her reservations. To that end, she is following in the footsteps of her grandmother, a 40-year veteran teacher, instead of her mother who quit teaching after two years.

Amy's student teaching room is clearly not hers. She has a small but officious looking desk with a few personal items, which appear to be carefully selected and cared for, and the usual assortment of papers and resources for her teaching, which are fastidiously organized. The rest of the room is entirely her mentor teacher's, featuring sports paraphernalia and memorabilia from his coaching and posters almost exclusively based on mathematics. It is a teacher-centered room, with desks in rows facing forward and a video projector in the front of the room. I can see nothing of Amy's personality in the room, and am less than surprised when she leads me to a separate room—one down three hallways and outside to an auxiliary stand-alone made for the overflow of students. She confides that she loves this room and has gotten to know very well the special education teacher whose room it is. Amy addresses her focus this way: "Being a part of a child's life is what is most important for me, and having that child excited to see you every day."

## **Conclusion**

In describing the methods and methodologies that underlie this study, I have framed the

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<sup>5</sup> I'm using the identity-first language of "dyslexic" as opposed to the person-first language of "person with dyslexia" here because it is how Amy describes herself. I do so for this reason only, and without further commentary of the value or consequences of semantic nomenclature choices.

research questions to collect meaningful data that explore the questions under consideration, but also hopefully to contribute something meaningful to research in education. To be sure, researching imagination as I have described it elsewhere in this study is a problematic endeavor which makes ensuring that the methods that are employed are appropriate for the kind of study I conducted, but also, and more importantly, that the methods seek to understand the forms of imagination, experience, and teaching in-becoming that I seek to understand. Consequently, the strategies and claims that are outlined here are designed to invite understanding about how teachers in-becoming live to “explore ideas about themselves and the world in which they live, to ask questions about the experience called living, to embrace ambiguity, to notice the unusual without fear, and to look upon the ordinary with new eyes” (Goodman & Teel, 1998, p. 67).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Imagination and the Role of Experiences for the Teacher In-Becoming**

Making an effort to interpret the texts of their life stories, listening to others' stories in whatever "web of relationships" they find themselves, they may be able to multiply the perspectives through which they look upon the realities of teaching; they may be able to choose themselves anew in light of an expanded interest, an enriched sense of reality. (Greene, 1978, p. 33).

Carolyn and Jack teach in rooms next door to one another, but other than seeing them briefly interact in the teachers' lounge, I would never see them speak to one another. They don't dislike each other, but even teachers who work next to one another find themselves caught in the ebb and flow of daily life at Douglass Preparatory Academy, with little time to interact (Lortie, 1975). Like with each of the participants, I would have a few minutes at the beginning of my visit to speak briefly and have them show me around. Carolyn was having a particularly bad day. She had found out the day before that one of her students, a freshman in her history class, had died by suicide. She was struggling to make sense out of it, not that anyone could, and her emotions were raw. She reflected on when she spoke about it with her class, noting that counselling was available, and how besides her own bereavement, she was also upset that she couldn't take away the pain that many of her students were feeling. She mentioned that she'd be missing her teacher education courses that week to attend the funeral, but that there were some things that were just more important. Whatever other human instincts I have to offer condolences and to comfort Carolyn in a time when she's clearly struggling, I notice that she's trying to make

sense of the suicide from her students' perspective. I also can't help but notice how she has framed suffering through the experience of the death of a student in terms of how her students were experiencing it. At this point, I had only spoken with Carolyn a handful of times, and didn't know her as a person at all, but I found myself impressed by the level of maturity that she was demonstrating. Her grief was real, but addressing that grief from the perspective of her students was the act of an experienced teacher. Her openness and desire to describe what she is thinking and experiencing is inviting. Overshadowing the stark anguish of the conversation, and the realities of navigating life and death in the midst of learning to teach, was an uneasy concern that I was an outsider whose interlocution, or at the very least timing, was malapropos and unseemly. Carolyn's invitation to know her is as genuine as is her propensity to state exactly what was on her mind; characteristics that would serve her well as she became a teacher.

This chapter seeks to understand how teachers in-becoming, as a function of imagination, form narratives about their experiences that constitute meaning for their practice. I will explore two thematic trends that dominate the way that imagination works with narratives of experience created by teachers in-becoming to constitute meaning in and for their practice.

First, I demonstrate how teachers in-becoming contextualize their understanding of practice through narratives about their experiences that are mediated by their perception (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1995), and how their unique phase of learning to teach influences those narratives. Of all of the various people that the participants encounter through their learning to teach, it is not surprising that these narratives are often framed around his or her relationship to a particular person or group of people. The significance they place on the relationships that they form suggests a great deal both about how they experience their learning to teach, as well as how they think about teaching writ large. In the process, the teachers in-becoming embody simple

metaphors that represent their pedagogical practices. Importantly, these metaphors are about imagining a simplified construct of how they approach their professional practice, one that can help them articulate quickly and efficiently how to approach problems of pedagogy, politics, and practice as they enter teaching as fully fledged teachers.

Second, messages about their experiences that are perceived by teachers in-becoming are filtered through metaphors to help the teachers in-becoming develop a sense of what can and should constitute valuable teaching practices. It's helpful to think of the process of formulating narratives about experiences, filtering experiences through metaphors, and extracting messages upon which to build their practice as an imaginative evolution wherein the teacher in-becoming develops his or her practice with fidelity to self, and sets the boundaries of what is and isn't possible.

### **Narratives of Experience Mediated by Students' Perceptions**

**Carolyn: Becoming a teacher because of her students, not her mentor.** Carolyn pauses for a moment and looks around her room. We have been talking about what it's been like for her as a student teacher in her placement and whether or not she feels like a teacher. It's a long pause and I can see her eyes searching the walls and looking out of the window across the tall buildings and the shadows that are beginning to creep across the city below us. I can see her taking it all in. The classroom where she became a teacher, the hallways still filled with students coming and going even well after school. She smiles slightly as she responds:

I felt a little disconnected because I'm not staff so I can't do some of the things that I would have if I was staff. I can't push for new books. I can't create a different kind of website because I don't have that technology available. I can't create my classroom because all of the stuff that was up here was here when I got here. I can't change the way

that the classroom looked to make it more me. But, I've never felt like my students aren't my students. I know them, they know me and I've had them since October. Even after I'm gone, I know they'll still be my students. Maybe not technically, but they are.

Carolyn's allegiance to her students is a disposition that is frequently attributed not just to student teachers, but teachers throughout the profession at every stage of their careers. And for Carolyn, her students are the anchor of her practice. She has formulated her teaching across her student teaching experience around her students and their lives. Carolyn's approach to student relationships is based on genuine interest in who they are and what she can do to make them better people, as well as better students. In a school where she would have upwards of 140 students who were constantly shifting and changing because of lax scheduling policies and an array of out-of-classroom issues that affected attendance, Carolyn's dedication was tenacious.

I made the effort and took the time to get to know the class as a whole and the individual students within it. I've taken the time, I've put forth the energy to make those students mine. It takes a lot of energy and effort to get to know students while teaching them at the same time. At the beginning of the year they're very hesitant to tell you things about themselves because they don't want to be friends with their teacher and they hate school and it's boring, blah blah blah. It's hard to try and form a classroom and get them learning and forge those relationships at the same time without being obvious that you're doing it. It's hard to keep track which my 140 students play which sport, collects what, lives with their mom or dad or other, has a younger sister that I've met at parent teacher conferences, or has been absent for a week because they've been sick in the hospital. To add to her repertoire of relationship building, she has gone out of her way to coach and to participate in extra-curricular activities. She has formed informal study and conversation groups

at lunch and after school. She has even given her personal number to some students so that they can contact her if they have problems. She even got a text from one of them during our final interview—one that caused her to pause and laugh, because it was a snarky comment about the ineptitude of Carolyn’s mentor teacher, Mr. Baxter.

Carolyn Dunkel does not like her mentor teacher; there’s simply no other way to put it, and she imagines herself as the antithesis of him. She maintains that she was professional about the whole situation. That she learned some things from him early on, and that she always tried to work with him. She also is emphatic that she never, ever said anything in words or demeanor that could be construed as negative about him to students. But she has no respect for him as a teacher. She laments that he doesn’t bother to learn students’ names and that he has no classroom norms. More importantly, she has never felt supported by him, and has never seen him put in any kind of effort into the craft of teaching, much less to the degree that she believes is necessary to create the kind of culture where students are engaged and learning. In some ways, it’s worse for her that her students know it too.

“They’re used to doing nothing when I’m not there. Now that I’m gone, they are not excited to go back to doing nothing because they know that they can have fun and learn at the same time instead of reading silently and not learning anything. It’s hard to know that is what they’re doing and not be able to do anything about it.” The relationship, or lack thereof, that Carolyn has with Mr. Baxter is the crux of how she has come to know herself as a teacher: not as Mr. Baxter, but the antithesis of him.

Mr. Baxter—and students, teachers, and administrators alike, call him Mr. Baxter all the time, regardless of whether or not students are around—is a teacher who had been at Douglass Prep for decades and has become accustomed to the freedom from being in the classroom that he

has cultivated over the years, like some of the out-of-classroom responsibilities such as tending to the technology needs of teachers around the building and the perks of having an intern who's taking care of your classes. In Carolyn's estimation, for Mr. Baxter to so relish in his dereliction is unmitigated malpractice. As her student teaching experience progressed, she viewed her responsibility as teacher to not only compensate for his indolence, but because where he failed was, for her, the most significant aspect of teaching. Carolyn is always "there" for her students.

When it was time to start finishing my student teaching, I had reminded him that I would have to start stepping back and giving him back some of my classes. He said, "Well they've always been my classes." I just wanted to say, "No they're not, because you don't know a single person's name in that class. You can't have a class if you don't know what that class is, who it is, what it is all about, what their needs are. It's not yours unless you put forth some effort to make it yours."

Carolyn's understanding of what teaching can be was cultivated in the absence of a true mentorship. She would often get advice from other experienced teachers, including Jack's mentor teacher, Mrs. Braithwaite. She even emulated some of the cultural idiosyncrasies of the school that she obtained from Mrs. Braithwaite, like how to be consistent with rules and policies. But it was never the same. In truth, she never felt intellectually challenged by Mr. Baxter, nor did her confidence as a teacher wane in the void created by Mr. Baxter's indifference. Significantly, the teacher she imagines she is and can be was crafted in the dearth of pedagogical support. What Carolyn did need was some kind of feedback, and some kind of human connection that allowed her to make sense of her own teaching. *Her students* provided that space for her.

**Allen: Being an apprentice and becoming a teacher.** Allen's relationship to his mentor teacher is complicated by his deference to his role as student teacher. He's glad that he was



challenged in his placement; he didn't want to be there at the beginning any more than Jack wanted to be in his. He envisioned student teaching in a school like Meadow Grove where he grew up. He imagined that he'd be walking into a school with the latest technologies—SmartBoards and one-to-one computing in every room—and that he'd be a part of a team of teachers working tirelessly to challenge students and give them all kinds of unique learning opportunities. Marshall High School is very much unlike his vision. Rather, his room there is in the “new” part of the school, which was constructed 50 years previous, and is accessed via a labyrinthine set of hallways. The converted science lab features a projector and computer apparatus at the front of the room that Allen fashioned himself out of components that he and his mentor teacher had commandeered from around the school. He is proud of his accomplishments, saying, “I think all of the experiences here have shown me that I can cope with different situations and environments.” This simple and relatively benign statement, includes a tacit reality that helps shape Allen's experiences. He is the consummate apprentice. His learning to teach is as simple as that. He is learning to teach, and even in his emergence as a full-fledged teacher, thinks about his experiences within the context of apprenticeship.

His relationship with his mentor teacher, Mr. Flowers, is based on the apprenticeship model. Strangely, Mr. Flowers is a relatively “hands off” mentor teacher. He is not constantly micromanaging Allen's work or behavior, nor does he show consternation about the direction that Allen is choosing to take his classes.

He's supportive, and willing to help if I ask it. He understands that if I ask for help, that it isn't my only thing that I got all these other things going on, so he's been great about that. I've definitely learned that he's very open and honest with what he says and how he feels about activities and different styles of teaching... He didn't really like interns. He'd given

up on the whole intern thing. I'm his first in several years, and the first that wasn't older. He didn't have the best experience with them. He didn't trust them, and he didn't think they were prepared or smart enough for the room...But he's very supportive of what I've achieved this year and how this year has gone. He's not afraid to give me some feedback if I do something wrong, but takes the time to tell me when I do something well or right. Still, Allen is always concerned with what Mr. Flowers thinks about his practice. While Allen articulates clear ideas about what he wants to do in his room, and the kind of pedagogy and materials he tends to value, and even is both clear about and confident in his autonomy as a young teacher, there is an omnipresent desire to appease, if not outright please Mr. Flowers.

I guess I don't see him as my equal because I defer to him. In the end it's his classroom. If a kid fails his class, it's not going to be on me. It will come down on him, which is why I defer to him in those settings. But as far as the day-to-day curriculum and teaching the kids, it's very much he'll let me do what I want and I'll send it to him and usually looks fine, cool, run with it. So in that sense I see us as an equal in the classroom. In classroom management we're not equal, but I guess sometimes then I defer to him. It is his classroom. Even though I know he trusts me, I still felt like I had to prove myself. I don't know why.

The "teacher of record" argument for being delicate about how an emerging teacher conducts himself in the learning to teach field experience is common among the student teachers with whom I've worked over the years. It is simply a function of the policies that overshadow the high stakes environments in which schools operate. But it is also pretense. A convenient yet largely fabricated motif by which student teachers conform to the norms of the apprenticeship of observation. For Allen, there is even further subtext. Not only is it a ploy for him to align his

practices with those that are going to satisfy Mr. Flowers, but it also acts to give him the framework to treat his student teaching experience as an apprenticeship—one where he is free to make mistakes, rely on others when he won't be able to in the future, and to identify pedagogical strategies that align with his emerging self-conception as a teacher.

The problem, of course, is that there is an inauthenticity that guides that kind of practice, especially at a point when he is a teacher in-becoming and about to depart the relative safety of the teacher education program for a career as a teacher. He discusses the relationship with Mr. Flowers in contrast with his other professional experiences with colleagues (both at the university and within Marshall High). “Our department is not seven different teachers. We’re always talking, always collaborating, always communicating and trying to get ideas from each other. And that makes for a powerful experience, for us and for the kids.” The juxtaposition of his deference to who is ostensibly his immediate supervisor, Mr. Flowers, with the way that he thinks about other teachers in the school operates to form narratives that are always contingent, and always rooted in an eagerness to understand and grow, but one whose positionality relative to the school environment is tacitly about giving as much as he can to get as much as he can as a learning teacher. Put another way, Allen’s narratives about his experience are framed as just that: experience. His day-to-day practice becomes commodified, drawing on what happens in his classroom, with his colleagues, and in the broader school culture as a means of collecting the experiences that he views as necessary to perform as a teacher.

There was a time when there were two kids who were about to go at it. I froze.

Fortunately my mentor was in the room and he stepped in and took care of it. Because even though you think about what you should do, I’ve never seen it before. I just felt like the students would see me as not being their teacher if he had to step in and take care of

the issue. But the next time it happened, I dealt with it. So the kids saw that it was going to be dealt with in a consistent manner, that's what matters. I mean, they knew I was new and learning.

Allen also has a profound connection to his students and to be a part of their lives outside of his classroom.

Whether it's my students or my friends or family or people I care about, I always put my needs last. I always try to take care of other people and make sure everyone else is happy before I do my stuff. Like last week a student needed to stay after school on Friday to make up a test, so I cancelled my plans with friends to be there...Because if you can develop a relationship, show interest in a kid, that kid might pass your class just because you're his teacher. I need to be a part of the community as well because it gives me something to put all of my effort into. There's a purpose. If it's just a show up at 8 and leave at 3 kind of deal, what else am I getting out of it besides the students learning history?

What drives narratives about teaching for Allen is not the relationship to others in the profession, nor is it exclusively about performing at the perceived standards associated with those who have a supervisory function for him. The narratives about teaching that drive Allen are about the skills and dispositions that he can acquire that will enable him to reach kids. The narratives that Allen constructs about what matters in his teaching, and ultimately why the teaching he envisions lies in contrast with the kind of teaching that he has actually performed, is because his values about not just *why* he teaches but *how* he teaches is rooted in his ability to construct broad narratives in and about the students he serves.

I think the biggest thing is that because of my personality and because I care about the students and I have a hard time being the jerk when I need to be, I have a great relationship with the kids. They come in and ask me how I'm doing, how my weekend was, and I think part of that is that they not only see me in the classroom but they see me in tutoring, they see me attending the basketball games, the football games, volleyball games. I go to all the sporting events, it doesn't matter. I have kids in all those sports and I want to show them that I care about them outside the classroom as well. I go to the musical, I go to band concerts, whatever. So the relationship's there but sometimes when you know what else is going on with those students, it's really hard to, or I find it hard to kinda demand that discipline when it's needed.

This is markedly different from the kind of student relationships that Carolyn has, despite the commonality of locating narratives of teaching within the broader context of forming positive student relationships. Whereas Carolyn was primarily interested in being a significant force in her students' lives, Allen's approach was more performative. He was demonstrating that he could do the things to be visible and available to them. He sought to understand them and why they were the people that they were. All of these are tremendous characteristics of a high-quality teacher, and because he embedded them into his practice, was better able to serve his students.

But the effect for Allen was to imagine students to be objects of study to be understood; his passion for helping his students was unidirectional, and that to be a teacher means knowing about students without knowing them. In all of the ways that Allen imagines himself to be fully prepared to enter into teaching the following year in his own classroom, his understanding of how to demonstrate what he thinks are the imperatives that drive his practice as he imagines it is relatively superficial. Whereas he imagines that his relationships with students will operate in a

“build it and they will come” form of community building as a teacher, he has not theorized beyond that simple metaphor; he has not imagined why, let alone what happens if they don’t show up.

The confluence of roles that Allen ultimately plays as the intern pleasing his mentor teacher and apprentice trying to get every last ounce of experiences from his student teaching and person who deeply cares about helping students creates problematic narratives for Allen to fully develop a positive self-conception of himself as a teacher. Yet, Allen is resoundingly satisfied with how he has progressed as a teacher.

**Camille: Becoming coach, becoming teacher.** Some twenty miles away in Meadow Grove, Camille was having a much different experience from both Allen and Carolyn. Camille had an inauspicious beginning to her student teaching but thrived on the challenge of trying to get better as a teacher.

When it came to the end of the first quarter, Sugden pulled me aside and said, “you’re pretty much the worst intern I’ve had to date. Like bar none. I don’t know what’s going on, but I couldn’t recommend you for teaching right now, I couldn’t give you a recommendation. There are interns in this building that are like, we know we don’t have the budget, but we have to find you a job. I couldn’t do that for you and that makes me sad.” I felt like sucker punched. It was the end of the first marking period around the end of October. The thing for me was, keep in mind I was also teaching in Perkins’ class. Perkins thought I was doing fan-fucking-tastic, so you have these very different experiences. While I had a horrible low point, I also had good high points the same day. I think the biggest thing for me is that I realized that I knew what Perkins’ expectations for me were but I didn’t know what Sugden’s expectations were.

And, because she identified with both of her mentor teachers because they were both also coaches, she was able to view her student teaching as an athlete would look to improve with good coaching. “I like knowing what the expectations are. I have so much respect for my mentors for letting me come in and screw up and figure out how to improve.”

It’s hard to know if Camille would have enjoyed her experiences student teaching if she had mentor teachers that were less like her. Many social studies teachers scoff at the old joke that “every social studies teacher has the same first name: coach.” Camille embraced it. Coaching, and specifically a brand of coaching that is predicated on respect, order, and control, became a dominant metaphor through which she filtered all of her experiences as a teacher and in particular with her work with students.

I’m not saying that it’s ok to be mean, but you can be blunt with students because frankly that’s what they need to hear sometimes. You know the first week I had some kids that were just goofing off. We were doing this thing and they asked me this is due Wednesday right? And I’m like no for you it’s due Tuesday. And they look at me like why and I’m like you know what you wasted my time all hour we had a Q and A and you’re over there playing hangman. By the way you spelled Yalta wrong. So for you it’s due tomorrow. You waste my time you can give me some of yours back to make up for it. Dead silence...There was one time a kid comes up, he’s been absent two days and we’re doing part of a review, going through some of it, and he has some good grades. He turns in his work on time. But he doesn’t respect class time. He distracts kids that do the work and it’s not every day. He comes up to me and says oh this will be due in two days right cause I was absent those two days. I’m no, it’ll be due in one. Why? Like you’re really going to come up here while you’re playing connect the dots all class period that I was giving you

answers to these questions to over half of them I might add on this review, you've been absent for two days, we have a test at the end of the week. You're really going to come up here and ask me for a two day extension when you're wasting time in class. I'm like so can you see why I don't want to give it to you? Do you see why I want it due tomorrow? And he's like, well yeah, I can.

Camille goes on for some minutes in this manner, recounting stories of her experience with students and the frustrations that she had in helping them to understand her expectations for normative and respectful behavior. I sit back and listen, but I'm not sure at this point if she knows I'm still in the room. Her cadence and her demeanor indicate that she is reliving each of these experiences as she tells them. When she finishes she sits back and thinks for a long moment before saying, "the most valuable thing you can give a kid is your time and your energy. Your attention. The kids that come to me they ask questions, they want to get better. They're looking for my input and are willing to put in the work and think about and take what I have to offer and use it. Those are my favorites because they come to me and they're willing to do the work and willing to look at what we can do together to help them get better."

Camille frames her teaching experiences in the context of respect. Whereas she is interested first and foremost in being good at teaching, and there is little doubt that she cares both for the job and the students, she finds that there is an impossibility in achieving her aims without discourses of deference for her position of authority.

As I listened to her, I couldn't help but think about seeing her with students. Whether she was playing popular rock music off her computer as they walk in to class, or participating in lighthearted and sarcastic banter with them in the hallways, one cannot help but believe that she is both a caring and dedicated young teacher. She has a rapport with students and her



descriptions of her experiences suggest that she is earnestly attempting to foster an inclusive and dynamic learning environment. Why then is the most problematic relationships in her learning to teach with students? Danielewicz (2001, p. 39) argues that “in treating someone who wishes to be a teacher *as* a teacher...we acknowledge and reinforce the claim, making it more and more real for the individual.” In that context, what Camille struggles with, even as she transitions to her teaching career, is the authenticity of being a *teacher*. In many respects, Camille’s narratives about teaching rely on continuing to play-act at teaching, equating student compliance and her ability to hold dominion over them as elements of respect and as necessary elements of what it means to be a teacher.

In the coaching metaphor that she has predicated her practice upon, this is for her what it means to be treated like a teacher, and what makes teaching real for her. The contradictory effect of a dominance-respect form of teaching practice for Camille is that is how she is able to engage in pedagogies that defy traditional classroom norms. She says, “I’m excited for this next unit where I get to do some discussion-based teaching because I think it might actually work. And it makes me kind of sad because I wonder what the hell was I so afraid of not to do this earlier...I don’t know why we are so convinced that we have to adhere to a certain format all the time.” In all of her attempts to control her students, and in all of her experiences that suggest that the relationships to and with students are those that she most equates with what it means to be a teacher, underlying those is sheer uncertainty and lack of confidence. Her façade is about hiding her intense vulnerability. For Camille, showing vulnerability as a teacher is about as close to failure as you can get. As is with many things Camille has to say, she uses the generic form “other teachers” to refer to those issues that are most hard for her to say about herself. When asked, she said, “If you are uncertain about where you stand as your own teacher in the

classroom, I think you're going to be worried. That self-preservation would lead into self-doubt and you're not necessarily going to be sure where one starts and another ends."

**Amy: Becoming a teacher when you feel vulnerable.** If Camille is reticent, even afraid, of vulnerability as a teacher, Amy embraces it:

I remember one day and there was something wrong on every PowerPoint slide. I felt like I was being fed to the hounds. You have this wrong, you have that wrong. Does it matter when we're talking about how the Nile River affects people's ability to produce food? I was just like, Mark [her mentor teacher], I'm going to go home. I'm either going to cry or go home so I'm going to go home. There's definitely vulnerability and it's definitely because of the way that I make mistakes I feel is very personal. That's why I try to set up a relaxed environment because the kids are going to see me make mistakes all the time so they should be able to as well. As far as professionally, I feel like you feel vulnerable in this profession. Between tenure and unions and all that stuff as well as having principals and parents continuously evaluating you, you feel like it's a vulnerable profession and you either grow thick skin and you say this is how I do things and it works or you get out.

By all accounts Amy is hard-working, bright, and constantly thinking about how to be a more effective teacher. She talks about the theories and resources from her teacher education courses as an everyday part of what she does with students, though she understands them to have a more than average level of perfunctory meaning for her. She is organized, and is a teacher who views her career as a teacher as one of strict professionalism. Yet, what underlies Amy's work is that she has a subtle and wry sense of humor about herself and her teaching. One of my favorite anecdotes from her is how she has learned how to answer students' questions. "My first response

in my head is what I'd say in normal life; the second was sarcastic for teaching life; and the third was without the sarcasm. By the time I answered the question, the kid had already moved on."

A large part of her sense of humor is because she is dyslexic and continues to work to overcome her disabilities. Her sense of humor has grown out of necessity, and her welcoming sense of vulnerability is predicated on the routine ways in which she makes inversions of letters and numbers, as well as misspellings. She describes simple tasks like writing names on the board or creating her own materials as panic attack inducing activities; a point that she argues almost kept her from pursuing education in the first place. Her general philosophy comes from an attitude that she'll make mistakes, but she's smarter and better organized than most people. In addition, the effect of this is that she is a teacher that for students, is inviting in her humor and her flaws, but is also an admirable colleague because of the professionalism that she has cultivated as a teacher. As she is moving from being a student teacher to being a teacher, these lessons stick with her, but the narratives that she creates as a consequence define a form of teaching that is predicated on student engagement, and a perceived form of professionalism that draws boundaries between her and other teachers in-becoming.

First, the narratives that she creates about her practice are about cultivating safe spaces for students. Her sense of humor about her own disabilities and affection for students who are struggling help support that disposition. She argues:

For one of my students, I know what a tight line he's on and how close he is to not being able to do the things that he wants to do. And it's because of past poor decisions. So if he's making really good decisions now but maybe said one inappropriate thing, I don't want that to be the final straw. I don't want that to be why he can't go on the field trip

now, because he got written up that one last time. But I also don't want him to think that calling people assholes in the middle of class is acceptable.

She continues:

I've got three types of students in my classroom: those that complain, "why can't we just read out of the book?"; well, because I don't like to so we're not going to. Then there are the ones that get kind of into whatever we're doing. And then there are the students that really surprise you. The ones where I think, "OK, you've given me nothing but C work, so just get it done on time and we're good. And then they shoot for the stars with a project or something. Two that stand out are that students had a really good feedback to the Facebook project I created, and I'm getting really good feedback from my Egypt quest we did recently. They just like doing something different.

Amy's care about her students is palpable, providing the major theme that she weaves in and out of her teaching as she transitions from student teacher to teacher in-becoming.

That sensibility about what constitutes a welcoming classroom also has implications about how she perceives her role as a teacher in a school. Consequently, the narratives about what are professional and unprofessional behaviors as a teacher clarifies the way in which she interacts with students and faculty.

Teaching is a lifestyle. People expect different things out of teachers. If you're a politician and you make a personal indiscretion, shame on you; if you're a teacher, you lost your job. If you are a hygienist and you see someone you work on at the supermarket you wave hi and walk by. If you're a teacher the parent comes up and wants to know why the student failed the test. Your personal life is much more open. Especially now with social networking and how quickly information flies. The way that you treat your

students and the way that you interact with people in your building is not only a decision but it's a personality based lifestyle. You're going to end up creating, not a legacy, but when you've been at a school people say this person is a nice teacher, this teacher gives a lot of homework, that's coach, as long as you're on the football team, you're fine in there. So you also create a living memory in the student body. I think that goes into what kind of lifestyle you choose. You as a teacher, what life you live, teaching definitely isn't a nine to five job or a I can leave it at work kind of job. It's a here's my personality. Take it or leave it. I think there are great things and negative things about it. I think it opens you up to great opportunities for relationships and communication. It allows you to always be changing and learning and adapting and challenging yourself. I also think that it's no business of my students what I do with my Saturday nights, but they don't see it that way. So that invasion of privacy obviously is something a lot of people struggle with.

Amy's humor masks a deeper fear that underlies narratives about why she makes the choices that she does as a teacher. In a very real sense, Amy practices a double life. In one, she has her outside school life, where she can be funny, and sarcastic, and imperfect, and enjoy all of the normalcy afforded to a person of her age and relative place in life, things like dating, and going to bars with friends. On the other is her life as a teacher, where she deems the necessity to be cautious—even, at times, perfect—in what she says and how she acts. In her “teacher life” her narratives are more concerned with having the right kind of relationship with students, like knowing and caring about them without revealing too much of herself in the process. In that life it is an inevitability that she care about things like how she is perceived as a person, whether she is living up to a perceived expectation of professionalism, and whether or not she is being the teacher that she imagined herself to be.

As Amy progressed across her student teaching, she became more and more comfortable moving between the two lives. During this study, at a time when she self-identified as a teacher, and was prepared as she could be to assume the autonomy of practice, the evolution of her narratives about teaching became increasingly blurred by the latter life—the life of a teacher—superseding the way she formed narratives about her life writ large. As a result, even the way that she thought about her relationship with and to her peers was affected by these perceptions about what is “professional”:

I taught social studies and math. Another student teacher from my university taught all social studies. We were very different individuals. Our professional style, our teaching style, our interpersonal relationships were very, very different. So a lot of the school’s perceptions of me were made by comparing me to him. And there were other interns from other universities too. We all felt like we were being compared to one another, especially with the other student teacher from my university. I think it’d be interesting to have him in your study, but he’s not the type to sign up for extra anything. Little things like professional conduct in the copy room. I’m trying to fix it from being jammed and he’s standing behind me heckling me. And I know him so he was trying to make the best of the fact that we all needed copies about five minutes before class started. But to other people, that was incredibly unprofessional. In that way it makes me seem more professional. Or where I was more creative in my lesson planning, he followed his mentor strictly.

She had mentioned earlier in the study how comical it was to her that her middle school students imposed middle school narratives on the student teachers in the building, laughing about how they had created elaborate soap-opera storylines about their relationships outside of school. But

in the transformation of becoming a teacher, the narratives that she values about those relationships are much more complex, suggesting that there are limits to friendship and a sensibility about what constitutes appropriate behavior in schools that separates good and bad teachers. That she applies these rules to her immediate peers, who are the ones against whom she'll be competing for jobs, and not necessarily the teaching staff as a whole is an apparent form of using those narratives, and the experiences upon which they are predicated, to develop a form of self-assessment for Amy to check her imagined teaching self against the field.

**Jack: Embodying a teacher but not implicating himself in being one.** The room is quiet as Jack sits in thought for a moment, save for the omnipresent random clicking of his pen. *Click-click.* We've spent the last few minutes discussing what it means to portray yourself as a teacher, and I keep trying to get him to clarify his responses. *Click-click. Click-click.* He seems a little agitated that I'm not simply accepting his answers on their face; to me, they come across more as rehearsed interview responses than emblematic of what he really thinks. *Click-click.* I've asked him to give me an example of a time when he felt like his students knew who he was. He is being deliberate in thinking about a response. *Click-click.* Finally:

Part of forming relationships is knowing what's going on and what's important to the students. So like Homecoming week, especially at Douglass, everyone seems like they're involved. There is something every day and with all of the clubs, you just have to know how busy they are outside your class. So we had a test planned for the day of the pep rally and just knowing that they had other stuff going on and it was for the betterment of the school, I went ahead and pushed it to a different day. Just understanding that they maybe needed a little bit more time to be prepared for the test.

Again his example is rooted in the kind of response he might give in an interview. Students know him because he pushed a test during Homecoming week. He expands on it, citing how he always tries to talk with kids before and after class about things that interest them, like music or the club they're a part of. *Click-click*. I try a different tack, asking him since labels are a big part of high school culture, what kind of labels would his students have about him. *Click-click*. Funny, or corny. Caring. Understanding. Well-rounded. Each accompanied by an anecdote about why he thought of it that way.

There is a reason that the omnipresent clicking of his pen is important to understanding Jack and the way he forms narratives about experiences. I came to see it as an intermediary to his thought process, and one that he deployed when he became frustrated with having to consciously attend to contradictions in his own narratives. For any kind of experience he would say, "oh I can think of a million examples of that" and would have a story about a student to back up his assertions. When asked about experiences in working with the social studies curriculum or addressing issues in the classroom, he would deliberate on his choices and times when he worked with students with relative ease. But when confronted with explaining *why* those experiences impacted his teaching, which is to say, to ask him to theorize his own practices, his speaking becomes deliberate, and he begins clicking his pen. It was something to do when he was forced to face the relative superficiality of his narratives, and address his own positionality in his practice.

For all of his claims to be "laid back" and "approachable", Jack maintains a stoic sensibility that is a barrier between the kinds of responses he gives and what he really thinks. It's both a form of compartmentalization of the activities of his teaching, but also a reluctance to implicate himself in the consequences of his teaching practice, beyond the mechanisms of



schooling, like assessments and pedagogical delivery. Both factors help Jack have a self-conception of teaching that enables him to feel successful—to feel like a teacher—without having to consider the ways in which he might have failed. As he does so, he is able to focus on the singular task of being interested in his students' learning, without theorizing what the consequences, limitations, and counterfactual possibilities for his teaching might be.

I don't want it to appear that Jack is obfuscating here. The truth is that he truly, deeply cares about his teaching, and he thinks a lot about what he does as a teacher. If you ask him about something he's teaching or why he chose a particular piece of curriculum, he almost gets giddy, excitedly talking about what it is he did and why. Frankly, he's friendly, outgoing, and he and I enjoy our discussions with one another throughout the course of the study. In short, he's a good guy, who tries very hard to give his all to his kids, and who is not satisfied with a kind of teaching where you merely show up.

Teaching is knowing your students and knowing what they need from you to become better learners. I think that a lot of times teaching, especially at the lecture level or the large lecture, is we give you the information, you write it down and study it, and that it. Then you come in and take a test. Getting to know your students, you create that bond that they know that a) you care about them and b) you address the problems that they're having in learning in the class. I felt that with students I know more about, I'm able to help them a lot better. I'm trying to reach out to students—it's always difficult because there's students that don't really want you as a part of their life or part of their learning experience even though you're their teacher. But those students that do allow you to, you can really see a difference.

Framed this way, it's not hard to see why Jack's narratives about teaching are nearly exclusively framed as discourses in understanding his students to support their learning. He does not view teaching as a Hollywood movie script where he will inspire students to rise up and meet their vast potential. "It'd be great if I had that kind of Mr. Keating [from *Dead Poet's Society*] sensibility, but I'm too much of a conformist, a traditionalist, in that sense." But instead he speaks of a girl who was in his history class who began the year with an F and by the time he left his teaching placement had worked her way to a B. "Her sense of accomplishment, you could just see it in her face." In his narrative, he worked with the student and advocated for her so that she could pass the course and learn in the way that he believed that she could. Absent from the narrative is the concept that he was implicated in her initial performance, and instead locates his narrative with the paternalistic "I know what's best" frame of teaching. In other words, rather than differentiating his instruction—or even acknowledging that as a teacher he began his student teaching with limited pedagogical skills and improved them over time—his teaching is structured by requiring the student to conform to him, and not vice versa.

There is an implied hubris in those teaching narratives. It suggests that Jack believes that his teaching was both consistent and of good quality from the inception of his student teaching experience, and that any growth that happened to him across the experience was "hidden" from students. He in fact discusses with great description the things he learned from his mentor teacher, from other teachers, from his peers, and even from his teacher education program. Each of these he very deliberately utilized to take from them the elements and dispositions that fit his understanding of himself as a teacher, and at this stage of his development he can demonstrate that he is not the same teacher that he was at the beginning of his learning to teach. Nothing about his present understanding of teaching substantiates that he believes that his approach to

teaching should change to better meet the needs of his students. Rather, the discourses that he presents are of students learning how to meet expectations and of students who are able to be “successful,” which are always defined by grade received or perceived effort on the part of the student.

By failing to implicate himself in his own teaching, Jack has effectively constructed a pedagogy of a teacher in-becoming who has the capacity to address student “success” but not fully understand his own. While he very well may be able to describe with some detail key areas of his professional growth, and it might be true that he was able to demonstrate growth in his evaluations, at least to the extent that he was able to complete his teacher education program, Jack’s framing of that growth in the nomenclature of student academic success is a mechanism for inviting an external locus of control on his teaching and obfuscating responsibility for the pedagogical choices that he makes in his classroom. There is a certain level of underlying fear in constructing narratives of experience in this way. He puts it this way:

The importance placed on testing really worries me, because I know that my kids get the concepts when I talk to them. You can see it. But sometimes when it comes to putting it on paper when they have three other tests that day and maybe a swim meet or basketball game or something that maybe something just got lost. I know that’s happened to me, I’ve gone in knowing the stuff and come out with a c or d and been like uh-oh. I just feel like as we go on, the pressure keeps building. Not only on students but on teachers too.

These are things that matter.

This is a rare moment of introspection for Jack, but is significant in that he identifies something, like his worrying about displaced authority in his classroom, where there is a breach in his façade of confidence, and where he acknowledges a vulnerability that is both beyond his control and

might impact thinking about his own teaching. Like most moments like this with Jack, it is fleeting, and he returns quickly to portraying himself as he imagines himself once again.

I wanted to end this section with Jack because he is simultaneously the most frustrating and fascinating participant. The façade that he has carefully cultivated through his actions as a student teacher is the same one that he is using to propel himself forward into his career as a teacher. At this stage of his development he imagines that, given his set of experiences, skills, and dispositions, *this* is what a teacher should look like. Getting him to break through that and be a person with real thoughts, and feelings, and fears, and doubts, and things that make him happy, and sad, and angry is for all intents and purposes a Herculean task. Yet, there is so much to him as a teacher that is difficult to convey through words that makes him admirable as well. He is a consummate teacher, and one that I suspect students would gravitate towards, just as his colleagues and mentors seem to do as well.

Jack also represents a vehicle for returning to the point of this section: the narratives that he has constructed about the meaningful experiences he had as a student teacher give him the language that he needs to understand himself as a teacher in the very particular place of being a teacher in-becoming. Recall that not all experiences are the same, and Jack, like the other participants, has formed important meanings about teaching and being a teacher around the ones that posed the greatest significance. Yet, because the frame of reference that each had is in a time and place where they are no longer subject to the rigors of being student teacher, they are free to theorize how those meanings construct and understanding of teaching for their yet-to-be-determined futures. Jack has a very stable idea about his self-conception as a teacher that, however superficial and contradictory, provides him with a foundation upon which to make sense of the experiences of his past so as to create imagine how he will be a teacher in the future.

Each participant does the same, and whether it is the relationships that Carolyn has crafted, the metaphors of “coach” and “apprentice” that anchor Camille and Allen’s work respectively, or the vulnerability and dedicated professionalism of Amy, each has attributed significance to experiences in their student teaching that frame who they’ve become as teachers, and who they expect to be in the future. This is the power of narrative construction as a form of accessing imaginative practices. For the teacher in-becoming, who is neither a student teacher nor an induction phase teacher, the narratives by which they construct meaning in and about their practice are the primary means by which they imagine themselves as teachers. In the section that follows, I will attempt to describe how the messages that are received by the teachers in-becoming about their experiences further embed into their imagination particular visions and versions of meaningful teaching.

### **Messages and Perceptions of Teaching<sup>6</sup>**

Feiman-Nemser (2012, p. 119) once wrote that “the first encounter with real teaching occurs when beginning teachers step into their own classroom. Then learning to teach begins in earnest.” While her sentiment remains a both pithy and succinct characterization of induction-phase teaching, this study identifies a new phase of teacher education, one that lies between student teaching and induction-phase teaching, what I have described as teaching in-becoming. In this narrow gap defined by the participants’ cognitive shift from student to teacher, while pursuing job prospects, thinking about how to portray themselves as teachers in their new settings, and planning, if only in their imagination, what their future classrooms will be like, the

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<sup>6</sup> A note on the narrative style in this chapter: The beginning of this chapter was organized around each individual participant to demonstrate how different narratives uniquely affect participants, and how imaginative practices derive from those narratives about experience. The second part of this chapter, and in the chapter that follows, shifts to a narrative style in which prominent themes that emerged from the data analysis are described by weaving participants’ statements with one another. That narrative style better expresses how those themes illustrate the relationship between imagination and the teacher in-becoming. In short, the change in narrative style is intentional for the purposes of clarity and organization of findings.

participants in this study were also actively theorizing their experiences during their student teaching and constructing narratives about what they can and can't do as teachers. Being in-becoming is a significant phase in learning to teach because it is the only opportunity in their career to internalize their teaching with a foundation of pure expectation and imagination. While the participants will surely continue to imagine and expect, framing their teaching in ways that support imaginative processes, throughout their careers, their teaching will always be tempered by their experiences as a teacher and juxtaposed against their student teaching. Being a teacher in-becoming, though, is unlike being in the induction phase. There is no survival mode, no adaptation, no trial and error, and no clinging to pedagogical practices that enable them to stay afloat as teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). This new stage of learning to teach is one where imagination forms the boundaries of what can and can't be done as teachers, based in large part on the narratives that are created by the experiences during their student teaching.

In each of the experiences, and the narratives that are derived from them, there is a conveyed message to the teacher in-becoming about his or her practice that demarcates the boundaries of how they imagine their practice. Messages about the proper way to behave, the kinds of curriculum that are more important than others, who to trust and who not to, how to treat students and those with authority over you, and especially how to think about the relationship between what is learned at the university and in the field are just a few of the messages with which teachers in-becoming contend. Because the experience upon which the message is predicated is contextual and unique in nature, the entity conveying the message varies from participant to participant, and from experience to experience. Yet these messages when taken in their entirety are the discourses by which the teacher in-becoming understands teaching and schooling, as well as the degree to which each perceives that the kind of teaching that is

imagined can be enacted in the real world. While the next chapter will deal with issues of boundaries and imagination more explicitly, the purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the messages do exist, and those messages have implications on teachers' in-becoming perception of teachings.

Part of the tension that student teachers face is that they enter schools that are often not particularly dynamic places, but are places where institutional routines and norms about teaching and learning are continually reified through policy and practice. Student teachers also come to the field setting knowing that creative pedagogies are judged favorably by teachers and teacher educators (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 176). Jack speaks about how these tensions are manifest in his day-to-day practice. During our conversations across the study, he would routinely use the word "covering" when referring to his implementation of the curriculum, but would immediately correct himself, saying that the word "covered" doesn't convey what he does in the classroom. When confronted about this he says,

We were told by the university that "covered" is like a dirty word. You're not supposed to be covering material, you're supposed to be teaching material. Just over three or four years of being in that department, that's my feeling about it too. Also, the social stigma that goes with it. If you say covered to another teacher, I worry that they think, "what's he think, that I'm just getting through it?" Sometimes the perception that goes with getting through the material is that you're not teaching it as well as you could have. You're not being as innovative or something. It's more of something I've learned over time.

By the time that they become teachers in-becoming, they have received those messages, filtered them through narratives created by experiences, and used them to construct an

individualized sensibility about what teaching is and can be. Camille's statement about how she evolved as a teacher is a good way to frame this phenomenon.

I think that especially when you start, your concept of teaching is to have your notes in a special way and you have to do this, this is what we're doing today. Eventually we branch out, we don't use the notes, we do something else. You do a simulation, you do a discussion, but I don't think you see very often where you carry it through for a whole unit. Which I think I'm going to find is going to be stressful, but I can't wait to try it because I am going to get a lot out of it by trying to make something different work. Because they've never had anything like this and I'm curious to see how this changes what is going on in the environment, if it changes classroom culture, if it changes how they view the class, if it changes how I view the class. It's not just a slight change. It is a 180. And I'm really excited to see how it changes. I think part of it might just be that we're panicked. We're young. We're inexperienced. We're stressed. We go back to what we know.

Camille's message is shared by the participants' experiences in learning to teach, and as they imagine themselves as teachers in the next phase of their career, they have already begun internalizing the perceptions about teaching. The problem, of course, is that they have an inherent tension associated with the two messages. In one set of messages, they are supposed to be doing dynamic teaching, being creative in their pedagogical strategies, and developing relationships that change children's lives for the better. They recognize that these messages suggest that any degree of deviation from those pedagogical practices will demonstrably reduce the quality of students' experience and, in return, label themselves as low quality teachers. In the other set of messages, they've learned how to survive through the stressors and idiosyncrasies of



being in a school context as student teachers, and have been bestowed with extrinsic rewards that tell them that they are, in fact, successful teachers. To be sure, the extrinsic rewards that they value depends on the narratives that they've created in their experiences in learning to teach, but regardless, they recognize the way that they teach has certain normative characteristics which, despite conflicting messages elsewhere in their learning to teach, they believe has value, both for the kind of teacher that they want to be, but also as a function of being "successful" in a real life classroom. When reflecting on a good two-three day sequence of lessons, Allen describes defining success within those conveyed messages this way:

It showed that I can do it. It showed me that I definitely have the capability to do it. I have the ability to connect with students, I just have to carefully plan how I do it. It's getting the right mix of activities and stuff down. I guess for most of the classes that worked, a couple seemed distracted. It just shows me that each class is different and you have to tweak each one a little bit to go with their needs and their wants and stuff but that the way that I see myself as a teacher can be effective. I just have to perfect some of the ways in which I am doing it.

At this stage of learning to teach, the teacher in-becoming is able to articulate a philosophy of teaching that is perceptively operational in an active classroom, but is also deeply embedded within described barriers. Carolyn is a prime example of this. She speaks eloquently of her great experience, how she's become close with her students and how she wouldn't change the experience at all, yet, she has literally nothing good to say about her mentor teacher. She describes the school environment as often disorganized, and complains about policies that interfere with her teaching (such as a school rule about allowing tardies that effectively reduces her instructional time in first hour). Despite the conflicts and tensions conveyed to her through

her experiences as a teacher, now outside those settings as a teacher in-becoming, Carolyn is actively forming a perception of her teaching practice that can be actively operationalized into a classroom setting.

Carolyn has developed a set of narratives about her experiences based on the relationships that she's forming, especially with her students. No doubt that the death of one of her students played an important part in feeling a connection to her students—in our conversations, her emotions were raw on that topic. Her desire to connect with students conveys a message of what kind of teacher that she wants to be, or more accurately, the kind of teacher she believes that she already is, and contrasts that against the barriers and problematic interpersonal relationships that she has dismissed. For her, the experiences that she has had, both positive (the reaction of her students, her involvement in the school community, her feeling of success) and negative (her mentor teacher, the systematic aspects of schooling), frames for her the kinds of teaching that she aspires to create: passionate about subject matter, passionate about students, passionate about being a part of a school community, even as she discusses the strain and complexity of operating in a social system of schooling.

Teaching is hard. On any given day you could go through a full rainbow of emotions from being ecstatic that a student that has been struggling gets it finally, a student that has been sick or missing comes in and sits down like they've been there every day which is just frustrating. Coming up with new and exciting and different ways to assist your students in creating and finding knowledge for themselves without just telling them what I want them to know. It's hard for me to not step in and say it's this, this, and this instead of letting it organically happen in a class discussion or simulation. That's hard to know the right answer and not give it to them.

Such tensions in articulating perceptions of teaching have a rather dramatic effect on the psyche of how teachers in-becoming experience their role as emerging teachers, and what they can expect from the job. To put it plainly, the pressures are real. Allen's commitment to teaching as a teacher in-becoming is emblematic of how the participants speak about being a teacher.

Teaching is a 24-hour job, but rewarding. I used to go home and do work. You'd have that random dream about school and what happened. I had a dream once that I had to kick one of the nicest kids in class out one time, which was really weird. But your brain I don't think ever shuts off. I'd take breaks from it but it never shut off. Even now, I'm always thinking about it. How can I do this better, or what am I going to do tomorrow, or what am I doing next week? How can I change that lesson, and how can I teach it differently? I think it's always because I expect so much of myself that I'm always on the clock.

A combination of a limited understanding of the social contexts of teachers within schools and uncertainty about how to interpret and internalize conveyed messages, creates conditions of fear where the teacher in-becoming, even after all his or her duties are completed, still has a perception of teaching that dominates not just in-practice life, but also the life outside of university, and outside of school. The effect is that teachers in-becoming are never quite free from a constant addressing of the job, and in that confinement, never quite free from trying to make sense of the conflicting messages that they receive either those that are explicitly conveyed to them, or through their experiences. Parker Palmer (2007, pp. 37-38) describes the multileveled presentation of fear in even the most routine educational and pedagogical acts: the fear of the live encounter, the fear of diversity, and the fear of losing identity. Teachers in-becoming, even as they routinely theorize their practice against the experiences and narratives that they have

created, still limit their perceptions of teaching against the stresses of their student teaching, and the fears they have about disrupting the career path for which they have worked so diligently.

Camille says it this way:

I think that especially as young teachers you are told so many things that you work in a culture of fear; that as a teacher you have to interact in a way that is innately fearful of what might happen.

After a long pause, she continues:

I've been very lucky. You know, the administrators were very understanding about the things that we're covering. I had misgivings about how our units were structured which is more related to our resources than our actual ability or belief as teachers. But I think I've seen it when I hear other student teachers talk about it. Or, it's just being taught to always worry that you don't even know where the line is but you might step over it. We don't even know where the line is or where it is, or if it really applies to us or if it doesn't. We know that somewhere there's a line, and we're still young and inexperienced and we don't know where that line is. If that line's there, what do we do as we approach it? How can we get around it? How can we negotiate it? We don't know. We just know that we've been told from day one that we need to watch out. This could happen to you. Teachers get fired for that sort of thing. Well crap, I don't even have a teaching job yet. I feel like we get it jammed down our throats so much that we are so terrified of it. And that first moment when you're in front of the classroom, in addition to the "crap I know I know this stuff, now how do I teach it?" stage fright issue, you have the "am I doing this right?" so I don't get screwed? I think it is a horrible feeling to have.

And therein lies the true contradiction about how narratives of experience exist, and how they help teachers in-becoming perceive teaching: a teacher in-becoming is always thinking about his or her practice, and always trying to determine what he or she could do differently to produce a more engaging and effective experience for students. But there is an omnipresent culture of fear that ill-defines the boundaries of what they can and can't do, except that there are clear messages that there is an invisible line that they cannot cross. I ask Camille the obvious question following this exchange, "who told you?" With a wave of her hand, her response was: "*they* do," meaning it's an ever-present message conveyed by the institutions of her learning to teach—university, schools, students, parents, mentors, policies, and on and on and on. To live in a culture of fear, as Camille puts it, is to be forced to define those boundaries for one's self and to make decisions about the ability to cross across those boundaries to achieve the kind of teaching that the teacher in-becoming imagines, or if the narratives of experience provide a safeguard for their teaching practice. The problem, of course, is that the teacher in-becoming has no place in which to sort out that dilemma, except in theorizing her own practice. This is what Greene (1995a, p. 65) refers to as "an interlude between a lived past and what we conceive to be some future possibility." They may have imagined schools and classrooms in which they will one day inhabit, but at this stage of their development, the only frame of reference they have for making meaning from the web of contexts in which they are coming to understand the complexity of teaching is in a past they've left behind, not only because they've completed their obligation to their teacher education, but because they no longer conceptualize themselves as student teachers. In that way, the narratives they've created and their perceptions of teaching could not be more important in framing the kind of teacher they one day hope to be.

## Conclusion

This chapter has been dedicated to clarifying, organizing, and providing significance for the ways in which teachers in-becoming use experiences—often expressed as disruptions and subjectivities—to articulate what matters to them as teachers. Through the formation of narratives about their experiences, they attempt to constitute meaning for what they imagine teaching to be and to develop ways in which the versions of their practice might be brought to fruition. They must contend with conflicting messages about their practice, and in recognizing them, formulate perceptions about what the kind of teacher they imagine themselves to be. The effect of this process is to distill their daily lives, and all of the complex relationships and subjectivities, into operational meanings about self, especially self as teacher.

I've tried to describe that process through the words and deeds of the participants of the study. Indeed, it is their lives and their becoming of teachers with which this study concerns itself. Their voices are the ones that matter here. To paraphrase Britzman (2003), the most powerful version of a teacher in-becoming is one where she is the author of the teacher she is becoming. The following chapters will turn the attention away from explicit experiences and the narratives created by them, to explore more deeply the imaginative qualities of what it means to be a teacher in-becoming. Yet, it is upon those narratives where the visions and versions of the teachers they are becoming are built, and the meaning created by them, however contingent, cannot be understated.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Imagination, Possibilities, and the Teacher In-Becoming**

The question of boundaries of course is the main question of daily life. And this is one of the major questions of our lives: how we keep boundaries, what permission we have to cross boundaries, and how we do so (Yehoshua, 2004).

This study tells a story of the evolution of five young teachers during a phase of their learning to teach where they are in-becoming, and the significance of this chapter is that their words—how they imagine themselves and their realities—gives credence to the notion that there are important things to learn about that phase of teaching, especially when they are faced with the prospect of having to cross boundaries, and to imagine about how to position themselves as teachers. To become a teacher, we must all proceed through a phase of in-becoming where our self-conception as teacher is ambiguously shifting between a discarded past and an unknown future.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the meanings that the teachers in-becoming have constituted in and about their practice to imagine what is and is not possible as a consequence of how they understand themselves as teachers. The goal is to articulate the degree to which teachers in-becoming are able to imagine practices that are not technocratic and where they feel not just free but compelled to engage in practices that lie outside normative assumptions about what you can do in a classroom as a teacher. What I discovered was that often the barriers that teachers in-becoming erect and negotiate are necessary for them to face contradictions in their practice, to situate their sense of teaching within an imagined space, and to formulate an

operational sense of self as a teacher. It is not about being creative in executing curricular or pedagogical strategies. It is not about conceiving of a Utopian milieu in which they magically ascend to the pinnacle of their practice. It is a messy process in which teachers in-becoming struggle to come to terms with the narratives upon which they have based their understanding of teaching, and within them, construct the conceptual architecture that enables some possibilities to be considered, while others remain elusive.

This chapter will address three major themes that are significant to the relationship among imagination, possibility, and the being a teacher in-becoming. I begin by interrogating the multifaceted and problematic barriers and boundaries that riddle the landscape of a teacher in-becoming's practice and emerge hopeful and focused on the possibilities that arise from imagination. Then, I examine how forming a self-conception as a teacher occurs, and the role that imagination plays in it. Finally, I will discuss what it means to be a teacher in-becoming within the context of the participants' lived experiences, and how an image of being a teacher emerges.

### **Fears and Epiphanies, Boundaries and Possibilities**

Amy leans back in her chair and takes a long drink of water. She has been talking for almost 30 minutes straight about how and why she designed a unit the way that she did, but, I believed, the drink she took was more to buy her time than to quench her thirst. She is pondering the question: does planning your instruction using the format you've been using in your placement help you think about the possibilities of teaching? She looks at the lesson plans she brought with her spread out before her, rereading them and considering them. I'm literally on the edge of my seat; I'm sitting forward in anticipation for what I think is an important question, but also due to the methods I've employed in this study I've been anticipating that now I have an



opportunity to have with her this important conversation. So far, she had discussed the merits of planning using the nomenclature provided to her in her university courses, which favored using *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), a markedly different, and far more complex variant of the planning she has been doing in her placement, which primarily consisted of joint planning activities and using the same resources across three social studies teachers so that all students in the school were “doing the same thing at the same time.” She’s been choosing her words carefully thus far, speaking in fragmented sentences and trying to rationalize why her daily practice of putting topics in calendar boxes like so many teachers before her was ostensibly more appropriate to her understanding of teaching than using the model used at her university. In fairness, what she’s doing in her placement is far more detailed than that, but she recognizes that the two ways of planning are not the same. Her pause is now at 20 seconds or more, which feels like an eternity in the cramped room with no windows where we conducted this interview.

“I mean, process wise, they’re very similar. This one is much more efficient in a sense because it’s not like I have time to write a two-page rationale every day. Having a rationale for everything you do *is* important, but writing it out for two pages just isn’t possible when you’re teaching every day.” She stops abruptly. “I don’t think the university has ever presented another style of lesson planning for me to do, now that I think about it. It’s this is how you lesson plan, it’s called UBD, just do it.” Then, the realization is quickly over and she says:

I think my style of lesson planning adapts the good things of UBD and what I feel comfortable doing. Especially as a new teacher I feel comfortable—I feel it’s necessary to be able to show that I did these standards on these days. To be able to say, this is the day that I covered these test questions. It’s an accountability thing that maybe wasn’t in education five years ago, but I know accountability will be for the rest of my career.

She goes on to talk about the need for greater flexibility and gives herself a hard time for not writing down the journaling questions or other structured activities in her teaching with more deliberation and detail. But I find myself distracted. She just said that one of the most important things that she will need to be able to do as a teacher is to demonstrate that she's doing her job. She is already experiencing an overt sense of surveillance about defending her practice from an unknown and ethereal inquisitor. The effects of living in the "age of accountability" (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Montgomery, 2012) are on full display for Amy. Though she clearly does not realize it, she is articulating a vision of teaching dominated by technocratic ideas about what constitutes her craft rather than inviting the means of exploring innovative practices (Greene, 1995b; Ravitch, 2007, 2010). Some minutes later she explains that for most of the jobs that she's looking at, she knows she'll be required to submit her lesson plans for review. She simply sees it as the nature of the business.

It occurs to me that it might be through the negative discourses that demarcate the boundaries of our practice as teachers, which, as a component of imagination in which the teacher in-becoming sets limits about what he can't do, regardless of external stimuli, based on the perception of his relationship to and with the social world, that allows us to imagine teaching. We all have them, and teachers in-becoming are particularly susceptible to overidentifying the boundaries of teaching due to their relative state of transition and the qualities of the unknown that arise from that space (Danielewicz, 2001). The participants in this study have already formulated a self-conception of themselves as teachers, but the consequences of how they imagine their practice, and their relative success as a teacher, within that self-conception may have as much to do with the negative qualities of their experiences than with the positive ones. It is only through identifying the boundaries of their practice that they can imagine acts that cross

over them. By crossing over the barriers that inhibit our practice we can then see possibilities for the choices that free us to teach in ways that we imagine ourselves to that they are. The self-conception of a teacher in-becoming as a teacher is dependent on it. Jack says:

At first I felt a little timid in the classroom. Not because I didn't like it but because I didn't want to screw up. I wanted to make sure I was getting my point across and that they were learning something. I always hated being in classrooms with the teacher who was like sit there and either do book work or do nothing. I really didn't want to be that kind of teacher that couldn't get his point across and had to result to that. Having those experiences and knowing that people I really respect as colleagues and teachers I really respect were having similar experiences, this isn't out of the ordinary. If you have a bad day you learn from it. That confidence of walking into class and thinking I can do this because I know that I've had shared experiences with other people that I think are really doing a good job. That really helped.

Jack won't go as far as to say that he's afraid, but he comes about as close as he ever will to admitting it. Everybody has fears. O'Donohue (1999) puts it this way:

On the outside a person may seem contented and free, but the inner landscape may be a secret prison...we have a real fear of freedom. In general, everyone is apparently in favour of freedom...In the practice of our lives, however, we usually keep back from freedom. We find it awkward and disturbing. Freedom challenges us to awaken and realize all the possibilities that sleep in the clay of our hearts. (pp. 100-101)

Fears are natural and, even when fantastical, are always products of our imagination. In the purest sense, a fear is an imagined form of what could be. But in common practice, we take the experiences that we have, form narratives about them, and sometimes, perhaps too often,

imagine that what troubles us, what we are afraid of, is a barrier to entertaining possibilities that lie outside of our experiences. In this way, fear is imagined, not as a fantastical, elusive thing, but a way of knowing the worlds in which we inhabit, and a way of circumscribing our experiences.

Everyone also has revelations that help them see the world clearly. This phenomenon, referred to as epiphanies, or what Denzin (as cited in Kien, 2013) argues is an identifiable moment of lived experience that one can identify as a turning point in one's understanding of oneself and one's relationship to the world, opens for individuals possibilities and signifies a breaking through of barriers, so often shrouded in our fears, that had previously obstructed personal progress. This is a long way of saying that whatever our imagined self, and whatever our goals, we still have fears that hold us back, and we still have moments of clarity that propel us forward.

Of course, having both fears and epiphanies is true of teachers in-becoming as well. In their learning to teach, they experience fears and they experience epiphanies. The narratives that they create about their experiences that were described in the previous chapter serve as mechanisms for embedding the messages they receive, and for orienting their practice; epiphanies and fears are the most visible architecture that permit possibilities to be realized. The participants in this study clearly stated what some of these were and how they impacted who they are as teachers. Importantly, the fears and epiphanies that worked in their practice operated to help them break through barriers and identify possibilities either for themselves or for their practice.

As I have come to know her, I believe that attempting to see possibilities for herself as a teacher is where Amy is coming from when she says, "I'm scared of getting burned out. I would hate to be in the classroom because it's a steady paycheck. Not only do you hate your life, but

your kids hate your life.” The product of fears and epiphanies is an engagement that either permit us or inhibit us from breaking through the self-created boundaries of our lived reality. For teachers in-becoming, this is the process of first identifying the conceptual frames that act as impediments to the kinds of practices that we have imagined, and then determining the extent to which he or she has agency, even permission, to contend with them. The participants in this study are emblematic of this practice, and through their words, the role of fears and epiphanies as a mediator of possibilities of their practice is evident.

I’ve said it elsewhere, and I reiterate: cracking Jack’s façade is challenging. He simply does not like to think about himself in any vulnerable way as a teacher. For a person who momentarily let down his guard to tell me that he was initially nervous about teaching at Douglass Prep, he is remarkably uncommunicative about anything that truly scares him. When probed, he interprets it two ways. His first reaction is that it scares him that a student might walk away from his class feeling like she didn’t learn anything. Then he interprets it as being fearful of physical harm, which he adamantly doesn’t have. It’s more of an intellectual exercise to consider what he’s fearful of, and the only intrusions into who he is as a person are limited. Partly, for Jack, expressing personal fears is a matter of invading his carefully cultivated teacher personae, and by extension the confidence that he founds it upon. But by the same token, it is why he’s unable to identify a single moment of epiphany, but instead as how he’s always analyzing this work:

Little things like that with lesson plans that will just hit you when you’re driving or sitting at home avoiding looking at it and watching Sportscenter instead. I’ve had that happen with projects, I’ve known that I wanted to look at something in a certain way but

I don't know what I wanted to ask them or focus on and the way that I can do it really hits me.

Jack's discernable reluctance to consider his self as part of teaching prevents him from considering possibilities. His vision of his teaching is as it always is: good, but he can will it to be better.

When I ask Allen what he's afraid of as a teacher he shrugs his shoulders, sighs, and says, "To put it bluntly, I'm afraid of the possibility that I might suck. That I might just be terrible as a teacher." I've known Allen to be anything but a terrible teacher; he's young and still has a great deal to learn about his craft, but all of the evidence suggests that he has both the dispositions and the skills to be a highly effective teacher. I tell him that I find it curious he'd think that and ask him why. He replies:

It's about not being able to do what I want to do; not relating to kids the way that I want to, and not being able to affect kids in a positive way. When I see some kids get out of control or to lose focus and you just can't get a kid to understand the importance of why they're here, it's going to be really hard for them to buy into the education and what it can do for them. That scares me. I've seen how valuable it can be and I see how much emphasis society puts on it. When you're 13 years old, you don't really think about that.

Allen's initial reaction to the prospect of something scaring him is to give an unfiltered, totally honest response that implicates not just his own actions, but his self-conception as a teacher.

Faced with imagining his teaching practice and what could identifiably frighten him, he articulated a clear and internalized personal response: he might suck. He simply might not be good enough. But, that moment was fleeting, as Allen quickly relocated his fears more directly about his practice, an act which has an inherent safety. Instead of the highly personalized, self-

directed ineptitude, Allen retreated to the security of turning his fears about failure onto students. Instead of “I’m not a good teacher,” his fears refocus around the external, “I might not help students the way that I want to.”

Vacillating statements of fear and epiphany between internal and external locus of control is a mechanism for sustaining positive imagined self-images as a teacher that support the belief that as teachers in-becoming, they are prepared to be autonomous teachers. Allen’s shift from momentary vulnerability to analytic determinism isn’t intentional. Instead, it allows him to shift the burden of the imagined that scares him away from his personal characteristics and instead locates them on his teaching in his school context, which he perceives he has far greater control over. The consequence is that as he describes moments of clarity and epiphany, he does so in ways that affect what he personally believes is important to his teaching, but without interrupting the cultivated personae of “Teacher.”

Allen describes his epiphany this way:

The crazy things that have happened to some of my students outside of the classroom has just reminded me how much students have going on outside of this class. I’m not a big “homework every night” person, I understand they have other things going on, I know some of my kids have to go home and take care of a younger sibling. I know students are involved in athletics or have to go do something else. I’ve had a kid filed truancy against him and they were in jail for a week. I’ve had students in the hospital because their brother is there or their mom passed away. There’s so many things going on outside of their lives that I guess I just realize that there’s so much more to a student than what happens in your classroom. I think you really have to know your students to succeed at the level I want to succeed at. You need to understand where they’re coming from. And

you never write off a student, ever. I know that's something they always tell you, but I've seen several kids walk into this class beat up by just the mentality of I can't do it, I've never been able to do it. They're great kids. I've had students walk into my class and people have told me, she's a nightmare, have fun. And she's one of the best behaved kids in my class. So, I guess it's just the amazing ability for kids to change in your classroom based on how they perceive you and how much you respect them. Because it's something that not all the teachers do and the students definitely notice it and they don't take it for granted when you show them that respect and caring. Those are the two big things.

Allen's shift to thinking about his practice in the highly personalized terms that he began discussing his fears with to this broader philosophical statement about the importance of what he does in the classroom provides a space for him to juxtapose his personal fears and inadequacies against broader social structures that he sees lived out in his teaching and by his students that come into his room every day. The effect is to constitute imagined practices that attend to both aspects of his emerging self-conception as a teacher and to reify his confidence in being a teacher in-becoming.

Sometimes though, the process of how fears and epiphanies operate in the imagination are less overt than they are with Allen, but they are nonetheless both present and important to the way that the teacher in-becoming understands teaching. Camille had a somewhat challenging time as a student teacher. At one point, one of her mentor teachers told her that she was the worst student teacher he had ever seen. In addition, she struggled to find her voice and her place in teaching as she dealt with insubordinate students and several classes that were dismissive of her because of her personality. On the edges of her narratives about her experiences is a rawness that she wasn't sure she was ever truly liked, not as a teacher, and not as a student teacher. She says



that she is the kind of person that prefers to “sit back and observe” in social situations so she can analyze and understand the interplay of personalities and the dynamics of the context. An unfortunate side effect for Camille was that she became hyperattentive to her own place, or lack thereof, in those contexts. She also describes that she had recurring fears when she was alone with her thoughts—like in the car or alone in the room before school—where she considered the potential possibilities, or as she says, “all the things can could go wrong.” This isn’t to say that Camille behaved as some broken and demure decoration in her own experiences. Quite the opposite, she was outgoing, sometimes brash, and consistently outwardly confident; but the consequence of how her fears were manifest in her practice is that she was guided by uncertainty and her confidence a thin and sometimes cracked disguise that was more performance than personality.

Then came her breaking point. Interestingly, her breaking point was first reflected in her time outside of her student teaching when she was coaching. She launches into a story about when she had finally had enough from a kid who was goofing off, not following directions, interrupting coaches and other athletes from practicing, and other such behaviors. Though the child was only six, she confronted him and “held him accountable” to do what he was supposed to do. She admits that she was more than a little verbally aggressive, but afterward she felt good, and the child responded. She realized that she didn’t have to smile and take what she considered disrespect. And if she didn’t have to do that with a six-year-old, she certainly didn’t have to do it with a sixteen-year-old who should know better. She says:

I realized that someone else might be able to teach some other way but this is actually a skill that I have. Coaching is a skill. It is not an easy one. It is a very difficult thing to master. It took time and effort, so why am I trying to cut off my nose to spite my face in

the classroom? This is something I know how to do, I can do, I have been doing successfully. I'm just trying to pretend that it doesn't exist. Why am I doing that? Incorporating those coaching skills I have might not make me your favorite teacher, and I'm not going to demand that you respect me, but I'm hoping that I can command it. There's a difference. If I demand that you respect me, you're going to fight me every single day you walk in that classroom. But if I can command your respect, you may not agree with me but you'll do it. You may not understand it right away but hopefully you will. I'm not going to get it right all the time. I might not even get it right half of the time. But damn it I'm going to try. I'm going to use everything I have in my arsenal of teacher tricks that is still very, very small, but a very big part of me and a thing that I have is the fact that I'm a coach. And a pretty damn good one.

What she describes as her epiphany is really a moment when she chose to accept teaching on her own terms and in all her flaws over the fears and uncertainty that had simmered just below the surface of her practice up until that point. In a moment of self-realization, she chose the act of transforming her vision of teaching to better align with the metaphor of coaching, not only because it is where she had, up to that point, experienced personal fulfillment and success, but because it clearly demarcated the rules and boundaries of what was permissible in interacting within schools. Through an act of her imagination, she set limits about what she couldn't do based solely on the perception of her relationship to and with the realities of her placement. Once she had circumscribed the rules by which she can operate her practice, the possibilities for what she imagines herself as a teacher to be, and what she can do as a teacher, stem organically from that image of teaching.

Being honest about one's fears and the identifiable moments of revelation about lived experience exposes a vulnerability that is contradictory to what it's supposed to mean to be a teacher in-becoming. At a moment of their teaching practice when they are supposed to be "done learning" and ready to take on their own classroom, there is an implied sense of outward confidence in their teaching ability. Put simply, they're supposed to feel like teachers, and they're supposed to be able to demonstrate that they can be trusted to be teachers. They know this, in fact they embody this. So to have fears, even uncertainties, in the very essence of their self-conception means acknowledging a breach in the carefully crafted façade of being a teacher that is ready for the classroom. It creates a message that at the very minimum suggests that they may not be who they think they are.

The participants' self-described behavior—and by extension what they believe they can and cannot do as teachers—is mediated by their relationships with various individuals and institutions with whom they are associated, from mentor teachers to field instructors, and from their field placement to their teacher education program. The effect is to form discourses of what constitutes "right" behavior, which limits and defines what teachers in-becoming believe that they can and cannot do. Their concern isn't necessarily for emulating what's "correct" or even becoming part of a set of professional rules, or put another way, for developing a set of dispositions that will help them theorize their teaching practices in real world settings. Their concern is for maintaining employability, and for not disrupting the relationships they've crafted of anyone who might be watching. Amy describes how she sees herself in the school:

One of my kids was having a really great day, I forget what was going on, but she had gotten a good grade and she's not a good student. So she got a good grade on the quiz and ran up and gave me a hug. The first thing I do is "I'm not touching you." Then I was like,

that is really cute. You're still a little kid. You still want me to like you. I took it as I meant something to her when she did that. Or she wanted to get me fired, I'm not really sure. I don't think she was being malicious. I just don't feel comfortable giving kids hugs. Not in a teacher-student relationship. Especially with everything going on in the world, there's just too many other things.

Amy's reticence to show even innocent physical affection for her students is not about a reluctance to touch a student, but is couched in a broader social narrative about what is and isn't appropriate behavior as a teacher, and whether or not she would participate in something that she deems unprofessional. More importantly, she circumscribes her notions of what physical activity is ok with students based on whether or not a perception of her physicality with students would prevent her from becoming a teacher. Remember, this is at a time and a place where Amy, and the rest of the participants as well, are at a transitory stage of their learning to teach. Amy does not have students at this moment. She completed her student teaching and she has yet to find herself teaching in a different school context. Still, she worries about physical interactions with students based on whether or not it will affect her potential employability, and has nothing to do with whether or not she has affection for her students. She has some experience that adds further texture:

I'm a camp counselor and I'll give them piggyback rides. I don't care there. I nanny as well and I've got no problem there. I just feel like teacher-student relationships, that's something that's for home. That's a line I think. I'll teach your kids to say please and thank you but I'm not going to give them a hug mostly because they'll get me fired for it. Maybe I've just been scared off too much. I feel like there are certain circumstances where that rule can be broken but I haven't hit it yet. I've got no problem patting kids on

the back, giving them high fives, all of that kind of stuff but not hugs. At university in our classes once a year they tell us horror stories of somebody patted somebody on the shoulder and they were alone in the classroom and they got fired.

She pauses for a long moment as a memory drifts into focus. Distantly, she says:

I had a friend at a nearby school last year who took some pictures at a party and it ended up on Facebook. It all went downhill from there. I feel like those are just blazing examples for us to follow in their footsteps; thank you for making that mistake, I won't do it.

Immediately back in focus she concludes:

As of right now, where I am in my life, I think it's a pain in the butt but I'm fine with it. If I was gay or if I were part of a minority group then I think it would be much harder. Those type of things, you can't allow yourself to show part of your own culture because of what public perception thinks teachers should be. I think that can be much more restricting. I don't want to say that it's not fair but it doesn't help the classroom at all. I think opportunities like that are opportunities to learn. Learn about someone else's culture, learn about your own by comparison, about I don't agree with you at all but we live together cause that's a skill that isn't being taught and really needs to be. I've had smaller conversations with my students about it. We do not call people a faggot in class because yada yada yada. We have those conversations. I don't go into why or why not you should accept homosexuality as these people's lives. Partly because I feel like we're in a public school, we're in seventh grade, some of these kids have had really graphic, extreme, sexual trauma in their life. I don't want to trigger something, I was the student

teacher, you know. It's kind of a fine line over what I feel is appropriate for me to take on in the classroom and what I feel is not.

The boundaries that Amy has constructed about her practice include both physical, in that she has restricted if and how it is appropriate to touch students, as well as conceptual, which she bases on broad public perceptions about teachers. The boundaries inhibit her practice, and her actions—the choices she makes in how she interacts with kids, and how she cultivates her professional sensibility as a teacher—become about sustaining her imagined career as a teacher instead of further developing how she imagines herself as a teacher. In other words, Amy's focus on *becoming* a teacher outweighs any sense of who she imagines herself to be *as* a teacher.

Employability trumps teachability; for the teacher in-becoming, there is a pragmatism about how they embody their work. Amy is a good example of how a teacher in-becoming's sense about what is and isn't permissible gives credence to choosing some behaviors as a teacher over others. Indeed, for the teachers in-becoming, the *consequence* that overshadows much of their work, and the possibilities that they see in their work, is as much about having a job as it is about being a good teacher. In other words, they have come to imagine that they need a job to be the teacher that they imagine themselves to be, which means that they have to curtail certain behaviors that might jeopardize that vision. It might have some practical considerations, but forming one's teaching practice based on the boundaries that one perceives will support employability also has the consequence of preventing the teacher in-becoming to imagine his or her work as anything other than what is seen as normative within the context of the student teaching experience. It both reinforces concepts of the apprenticeship of observation, but perhaps more importantly diminishes implicit determinations of what is possible as a teacher.

Jack creates tacit barriers to his work, ones that he doesn't recognize in practice. He speaks eloquently about his collegial relationship with his mentor teacher, and how he has learned a lot from her. He also frequently speaks about what about the curriculum really makes him feel like he's doing what he wanted to. He also can speak about the things that he values from his TE program and how he wants to implement some of the more engaging aspects of it: "Because I'll hear someone say something in class and I'll be like man that's really cool, I wish I knew more about it. Or they don't have time to explain so I'll go implement it in class." But what's most important about Jack is that he routinely expresses that he has freedom to teach the way that he wants. He does not feel like he has been restricted, and he feels fully supported by his mentor teacher. For Jack, the concept of pedagogical freedom is one that he has already imagines as being intrinsic to his teaching. If pressed, he will argue that he can do whatever he wants.

But, the barriers that Jack has constructed in his own imagined practice are not ones of explicit authority over his day-to-day practice, nor are they about the contextualized relationships that operate to constrict his behaviors. The barriers that Jack has constructed are far more subtle. They are the very forms of teaching and learning that he has come to value through his teaching experience. They are the discursive practice of his work. For Jack, conceptualizing teaching and learning that lies outside of the traditional classroom experience is simply beyond his imaginative capacity. Every pedagogical act, even those that he finds to be innovative or pushing the boundaries of what you can and can't do resides in the imagined space of what constitutes curriculum and what constitutes a classroom. He says:

In World History I tend to have a more traditional view in the sense that there should be a lot of lecture and direct instruction in part because you are dealing with a lot of terms and

geographic concepts. My other class, Sociology, is a bit different. I like to have more of a discussion, like what do you think about this? Not as rigid, not there it is in the book, that's the way it has to be. I like to field as many questions as possible, if they raise their hand instead of shouting out. But even then if it's a good enough shout out, I like to take it. Sometimes that can be frustrating to other students who don't want to hear it from the student who just doesn't get it, or wants to go a little off topic. I do like having that informal setting where they can ask any question. In terms of when assignments are due, where can you find that information, where can I pick up another copy, I think I'm very formal in that sense. I like having a schedule. Looking at the schedule coming up, I know what I have to do and that's going to get done on this date at this time. And if I find an extra hour, I'm not probably not going to use that time for them because I'm stuck in the rigidity of that schedule. I like a routine. We have the same unit assignments that are set up in the same format with various tweaks that are due the day of the test. The outlines will be due before that so that you've read the material. So that I'm very formal in, but in the classroom, that's something I'm very proud of actually.

The effect of that practice on his imagination is to construct barriers of practice and limit his conception of what is possible within his day-to-day practice. Whereas other teachers in-becoming may see, and lament, structural barriers associated with the policies and practices of the schools they are in, like having to rely on a particular text or an attendance policy that creates disruptions, Jack views these as part of what it means to be a teacher. To put a metaphor on this act, if you think of teaching as a board game, another teacher might imagine what the game would be like if you changed the rules or redesigned the board. Jack imagines the various ways that the game can be played within the structure of the rules and on the existing board. His



imagined practice, in that way, stems from how he arranges and rearranges the structural realities of his practice, but at no point does he seek to challenge them. Still, the last thing Jack says to me before we part ways at the end of the study is the most profound, and the single thing that continues to give me hope that being a teacher in-becoming can become the kind of teacher they imagined when they got into teaching:

When you look at teaching—and we’ve all had that, we’ve all observed other teachers—where we see teaching that’s always been done, and how it’s always been done. You can say, “OK, I get it. That makes sense. I see why you do it that way.”

But, always thinking that there’s another way to do it, a better way even, is how you stay a good teacher. And it might never come to pass, but I think it’s important to think about other possibilities. Finding that other way, just in case. Maybe it’s not practical, but it’s how you make it possible for your kids to learn.

### **Self-Conception as a Teacher**

Jack’s imagining his teaching practice in a way that does not challenge the status quo is representative of how teachers in-becoming create contradictions in their teaching (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; McLean, 1999). Teachers in-becoming imagine forms of teaching that are technocratic and organized around common organizational practices found in schools rather than developing possibilities of how schools could operate otherwise. Yet, even in those practices, teachers in-becoming have discernable difficulty navigating incongruity when they see it in their practice, especially when it challenges what they imagine their practice should be like. Again, Jack is representative of this phenomenon. As he continues to foster a self-conception of teaching that harmonizes the edifice of teaching he imagines with the brand of teaching he perceives is expected of him, he struggles with indecision about inconsistency between the two:

So I sat down and made a plan. I made a chart that tells me what I'm teaching each day and if I'm not there I've got to breeze through the other stuff to get to here. That's where I'm supposed to be. I'm checking in to see if that's where I'm at. I know all four of the world history teachers are in different parts of the book. I don't want to say book. I should say different part of the content. I never felt like I was rushing it but I always thought there could be a quicker way so that we get more content covered. I hate the word covered. I don't like using the word covered. But this is a whole new subject area that could really broaden the way that they look at the world.

There is marked uncertainty in his ideas about planning and implementing curriculum. The language that he adheres to is simultaneously as he has come to imagine what teaching is, and also contradictory to the pedagogical practices that he values. Even as Jack discloses his great affection of organization- and teacher-dominant pedagogies, he encounters a disruption as he envisions less and less of the teacher he wanted to be within them. As Jack transfers the vision of the teacher he imagines himself to be within the structures that he assumes to constitute schooling, he crafts a narrative of his teaching that he believes is emblematic of what teaching should be that dramatically contradicts many of the day-to-day practices that he has learned sustain his practice. In the vignette that follows, Jack describes a time in his teaching where he felt like he was the teacher he imagined himself to be, and is a formulation of his teaching that he both consistently turns to throughout the study and one that he bases his future teaching and employability upon. He says:

So I give them this review game using terminology. I'm moving around the room and if I found a word that's incorrect, I wouldn't tell them which one, I'd just say that it's incorrect and move on. Just working the room and joking with them and being a little

sarcastic with them at the same time. I thought that was really cool, I felt really in my element there. I like moving around because it gets me around to different parts of the classroom and it keeps students on their toes. I just don't want to be the teacher that's up here talking all the time. I see the point in it, and I don't necessarily mind lecture, but I'd like to do more of the hands-on stuff because I've noticed that even if they're only ten minute exercises, students are more involved.

This is the point where Jack transitions into the teacher he imagines himself to be, and when his self-conception as a teacher is cemented.

Whereas much of the literature in educational research focuses on the processes by which the phenomenon of self-conception forming occurs in one's teacher education (e.g., Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Segall, 2002) or during the induction, or other subsequent phases of teaching (e.g., Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999), being a teacher in-becoming has unique characteristics. It's true that so many young teachers identify the experiences, and the stories, that shape who they are through those they had as student teachers (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001), because the teacher in-becoming has begun shedding the "student teacher" persona, their ability to reside in, and situate their practice upon, stories and experiences as a student teacher becomes far more complex. The conception of self that develops for the teacher in-becoming has a peculiar and destabilized quality in which the teacher in-becoming is framing and reframing between a lived past and an expected future. The effect is to understand themselves as teachers, to be expected to be seen as teachers, and to expect to be teachers, but without evidence or location to do so beyond their completed teacher education program.

According to Danielewicz (2001, p. 35), the identities<sup>7</sup> that we create for ourselves are never finished and always in the process of becoming. We make determinations about what is our “self” through “classification (she is a teacher), association (I am like her), and identification (I want to be like her).” Our sense of self is given further texture in how those same determinations are made by others, by institutions, and by social discourses. Finally, we can also conceive of “collective identities” (p. 112) where our membership to a group—being a teacher—exists because of the interplay between social and personal discourses of being. Each of these shapes who (and how) we see ourselves, and contributes to a broad theme of self-conception. Those narratives about self are pervasive, and become the locus of both inward and outward expressions of the imagined person that one has become.

The teachers in-becoming in this study imagine a future that is positive, and imagine themselves as teachers who are changing students’ lives. They believe they are teachers. They expect to be thought of as teachers. And they look forward to exercising that self-conception in their practice in the very near future. It is nearly tangible for them. But the personal and social dimensions of their conception of self—and how they arrived at thinking of themselves as teachers—offers a connection between the self and the imagination that produces the conditions for the teacher in-becoming to reside.

For Amy, the question of whether or not to embed herself in the community outside of the school was an important consideration. She opened up briefly about being dyslexic, giving two small vignettes about how it impacted her. The first revolved around her and her sister getting the same essay-based scholarship. Whereas her sister had received words of

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<sup>7</sup> To reiterate what I wrote in chapter one, I’m uncomfortable using the term “identity,” and very uncomfortable using it interchangeably with the concept of self-conception. I find the latter term to be a more precise and thus useful term to describe a phenomenon in/for the teacher in-becoming. While I recognize some scholars will use the term “identity” and its forms relatively freely, I will make every attempt to use the term self-conception.

congratulations from her mother, because Amy had written about her dyslexia, and her mother responded was unintentionally craven: “See? Having dyslexia pays off!” In the second story, she recounted how her grandmother had once introduced her as “her dyslexic granddaughter” even though she had just graduated from university. To be clear, Amy is both open about and actually embraces being dyslexic. It is an integral part of her self-conception, and one that shapes the narratives she has about working in classrooms and with children. Still, given that she incorporates her vulnerability and professionalism into her day-to-day practices, and the narratives that originate from them, how she questions her public persona beyond that is significant.

She separates her two self-conceptions—the private person and the public persona—and because her dyslexia is so tied to her self, the way that it becomes operationalized in her life has meaning for her. She says being dyslexic in her personal life is like having an asterisk constantly attached to you; being dyslexic in her professional life is both entertaining and a way to connect to students. So when she says that, for her, when she stopped segmenting every element of her teaching and simply embraced all of it—teaching all the classes, doing all of the routines and housekeeping like attendance, planning all the classes, and, perhaps most importantly, asking fewer and fewer questions of the other teachers around her—in that moment, she became a teacher. Amy says that,

When I realized that I could teach it in my own way, that’s when I was a teacher. I wasn’t beholden to anyone. I could still work with the other teachers and not have to do the same thing. All of the things that I value as a learner, like discussions and simulations, were suddenly on the table. There’s freedom in that.

The freedom that Amy perceived opened to her a whole landscape of imagined teaching practices that supported her sensibility about how kids, like she was, who don't learn from the book, can have the opportunities to experience education on their own terms. Such an imagined space not only presented her with the language for autonomy as a teacher, but presented her with a wholly new self-conception as a teacher, one she could build on and further cultivate in the years to come.

Even Allen, the most consummate of apprentices, has a thoroughly developed sense of being a teacher. He immediately is able to pinpoint when he made the transition from student teacher to teacher as the time when his mentor teacher left for five days and he was left with five classes to plan, teach, and support. And he did. He did so with renewed energy and confidence that he wasn't expecting. He says this excitedly, and I find myself excited for him:

It was a longer period of time where I had to do everything. On my own. And there wasn't someone standing there looking over my shoulder. It gave me a chance to *feel* like a teacher I guess. And from that moment until I left a few weeks ago, those were *my* classes.

The development of self-conception as a teacher becomes an operation of imagination for the teacher in-becoming. Whereas the concepts that help the teacher in-becoming form their conception of self are anchored in lived experiences both personal and professional, the effect is for teachers in-becoming to understand teaching as something that is future oriented. Put another way, despite all of the rigors of successfully completing the student teaching experience, and in the process, framing statements about how they teach within the context of the lived experiences of the classrooms in their student teaching, their conception of self as a teacher is a far more complex iteration where they simultaneously embody all of the characteristics of teacher, and do

so, at least in part, because they view their student teaching as a problem to be solved. Once they have done so, they are able to envision themselves as a teacher. And like Danielewicz (2001, p. 35) expect that they will classify as a teacher, associate like a teacher, and identify as a teacher.

Camille says it this way:

As soon as I stepped out and did it, it just fit, I fit, dealing with it in the classroom, dealing with the subject matter, it worked. I really hadn't felt entirely myself until then. It is much closer to the teacher that I want to be.

She teases this element of her teaching out some more and finally arrives at a revelation about herself:

It's important to conceptualize yourself as *the* teacher because otherwise it's like you're dressing up in your parents' clothes. But a lot of that has to do with being able to teach the way you know how to. The first time I saw myself teaching in ten years was my epiphany moment. I was probably a little tentative about giving myself over to teaching all the way. But that was the moment where I did. So that was when being a teacher all came together.

When participants are encouraged to imagine forms of teaching that are personally significant, connected to who they hope and fear they might be, and lie outside others' experiences as a teacher, the self-conception as a teacher that emerges is an imagined, even idealized, version of who they hope to be. But what they construct about what constitutes teaching is not framed by assumptions about what their student teaching placements are and their perceived role within them. Instead, participants are able to identify unique characteristics upon which they qualify their growth as teachers. It is a markedly future-looking aspect that differentiates the apprenticeship aspects of student teaching with cognitive frame of being a teacher in-becoming.

Being a teacher in-becoming explains how developing self-identification as a teacher enables the participant to think about pedagogy and practice in a manner that is characteristically both embedded in his learn to teach and resides in an imagined, future space.

Carolyn's self-identification as a teacher is elusive to her. Not in that she doesn't identify herself as a teacher, or that her conception of self is heavily dependent on being a teacher. They very much are; she has a subtle, but I think lovely, tendency to speak of herself in her teaching stories as if she's been a teacher for years. Rather, simply being able to state when she knew she was a teacher is troubling for her. She says, "wow, I mean I've felt like a teacher for so long" and "I can't come up with a single example." There is silence. I wait. Then:

Well, there's the time that I was teaching sixth hour and the projector broke. I was supposed to be giving a lecture and some notes off a PowerPoint, and it was suddenly gone. I had to wing it. I had to figure out on the spot how to keep going. And I did. I mean, I knew all the information and I knew how I wanted to teach it anyway, so I was able to pick up and go with it when a lot of people would have been really really flustered.

For Carolyn, this vignette is an uncharacteristically formulaic way of presenting her teaching. While she would say that she knew that it was successful several days later when she was giving them review and they didn't need any kind of PowerPoint or notes because they knew the material, I can't help but feel like it's part of a bigger truth for her. Carolyn is deeply passionate about what she does, and I have come to know and profoundly respect her approach to immersing herself into what she conceptualizes teaching to be. So for her to have an example that is so predicated on academic success, and not about the ways of knowing teaching that she



imagines to be so much more significant such as her relationship with students, I find myself a little flummoxed. I press a little bit, and she says:

Well, I was amazed that sixth hour knew it better than the hours that Mr. Baxter taught with the PowerPoint. It was just me and the kids. And a white board. No technology, just us together. Explaining things, fielding questions, leading a discussion, I think we even made a chart. None of that was what we originally planned. It made sense to them more than anything we had talked about before. I got to be creative on my feet and not be flustered. I realized that I can do this. This is what I want to do.

I don't mention to her that her self-conception as a teacher is, in no small way, based on the satisfaction of being better than her mentor teacher and that her kids were both more engaged and knew the material better. As a teacher in-becoming she has transcended the experience of being under the authority of her mentor teacher, at least on the surface, but her self-conception is still heavily based on her abilities to be the anti-Mr. Baxter. Even so, there is demonstrable significance in the reality that because she wasn't like him, and because she imagines herself to be a different brand of teacher, one where students and herself are dialogically engaged in helping everyone know and learn, that she can conceptualize herself as an autonomous teacher who can be successful anywhere, and under any teaching conditions. She doesn't view her growth at Douglass Prep, as only in the past, but instead as the foundation upon which she imagines the rest of her career.

From engaging in metaphors and narratives about what constitutes teaching to examining salient moments in their learning to teach where they felt both vulnerable and fully embodied as teachers there is a power in distancing oneself, and of leaving the past behind so that processing and theorizing from the lived experience of becoming a teacher can occur. Indeed, they can not

only maintain a strong conception of self as a teacher, but can imagine practices that might further embed a sense as a successful teacher if they cultivate that space with attention to their contextual relationship with others, and an operant space as decidedly unstable, and personally vulnerable. As Camille says, “I think your student teaching is a time that really takes it out of you and you become conditioned to it...Now I see myself in this very weird in-between space.” For Allen, such an imagined idea of the significance of what he does is what enables him to conceptualize himself as a teacher in significant ways:

Teachers hold a special place in society. I think that it’s a time-consuming job but you put in the hours, you put in the effort, you do all the things you don’t want to do whether it be writing up a kid or dealing with behavior problems but in the end, I find it worth it. If there’s that one moment of the day where I can say, you know what that was awesome, then it was all worth it. So being able to affect someone in a positive way is the most rewarding experience to me personally. Yeah, so hopefully I can be a part of that change. That’s why I want to do it.

### **Becoming a Teacher: Imagined Metamorphosis**

As an analogy, think about if someone gave you a box of LEGO blocks with a picture of a house on the front and told you to build a house. Because you know what a house looks like, what its constituent parts are, with no directions or reference to the picture on the box you could easily create something that can ostensibly be a house. It may or may not look like what’s on the front of the box, but you will likely conceptualize some sort of operational dwelling that might be referred to as a house. What you cannot do necessarily is conceptualize the concept of “house” as something that does not possess its constituent parts, and that does not have certain characteristics that bind you to the concept of what you know to be a house. You are not likely to

create a dwelling that has no walls, no doors, no windows, or no rooms, even if you creatively consider how those parts appear. The better we know something, know its parts, can reimagine or reconfigure it, the harder it is to imagine something that lies beyond it. Put another way, because we know from our experiences what something ought to be, the harder it is to consider what it could be.

Think about what it means to teach in that context. Tye (1998) have described the deep structures of schooling—our schools are modeled after education that took place over a century ago, textbooks and standards tell us what and sometimes how to teach. Is it any wonder then that when we give teachers the opportunity to imagine what teaching could be, they still name the very structures that situate what we know a “school” to look like? Is it any wonder that they may reconfigure the parts, or change the look of it, but they still think of classrooms as part of a school where they meet and children learn from the teacher? Because we have over a century of experience in naming the place of schools, and because teachers have their entire lives of knowing what schools are supposed to look like, what teaching is supposed to look like, then to ask them to conceptualize forms of teaching and learning that are outside the bounds of what they know is demonstrably unfair.

A hallmark of being a teacher in-becoming is the cognitive shift that occurs in imagining oneself as a full-fledged teacher. Therefore, being a teacher in-becoming must extend beyond existing in a particular time and place. Simply being done with student teaching but without a job might be universally experienced, but what one does with, and through, the cognitive shifts from student to teacher has an effect on what kind of teacher they imagine themselves to be. For the purposes of this study, that process—the theorizing of past experiences and the narratives that stem from them to imagine a form of teaching that is not yet, but could be, attained—is what

defines the phase of learning to teach that I am describing as being a teacher in-becoming. The participants in the study, therefore, more than just being in that place and time, have something to say about the classrooms they imagine themselves inhabiting in the months and years to come.

As the consummate apprentice, Allen has culled the dispositions, resources, and means of forming relationships that he can from his student teaching experience. He thrives on that aspect of his learning to teach, since it is what he imagines the experience to be largely about. Sure, it's about learning how to teach in a classroom, and as some kind of culmination of the experiences he had in his teacher education, but it's also about using that place and that time to squirrel away the things that he thinks he might need for his real teaching job in the future. To be fair, Allen has had a lot of support—he reminded me that the curriculum he was teaching was handed to him on a jump drive the summer before which he just popped into his computer and saved for use in his teaching and in organized meetings throughout the year—and had a good relationship with his mentor teacher. And his narratives about being there for his students that were derived from the relatively stable student teaching experience he had were supported by what he experienced throughout his student teaching. So, when he thinks about what he imagines the future to hold, and the kind of teacher he is, it is unsurprising that he frames himself in that same narrative:

I want to be someone like that young, hip teacher in shows that all the students can relate to, someone who's involved with the students and the school activities that they partake in. Being able to mentor them, and not just about stuff in school, but what's going on in their lives. That requires a lot of time at school. Which, ok. But also respect for education and getting students to respect them for who they are. To motivate them to want to do something and get the most out of their lives. If I'm looking at myself five years from

now, I hope that life is less chaotic, a little less of constant planning. That I have a bit of a life and a basic set of material that I'm constantly refining to its best aspects. But that I'm still feeling rewarded, and a sense of dedication to my students. The biggest thing is still getting that personal satisfaction from going in every day and making a difference.

His imagined teaching practices, and the teacher he expects himself to become, remain unchanged from how he formed narratives about his experiences. This is, in part, due to the superficiality and the relative lack of theorizing about the conditions that enable him to "be there for his students." Throughout his student teaching experience, he benefited from hidden structures of stability, from literally being handed the curriculum before ever began, to a mentor teacher who provided him with advice and oversight, to a school that had an established culture of active student organizations. As he imagines himself becoming a teacher, those remain hidden to him, and he takes for granted that those same conditions will exist wherever he goes. He believes he'll simply have to adapt to a new environment that is similar to, and perhaps improved from, his present understanding of what constitutes teaching.

But moving past those nascent images of what teaching will be like in the future where a teacher in-becoming can imagine possibilities instead of barriers includes beginning to see their own student teaching experiences as rooted in a hidden web of supports that go unnoticed. To become the teacher they imagine themselves to be, teachers in-becoming must start to separate artifices of their teaching from the elements of their teaching that they believe define them. This is what Camille is considering when she says:

People may assume that as a teacher you're the person that's going to be there and in the dress slacks or skirt and the blouse and the apple and the desk, and that you'll have your lesson plans laid out. They have an idea of what role you fill in their lives and what that

role is supposed to mean. I think there's a powerful difference between play acting as a teacher and actually taking that role into yourself. That role that other people have assigned to you is something you take charge of on your own.

We're near the end of our time together and Camille, having said all of the things that she joined the study to say (and more), is beginning to be more reflective. I take a moment to watch her, and I can't help but think that she's finding some peace. She's nervous, to be sure, about the prospect of finding a job as a teacher and what that will mean for her, and that edginess pervades her persona. Even so, she's smiling more, she is more relaxed, and she is taking more time to think about what she really wants to say. It's a bit of a pleasure for me to see that; I wish good things in life and in teaching for her, and to see the turbulence of her student teaching recede into memory as she looks forward is a welcome, if unspoken, relief. She leans forward and after a deep breath, says this:

I have the credentials. I'm competent enough to teach a class. I got through a tough year. But I don't feel like I'm the teacher until I really do have a job. As scary as that moment is going to be, it's going to be entirely mine. It's not going to be the university's, it's not going to be other kids' in my district, it's not going to be shared with my mentors. It's going to be something that is entirely my own. While I probably have a teacher personae that has been incorporated into my identity, I don't think it's going to be complete [for any of the teachers in-becoming] until you really do feel wherever you are next year is your classroom. There's something very powerful about knowing that it's your area, these are your students, these are the kids you're responsible for. I think there's something very powerful about that.

Aside from Camille's propensity to shift into "you" statements when she's having difficulty inserting herself and implicating herself in the consequences of her pedagogical choices into her teaching practices, this is a moment of clarity for her. Camille's student teaching was challenging, probably more so than she's willing to let on, even with me, and I have come to think about the way that she talks about the world—brash, sarcastic, and sometimes unkind—as a defense to feelings of vulnerability. This is an important moment for Camille because it is the first time in all of our conversations where she is willing to admit true hope for an expected future.

Amy, too, is reflective and experiencing hopefulness. She does not have the same defenses against vulnerability as Camille does, since she embraces her imperfections as a part of her teaching persona. Still, at this point in her growth as a teacher, and as she thinks about stepping into her own classroom for the first time, it takes her a moment to center herself:

Who am I as a teacher? You know, I've thought about what I want to do tomorrow, and I thought about big things I want my kids to learn, the little things I want my kids to learn, but who I am as a teacher?

She pauses. Then:

It's hard to interpret that. I know I'm not a tyrant. I can tell you I'm not the teacher that will let you come in and throw spitballs. I'm not that laid back. But I can tell you that I'm not the teacher that comes in every day where everyone is silent and reading. I'd be bored out of my mind. I want the kids to be creative and I want the kids to write and to talk in the classroom. So that invites a certain level of chaos and noise and conversation. I like that. In my imaginary world, I have the type of classroom where kids know what the rules are, but also understand that under certain circumstances have the ability to ask

permission to not follow them. I like to think that my kids know what's expected of them and perform to that because they realize what it means to me to have them follow through. I like my kids to—I guess I'm telling you what I like my kids to do and not what I do. They're my kids, so in my imaginary classroom we would read, write, and talk everyday because I think those things are important. What I envision myself as is a teacher that encourages those things while getting kids to see multiple sides to a situation. The challenge for the teacher in-becoming is to imagine a form of learning to teach that harmonizes the values and ideas presented throughout their teacher education and what is learned experientially, and upon which they form the narratives of their experience. Learning to teach then has peculiar effects on the teacher in-becoming.

There is perhaps no greater act of imagination that operates in learning to teach than what I like to call the “I know what's important” fallacy. Teacher education is predicated in part on a transfer of knowledge—of skills, theory, dispositions, and best practices that define the scope and sequence of being a teacher for all students—and developing structures by which to experience those within the safety of a prescribed framework. Yet, teachers in-becoming routinely both minimize and disregard these experiences as being disconnected from the “reality of schools” or being heavily laden with theoretical knowledge. Carolyn says:

I think a lot of the issues I have with the TE department in the past is that there's a lot of theory and no one wants to answer any of your questions about how can I use this in a class. I think that it's more true with some of my science and math friends where they asked their professors all the time, how do we use a simulation or something that's new and fun rather than a PowerPoint or lecture in class, and people can't give them an



answer. So I think it's really helpful to have answers and examples to questions like that.

I really like my field placements because I feel like I've learned a lot in those cases.

Once the teacher in-becoming has already assumed a self-conception as teacher, and views themselves as “past” the learning to teach experience, then they have a frame upon which to reflect on what it means to be leaving the relative safety of both a teacher education program, and the student teaching field experience that was its culmination for a teaching job. Teachers in-becoming will initially describe that the experiences of the field have inherently more value than the experiences of the program. Carolyn says it this way:

I think the way that I judge whether or not it's relevant in a general sense if during and after do I feel like I learned anything or do I feel like I had to think about myself as a teacher and how I want to be a teacher. I think other than that, it's just am I really thinking about the possibility of having a future classroom is it something that I can and should do instead of just doing an analysis of an article.

Yet, they speak about what they can and can't do—and what they like and dislike about being in the field—in ways that support the theoretical underpinnings of the program, even if they do not recognize it as such. They imagine their teaching with respect to certain possibilities of practice that are supported by their program, but not necessarily by the field; they are hopeful that they will be able to navigate the real world of teaching while maintaining their idealism for those forms of teaching. It's an inherent contradiction of being a teacher in-becoming. Carolyn demonstrates that phenomenon in this way:

My mentor thought that certain things were too childish for high school, like some simulations that I would do. He would question why I was doing it in a high school classroom and say it was too middle school. But whenever I did an activity that we did in

my teacher education courses, like where you take all the crayons out of the box and a group has to put them all back in the box without talking which illustrates assembly line and mass production and changes in the way that things are made, students were always more engaged.

When I told Mr. Baxter about it he just said, “You can just show them the PowerPoint.”

I was like, “It’s not the same thing.”

But I went with it because this is his classroom. The students in my 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> hour were my kids but I was in his classroom. I didn’t do anything to make it my own because I wasn’t able to.

He always used to say, “You can do what you want as long as you still have a graphic organizer then a PowerPoint because I put the PowerPoints online because they don’t have a book to take home.” So, I’ve just made the graphic organizers and PowerPoints my own.

But if you were to ask my mentor teacher, he would say that I was free to try anything. Which was just not the case. Even though he thought I was free to do anything, he was restricting me. I always wanted to do something else but I felt like if I tried something else I wouldn’t have the support.

Couched in Carolyn’s discussion about the frustrations of being limited in what she can do as a teacher is an important point: the kind of teaching that she really wants to do, and the kind of teaching that she subversively implemented, was more like the teaching advocated by her teacher education program, and not what she actually experienced as a teacher. Remember, Carolyn lamented that her teacher education program did not give her satisfactory answers to her

questions about activities to implement in her classes, yet, it is exactly the activities that she learned in her teacher education program that she feels inhibited from doing in the field.

For all of the expressed desire for autonomy, and in situating their understanding of teaching within the experiences in their student teaching field experience, the kind of teaching that they imagine, and the kind of teaching that they want to do (student centered, dynamic, interactive, etc.), is rarely what they actually experienced. The things that they dislike most about teaching—including teachers who are calling it in, policies that they view as barriers to instruction, and broad social issues that they see the effects of in their day-to-day practice—are the ones that they experienced, but imagine themselves rising above. What they do is find examples that are emblematic of the kind of teaching that they imagine and use that to: a) reify that kind of teaching *can* exist in the real world and b) to identify traits and dispositions that they attempt to replicate in order to achieve that imagined teaching practice within a future, and unknown, teaching context.

Finding the deeply personal aspects of Jack's teaching that are embedded in the way he responds in interviews is one of the things that I have enjoyed most. Nevertheless, I get the sense that Jack is bored at this stage of the study. He continues to give very top-level, job interview responses, often reiterating points that he has made before. I think he knows it, and aside from being mildly annoyed that I'm not satisfied with what he's telling me, I also get the impression that he's begun to turn his attention away from being a part of the study and look forward to himself as a teacher. He has stated unequivocally that he imagines himself teaching in a private high school like the one that he grew up in. He envisions a classroom that has all the resources he needs to teach, the freedom to craft an independent curriculum, and a school whose requirements and policies sustain an environment of unmitigated academic rigor.

This is one of those moments where I ever so slightly break through his façade. He begins with a very long pause, trying to put thought into words; it is one of the very few times where he's clearly at a loss for words. Then:

I would like to be the teacher that's known as always willing to support students. That if they have an idea, I'm the one that they'll turn to because I won't deter that kind of independent thinking. That they think, "he's going to listen to us" and make a decision based on that alone and not judge them based on past behavior. I like the idea of being in the classroom the most, and it's where I hope to stay. I like the idea of teaching the most because I get to work with the kids themselves.

Jack is imagining himself as a teacher with agency, and with that agency—for controlling the classroom, the curriculum, the norms and routines—comes a shift in thinking about why he teaches. As a teacher in-becoming, he possesses the verbiage to translate this very teacher-centric narratives and conceptions of teaching into their effect on how students come to know him as both a teacher, and a person, that they can count on. He mentions, almost off-handedly, that he thinks because of his age he can "impart some knowledge that they can relate to" for students, further cementing his transition from the rigors and rigidity of his student teaching experience to the kinds of practice he imagines for himself in the future. Emblematic of the effects of being a teacher in-becoming, Jack's transition, and the language that he has to articulate it, is the imaginative transition that occurs during this phase of learning to teach.

As the teacher in-becoming creates an understanding of her self-conception as a teacher, these are the imaginative processes that are at play, and are those that influence how the construction of self is achieved. The result is a knowledge of what one values as a teacher, and how one imagines teaching to be situated for the discernable future.

## **Conclusion**

For the duration of this dissertation, I have contended that being a teacher in-becoming carries with it some unique characteristics that place a person in between a past and a future, where the determinations of what one imagines teaching to be, and the agency one feels to be that teacher, manifest in ways that shape a future self. Imagining teaching in that way creates dimensions of learning to teach where the teacher in-becoming must contend with contradictions about who they've become, and the places where they have become teachers and have come to know teaching.

Each of the participants encountered being a teacher in-becoming on his or her own terms and found that the issues that became pervasive in their lived experience were the same ones that allowed for them to see their teaching in the future. Each one of the participants came to the study as individuals who were leaving student teaching, and in the process, concluding a time of their life where they were under intense scrutiny and self-motivation to become something they imagined themselves to be. Further, they did it because they wanted to make the world a better place, and to make the world a better place by affecting the lives of children through their unique talents and ways of seeing the world. How they came to conceptualize themselves as teachers ultimately was less about their past, and more about how they were going to affect the world beyond their student teaching.

The final chapter of this dissertation will address how the concepts of imagination and being a teacher in-becoming attend to institutional issues related to learning to teach and provide for teacher educators a way to think about how to support our student teachers after they've left their placements, and even our own classrooms. But before I turn my attention to those very important issues, I want to reflect briefly on the last things that two of the participants said to me

during the study. After carefully avoiding using the term “imagination” throughout all of the questions and conversations that we had, the last thing I asked was some conversational variant of, “how do you imagine yourself as a teacher or teaching?” To that Carolyn said, “I want to give my students a real experience. Not filling out a worksheet or taking a test, but to give them a chance to learn.” As they have transitioned from student teacher to teacher, and in being a teacher in-becoming, they still imagine a form of idealism that they will always and forever be striving toward. They did not ultimately become cynical nor lose their ability to discern educative practices that they found compelling. Rather they transcended the experience of learning to teach to imagine themselves as teachers, fully fledged and ready for whatever comes next. Or as Allen says,

When I think about my teaching, it is as an ideal that I’m trying to get to. I hope that what I imagine can be achieved in the classroom. For me, it’s always about what I want to be like, who I will be in the future, what changes I can make to be that.

I imagine so.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Conclusion: In-Becoming and Imagination**

The challenge is to make the ground palpable and visible to our students, to make possible the interplay of multiple voices, of “not quite commensurable visions.” ... And, yes, it is to work for responsiveness to principles of freedom, which still can be named within contexts of caring and concern. The principles and the contexts have to be *chosen* by living human beings against their own life-worlds and in the light of their lives with others, by persons able to call, to say, to sing and—using their imaginations, tapping their courage—to transform. (Greene, 1995b, p. 198)

If I have fidelity to investing in understanding how imagination acts upon our experiences to help us make sense of our lived experience (Dewey, 1934, 1938), and imagination as a fundamental part of how we understand our realities (Greene, 1995b), then it is also true that imagination does not simply stop because I chose to stop writing. The participants continue to live their lives. They interview for jobs; some of them accepting positions while others had yet to find work as this dissertation was completed. They continue to make sense of their student teaching as teachers in-becoming, and when they enter the classroom as teachers the following fall and begin what we refer to as the induction phase of teaching, they begin the slow process of meaning-making that evolves as the experiences they have as teachers replaces the experiences that they had as student teachers. Time, as they say, marches on.

It is common practice for dissertations to end with a chapter that examines the practical applications of its findings, of theorizing the significance of the findings, and of examining the

implications for the findings of the study for policy and practice. I will do that in this chapter, but with some hesitancy. The methodological design of this study uses Holstein and Gubrium's (2005) analytics of interpretive practice as a method of analysis that allowed me to vacillate between ethnographic and phenomenological approaches to describe with detail and validity the lived experiences of the participants in the study while also describing the consequences and effects of that lived experience for a particular phase of learning to teach that I call in-becoming. This was neither an ethnographic study, nor was it a phenomenological one, but somewhere in between, where the focus of analysis was designed to interrogate the relationship among imagination, lived experiences, and learning to teach for the participants. I have also very intentionally chosen particular narrative styles, including inserting my own textural (and textual) identities into this dissertation to better and more authentically represent the data and my analysis of it, within the study. I also included what I believe to be significant analysis and interpretation for better understanding elements of learning to teach and the phase of teacher education I call in-becoming, including seeking to understand the social and cultural arrangements that I argue define the boundaries of in-becoming as a phase of learning to teach.

However, I consciously attended to the data presented in this study as often as possible with the intention of allowing the participants' lived experiences to tell the story of their evolution as teachers and learners (van Manen, 1990). I did so because to fully understand and appreciate the perceptual realities and imagined forms of teaching that exist for the participants as teachers in-becoming, then it is imperative that, as van Manen (1990) says,

...the human being is seen and studied as a "person," in the full sense of that word, a person who is a flesh and blood sense-maker. The human being is a person who signifies—gives and derives meaning to and from the "things" of the world. (p. 14)



The presentation of the findings of this study were structured to tell that story: how this group of teachers in-becoming shape and were shaped by their experiences in learning to teach, and how they imagined their teaching as a consequence.

This concluding chapter will have the elements that are expected, but I'll organize them in a way that maintains fidelity to the participants' experiences and imagination as teachers in-becoming. I will begin with a brief summary of the findings as well as some thoughts about how the participants evolved with respect to the research questions in the study, and provide a foundation within the educational literature. I will then provide some thoughts on the educational significance of this study. Then, I will describe some implications for teacher education as I see it, based on this study. Finally, I will briefly describe the limitations and areas of future research that are evident now at the conclusion of the study.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

Much of the literature that I draw from as the foundation of this study is deeply theoretical in nature (Ayers, 1995; Casey, 2000; Danielewicz, 2001; Dewey, 1934, 1938; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Egan et al., 2007; Greene, 1978, 1995a, 1995b; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999), and is about experience, imagination, and/or developing identities on or about teaching. The cognitive qualities of imagination have a profound impact on how a person—specifically a teacher in-becoming—situates her understanding of her place in her lived world as contingent on interpretations of experiences (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1978, 1995a, 1995b) which serve to construct narratives about her perceived reality. I tend to anchor much of my thinking for this project in a foundation of theoretical literature because it offers to me a sense of my own imagination—providing the backdrop for thinking about how teachers in-becoming might be, instead of relying solely on how to understand them

on the basis of empirical research for other phases and moments in their learning to teach. Empirical studies are, of course, important—and I’ve highlighted many significant ones throughout this text, and will continue to do so throughout this chapter.

The story that I’ve told of each of the participants in this study, while each possessing starkly contrasting personalities and teaching styles, offers a glimpse into the world of becoming a teacher, and the role that imagination plays in helping teachers in-becoming to navigate the experiences they had in and out of the classroom, and the effect that it has on who they are as teachers. Though identities that teachers in-becoming have and shape throughout learning to teach are not entirely of their own accord (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012), they do have some capacity to “tolerate, integrate, and balance different selves” if only as a function of making sense of the social realities in which they are embedded (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 35). For the teachers in-becoming in this study, the ways that they come to know the experiences, the social conditions, and the messages they perceive throughout their learning to teach shape and are shaped by their imagined realities that they have constructed about what does, and can, constitute their teaching practice (Greene, 1995b).

In all, there were five primary findings from the data that I discussed in the two data analysis chapters. First, the participants used their experiences in learning to teach to develop narratives and metaphors upon which they based their teaching. Second, the participants received messages from multiple sources to develop perceptions about their teaching. Both findings contribute to the participants imagining teaching to occur in particular ways. Third, the participants experienced a series of fears and epiphanies that developed for them possibilities and boundaries about teaching practices they believed they had agency to (or not to) act upon. Fourth, these elements of imagination converge for the participant to articulate a self-conception

as a teacher. Finally, the participants' state of in-becoming provides dimensions of learning to teach about which they imagine their practice.

What the teachers in-becoming in this study have are nascent experiences as a teacher, and where autonomy and self-conception of themselves as teachers are grounded in their experiences. In what Greene (1973, p. 10) refers to as the “contingency of the real,” she suggests that a person coming to terms with understanding his or her reality must mean that the individual mediates what he or she experience as “real.” Those perceived realities are predicated on how we understand—as Greene says, are conscious of—the ways that we experience the world through language, thinking, cultures, and imagining. The results of this study extend the body of research that began with Greene's (1973) study of teachers, and in the tradition of other studies of teachers learning to teach (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Segall, 2002), examines the lived experiences of student teachers in relation to the social contexts in which they are embedded, and like Greene (1973, 1995b) articulates a clear connection between teaching and imagination. Where this study extends the conversation however, is to articulate a post-student teaching phase of learning to teach where imagination and experience converge to describe how teachers in-becoming perceive a reality in which they are free to become highly conscious of their world—their teaching, their relative subjectivity to others, and the socio-cultural contexts in which they are embedded—to make meaning as the reality presented to them and to imagine it otherwise.

This study also extends the conversation about the tensions and contradictions that shape the experiences of learning to teach and affect how emerging teachers understand what constitutes teaching and the disruptions that emerge from how they come to know their experiences in schools (Britzman, 2003; Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Greene, 1973; Hong, 2010; Segall, 2002). Coming to understand, or even make explicit, the ways in which the

perceptions and narratives of the experience of learning to teach affects, if nothing else, making those tensions central to what teachers in-becoming understand as the possibilities for their practice within their own self-conception as teachers, and in the various contexts in which they find themselves situated to learn to teach.

This study further extends the body of educational literature by describing how teachers in-becoming come to see what they can and cannot do as teachers (Britzman, 2003; Cooper & He, 2012; Cuenca, 2011; Danielewicz, 2001; Sydnor, 2014). For the participants in the study, tending to the possibilities that emerge from their imagined practice is both stressful and disruptive, finding freedom, consciousness, and possibility are juxtaposed against confronting the “principles of exclusion and denial that have allowed me a certain range of utterances and prevented others” (Greene, 1995b, pp. 109-110). Britzman (2003, p. 126) reminds us that student teachers draw “upon [their] own subjectivity—the deep convictions and beliefs, life experiences, sense of self, and his own theory of the world—to endow with purpose the inherited territory of student teaching and the meanings of pedagogy constructed there.” The participants still faced the same kinds of tension and realization that affect what they believe they can do as teachers, and who they are as pedagogues even after leaving their student teaching behind. Those tensions are neither tempered by time, nor by they were prepared to be teachers, nor were they subject to the ebbs and flows of the changing designs, curriculums, and contexts in which their individual schools operated. Instead, they were all elements of an imagined practice, one where experiences helped them form narratives, and one where subjectivities help shape the way that they understand their realities.

**Discussion of the findings from chapter four.** In chapter four, I sought to answer the first research question: How do teachers in-becoming, as a function of imagination, form

narratives about their experiences that constitute meaning for their practice? From the investigation into that question, two major findings emerged: (1) that teachers in-becoming form narratives about their experience that are mediated by their own perceptions; and, (2) perceptions about what constitutes teaching emerge from messages received during their learning to teach.

Imagining teaching practices for teachers in-becoming in the way that I have argued throughout this dissertation builds upon Dewey's earlier (1938) claims regarding experiences being constituted by continuity and interaction. In that view experiences are both understood, but continually re-understood and reconfigured with other experiences such that in its fluidity imagination might generate possibilities. It is the idea that those experiences are highly contingent that adds a newer texture to the way that imagination operates. While Dewey also acknowledged the deep impact that one's social condition has on his understanding of his experiences, Greene (1973, 1995b) takes this a step further by illustrating that in the contingency of one's relationship to the social world, understanding reality takes on both an active and a passive quality. It is only in the act of making the tacit explicit and the accepted interrogated can one begin to surmise what one's relationship to and with the world is, and what possibilities might exist as a consequence.

Given the significance of experiences in understanding teaching and schooling as influential dimensions of how a teacher in-becoming imagines his capacity to teach against the backdrop of his lived experiences, the effects of experience working in the way that Dewey (1934, 1938) describes on a teacher in-becoming become disrupted. The teachers in-becoming in this study did not have further experiences, at least at that point, upon which to situate new knowledge and understanding about the lived realities of being a teacher. They do not stop

interpreting experiences however, despite having no new classroom experiences upon which to reevaluate the narratives they've created about who they are as teachers.

By virtue of their place in learning to teach, the participants had to instead continually retheorize the experiences they've already made sense of to further textualize their imagined self-conception as a teacher. Building on the work of Egan (1992, 1997) the participants had to rely on the simple metaphors that they had created about being a teacher to center their self-conception, the effect of which was a stagnation of imagination as they entered classrooms in their first full-time teaching position. Metaphors, as an act of imagination (Egan, 1992, 1997), are problematic to make clear. While humans often use them as a rhetorical and organizing feature of understanding our everyday experiences, inviting the participants to create metaphors for their own practice produced methodological and analytical challenges. In order to prevent the participants from forming a metaphor early on in the research process about themselves that would alter the quality of the collected data, I had to use techniques that allowed for participants to produce metaphors that could be used as an analytical tool. Consequently, I asked participants to construct a metaphor about teaching (see Appendix A), but then compared other responses throughout the interview process to that metaphor to arrive at the metaphors that represented their imagined selves and practices.

It might then be argued that the metaphors presented in this study were co-constructed by both the participants and myself, wherein I imposed, through metaphors, an analytic frame upon which participants predicated their practice. However, following the work of Egan (1992, 1997) the imaginative consequences of the metaphorical sense of how the participants constituted their teaching was ultimately more authentically driven by their experiences and perceptions of how they lived them. It is not just that imagination draws from that which is already known and

familiar, but that imagination can also be used to reorder, reconfigure, and engage in alternative possibilities (Greene, 1995b; Egan, 1992, 1997, 2007). That while experiences are significant forces in situating our understanding of the present orientations to/of the world, imagination can transcend that known orientation and develop new archetypes from those experiences.

*Narratives of experience mediated by students' perceptions.* I made the rhetorical choice for this section to discuss each participant individually because experiences are both highly personal and highly contextual. For that reason, it was imperative that each of the participants' narratives about their own experiences become clear, and as they came to understand their teaching (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1978, 1995b; Egan et al., 2007; Sydnor, 2014). Each crafted a metaphor of their teaching (Egan, 1992; Egan, 1997; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Takaya, 2007) and about who they are as teachers through the lens of their experiences (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Gomez et al., (2000); Greene, 1978, 1995b) as they had time to reflect on them as teachers in-becoming.

It became significant through the course of the study that the substance of the metaphors the participants each created remained constant from the first interview to the last, but that over the course of time, their metaphors became increasingly simplified and framed in the context of past experiences. In other words, in their transformation from student teacher to teacher in-becoming, they came to understand the metaphors not as different, but as anchored in a past self-conception. The earlier interviews with the participants afforded them the opportunity to talk about their experiences and how they were navigating them. Later interviews situated the same metaphors—of student centered teacher, of apprentice, of coach, and so on—as subsequent to events that had happened *to* them, that they had created meanings *about*, and that they had centered their practice *on*. They became very different teachers through the metaphors they had

constructed about their imagined selves, how they perceived their realities, and based on their experiences (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Egan, 1992, 1997; Gomez et al., 2000; Greene, 1973, 1995b).

Carolyn and Allen both crafted their narratives about their students, but did so in very different ways. Whereas Allen cultivated his teaching as an apprentice, aiming to understand pedagogies and curricula that would help him develop a persona as a teacher who can be the go-to teacher for all students, Carolyn lived that practice by being there for her students. Their aims, however ostensibly the same, derived from very different places. The students they served were not wildly dissimilar, yet Carolyn's embracing of living a life that made students central to it, while Allen's approach to being in students' lives was a more intellectual exercise, created sharp deviations in the way that they created narratives about their students. Similarly, Jack's inability to implicate the consequences of his own practice within the narratives that he formed about his students made his development as a teacher something that he either did not recognize, or was unwilling to discuss. Juxtaposed against the vulnerability that emerged from Amy, and in her own way Camille, Jack's reticence to deviate from a carefully constructed and affected teaching persona, became emblematic of the way that he was both challenged by and uncomfortable with later findings in the study, including his becoming the teacher that he imagined himself to be. Amy and Camille were both shaped by their vulnerability, but in very different ways. Both experienced moments of uncertainty and tension, but whereas Amy viewed hers as an asset, Camille viewed hers as a weakness. As a consequence, the narratives they developed and the way they understood their experiences were very different, as well as formative in their becoming.

***Messages and perceptions of teaching.*** Once the teachers in-becoming had constructed narratives about their experiences (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1995b; Takaya, 2007) and



metaphors (Egan, 1992, 1997) in which to situate their practice, they uncovered a number of messages that affected their understanding of teaching, schooling, and how they can conduct themselves as professionals. Building on the work of Dewey (1938), Greene (1973, 1995a, 1995b), and Egan (Egan, 1992; Egan et al., 2007), it became apparent that despite experiences that largely frame their student teaching as one of progress, now, situated as teachers in-becoming, they continued to struggle to make sense of contradictions that fostered strains in how they imagine that they can go about the grind of teaching once outside the comforts of the student teaching experience (Cooper & He, 2012; Cuenca, 2011; Danielewicz, 2001; Greene, 1978, 1995b; Hong, 2010; Sydnor, 2014). The most problematic contradiction they see is trying to coalesce messages about being dynamic and innovative teachers with the extrinsic messages of success predicated on routinized pedagogical and curricular approaches (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Greene, 1978, 1995b; McLean, 1999).

Given these inherent contradictions, it's not surprising to see teachers in-becoming like Jack and Allen, who based their imagined selves on images of teaching based heavily on the routines of schooling, to struggle with how the messages that are conveyed to them by the field might be able to be imbued with those received from university. Whereas Jack tends to give credence to the field when in doubt, Allen, like Carolyn and Amy, has the tendency to instead struggle with internalizing the contradictory messages they have as a consequence of how they approach their practice as teachers. Meanwhile, Camille imagines, based on the messages she has received, a teaching that is predicated on a culture of fear, which is a way of expressing the imagined state of uncertainty and fears that demarcate what it means to be a teacher in-becoming.

**Discussion of the findings in chapter five.** For student teachers and in-practice teachers, there is a constant source of both experiences and of messages in which to base perceptions of what one can and can't do in her practice (Britzman, 2003; Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999; Sydnor, 2014). But for the teachers in-becoming in this study it was far more problematic, because they reside in a place in their learning to teach that is effectively in limbo. The only experiences from which they can form narratives and metaphors (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Egan, 1992, 1997; Gomez et al., 2000; Greene, 1973, 1995b) that help them understand themselves as teachers are in the past, and part of their development that they view as complete (Cooper & He, 2012; Sydnor, 2014). It's important to remember that this aspect of learning to teach happens in the real world, and is both messy and heavily contextual (Danielewicz, 2001; McLean, 1999). After all, what we perceive may or may not have any bearing on what actually happened, and what we do with how we imagine our experiences is a recursive process that we are constantly formulating (Dewey, 1938; Greene, 1995b). Absent the capacity to frame their teaching in a specific context, the participants were better able to see the full range of possibilities that arise from the self-conception of the teacher they have come to imagine they are (Greene, 1973, 1995b).

In chapter five, I sought to answer the second research question: In what ways do teachers in-becoming use (or do not use) meanings to imagine what is and is not possible in their practice as a consequence? From the investigation into that question, three major findings emerged: (1) teachers in-becoming experienced fears and epiphanies in their learning to teach that created for them both boundaries and possibilities for their practice; (2) teachers in-becoming crafted a self-conception as a teacher that emerged from their imagined realities and

experiences as a teacher; and (3), the transformation that occurred in becoming a teacher was a necessary and significant act of imagination.

This chapter builds on Greene's (1995b) conception of how possibilities occur in teaching, and how we come to imagine what we can and cannot do as teachers. To that end, the chapter provides evidence for how possibilities emerge from the experiences of the participants, and how imagination operates to entertain "a given imaginative presentation as purely possible while at the same time experiencing it as inherently indeterminate" (Casey, 2000, p. 123). Each of the participants could both identify and provide texture to the boundaries and possibilities that structured what they imagined teaching to consist of. While that means resisting "normalization" and seeking "spaces where we can envision other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them" (Greene, 1995b, p. 135), the teachers in-becoming in this study demonstrated that process to be far more complex, and in constant flux given the ebbs and flows of what they perceive to give the most meaning to their self-conception as a teacher. This chapter provides real-world context for Greene's (1988, p. 54) assertion that "the more I can perceive, the wider and more complex becomes the field over which my imagination can play; the more details there are to be integrated; the more richness and fecundity there may be to grasp..."

So much of the participants' discussion about possibilities revolved around pedagogical and logistical acts, like how to control a classroom, substantiating previous research on how teachers begin to understand themselves as teachers (Cooper & He, 2012; Cuenca, 2010; Sydnor, 2014). By drawing correlations between issues like fears, epiphanies, possibilities, and self-conception teachers in-becoming provide alternative avenues of investigating lived phenomena. Building on empirical data and contextualizing the theoretical dimensions for the brand of becoming that Greene (1995a) suggests, the findings in chapter five indicate that participants

require envisioning possibilities to provoke professional transformation. At the conclusion of this study, the participants were changed—in some good ways and some problematic ways—but as teachers in-becoming, they each imagined a self-conception of teacher that provided for them a base from which to progress in their careers.

This study also attended heavily to self-conception, which I attempt to describe distinctly from similarly situated concepts like identity. Imagining a self-conception as a teacher was a fundamental aspect of being in-becoming for the participants. As such, it builds on Danielewicz's (2001) study of aspiring teachers. She concludes her study by arguing:

Selves are made unwittingly in moments of convergence, when there is strong confluence of forces, or a crossing-over of disparate vectors of experience. We are not in charge.

There is great freedom and power in acknowledging our lack of control and in relinquishing that desire. Instead, we can hold on to and exercise our agency, the ability to act...With more energy, we can continue our work as teachers to create environments where discursive experience—with all its potential for convergence—happens (p. 197).

This study suggests a far more complex relationship. Indeed, selves are made, perhaps unwittingly, but it is nonetheless an active process, where the teacher in-becoming has imagined a self as being integral to the act of teaching. Still, it's less about how selves are made for the teacher in-becoming, but what they do with it, and how they construct and reconstruct themselves as teachers in light of the experiences that shaped their becoming.

Greene (1981, 1995a, 1995b) refers to the iterative construction and reconstruction of self-conception as “choosing yourself,” and in a time and place that lies between the powerful elements that are interested in constructing them (Britzman, 2003) either as student teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012) or as practicing teachers (Costigan & Crocco,

2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), the cognitive processes utilized by the teachers in-becoming frees them to develop an imagined conception of self that embodies the teacher they always wanted to be. Thus, this chapter provides the analytical means by which McLean (1999, p. 86) argues those interested in teaching should, “consider the contexts in which [becoming] is located, and out of which it is constructed.” In the context of this study, Amy confided at one point, “doing this study at the same time as interviewing [for potential teaching jobs] is hard; here I can be totally open and honest, but in a [job] interview I have to be careful about how I portray myself.” As these teachers find themselves transitioning into a form of teaching practice that has only thus far been held out as a promise—their own room, autonomy, responsibility, and of course, a paycheck—the way they imagine those experiences to come is formulated in the grind of their learning to teach, in the way that they articulate that reality, and in the context of their present reality as in-between a past and a future. The becoming of the participants in the study produced a series of dimensions through which becoming is understood to be integral in the development of teachers.

So, whether it is Carolyn swallowing her grief over the death of her student and her inability to alleviate the pain for her students to her framing of her grief over the death of her student to be moments later at the front of her room enthusiastically describing concepts on the board with the echo of light laughter emanating from the room; or Jack telling me, almost offhandedly, that “I was really nervous about coming here, you know. I mean, when they assigned me to this school, I wasn’t sure I even wanted to show up. Now I couldn’t imagine another experience. Truthfully, this school isn’t at all what people say. It’s amazing;” or Camille teaching the hour after she was told she was the worst intern her mentor had ever seen, and later finding some way to situate herself as a teacher that made transforming her practice possible; or

Allen constantly thinking about what he could do better, and what other skills or experiences he needs to acquire to be a teacher, while worrying that he “might suck as a teacher;” or Amy, finding her own vulnerability and shortcomings the way to access the lives of her students, and to provide both support and learning at the same time; each of the participants’ became emblematic of how the teacher in-becoming evolves and transforms during a very short time period where they are able to shed the student identities in which they have long been ensconced to assume, however inchoate, a self-conception of a teacher ready for *the job*.

***Fears and epiphanies, boundaries and possibilities.*** In the course of the data collection and analysis, it became clear that the concepts of fear and epiphanies (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Kien, 2013) that occurred as teachers juxtaposed against one another in a way that helps make clear the effects of boundaries and possibilities on imagination (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Egan et al., 2007; Greene 1995a, 1995b). The result was to understand that possibilities and boundaries, two significant attributes of how teachers in-becoming experience imagination and, by which, they can articulate what can and can’t be acted upon as teachers, reside in their ability to name and give substance to the elements of teaching that scare them and the moments that provided clarity about their purpose and praxis (Greene, 1995b).

Amy’s hypersensitivity to accountability creates an imagined form of teaching that precludes her from doing some things that she might normally do if she did not feel that there were major repercussions for her career if she were to do them. Things like innovative, organic forms of planning, hugging students, or simply being herself were elements that she identified as barriers to the kind of teaching she imagined, and those conditions that create in her concerns of being burned out. For Allen and Jack, their fears were predicated on screwing up, and of not living up to the dimensions of teaching that imagine great teachers to possess, and which they

continually emulate. For Camille, her epiphany stemmed from her fear to use the coaching skills that she had because they did not align with what she imagined teaching to be, but found freedom and possibility once she embraced that aspect of herself. Carolyn too, by embracing her realization that she had surpassed her mentor teacher in both efficacy and ability, cemented her image of herself as a teacher.

***Self-conception as a teacher.*** As the teachers in-becoming shed their self-conception as a student teacher and transform their self-conception to one of a practicing teacher, the timing of being a teacher in-becoming conveys their teaching, and their role as teachers (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; McLean, 1999; Sydnor, 2014), as something that can only exist in their imagination (Greene, 1995a, 1995b). For the participants in the study, cultivating a self-conception as a teacher is a major function of being a teacher in-becoming, but it also presents the conditions for the teacher in-becoming to imagine teaching where possibility is derived in response to what they know teaching to be like. Throughout, they maintain positivity about their role as teachers, and see their future as one where helping students will be a central part of how they think of themselves as teachers.

Each describes when they embodied how they imagine teaching to be, and in that process, defines how they will assess their image of success as a teacher. Each finds strength in imagining teaching where students are central, but based on their own approach. For Camille “it just clicks” while Allen finds himself in an initial foray into autonomy. Jack and Carolyn both envision themselves in the act of teaching, while Amy is concerned with her relationship to the community writ large. In all of these examples, the conception of self as the teacher emerges and provides for them the ability to imagine themselves as a practicing teacher outside the boundaries of their teacher education program.

*Becoming a teacher: Imagined metamorphosis.* Simply being done with student teaching but without a job might be universally experienced, but what one does with, and through the cognitive processes used during this time of transition has an effect on what kind of teacher they imagine themselves to be (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Hong, 2012). For the purposes of this study, building on Dewey (1934, 1938), Greene (1973, 1981 1995a, 1995b), McLean (1999), and Takaya (2007), that process—the theorizing of past experiences and the narratives that stem from them to imagine a form of teaching that is not yet, but could be, attained—is what defines the phase of learning to teach that I am describing as being a teacher in-becoming. For the participants in the study, what fundamentally makes them teachers in-becoming is that they indeed have gone through that process and have, as a result, codified significant elements of imagined teaching upon which their future practice is based (Greene, 1995a, 1995b).

Allen and Camille see things a bit differently, although I think that they come from the same place in their imagination. Camille sees the attainment of a job as the ultimate way that she will finally be a teacher, but more importantly, has learned to embody the confidence that she is a teacher without having to say so. Allen too, has embodied the teacher he imagines himself to be, but true to his metaphor of apprentice, doesn't imagine that he'll stray far from the teacher he currently is. In contrast, what Amy and Carolyn use to locate their imagined self in becoming a teacher is the active ability to critically analyze and critique the elements of teaching—relationships, curricula, pedagogical strategies—and to make determinations for themselves about what matters and what doesn't. And at the end of the day, for all of Jack's inability to implicate himself, when he has become a teacher, he does just that, and does it in relation to how his students will leave his room at the end of the year.



**Some final thoughts on imagination and the teacher in-becoming.** I rely heavily on the work of Greene for this dissertation, and in the traditions and theories developed by Dewey (1934, 1938), she articulates for teaching a strong theoretical line from experience, to possibility, to imagination (1973, 1995a, 1995b). Yet, a fair critique of her work, as it pertains to this study at least, is that despite the strength of her theoretical underpinnings, her writing at times can be as enigmatic and recondite as it is complex and thoughtful; rooted deeply in literature, philosophy, and her own experiences, applying her ideas to real-world contexts requires one to set aside any expectation to see from her structural applications of ideas or empirical studies, and be fully prepared to formulate interventions independently. This study provides empirical data that supports Greene's (1995b) theories about how imagination operates with emerging teachers, and in the process, articulates a vision of how research practices can use Greene's formulation of imagination in field settings.

This study is also predicated on an aspect of learning to teach that has little basis in the literature (Cooper & He, 2012). The word "becoming" as it is associated in the literature most often refers to the process of becoming a teacher writ large (McLean, 1999), as a journey (Sydnor, 2014), via the lens of student teaching (Britzman, 2003; Segall, 2002), through the lens of teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). The idea of becoming (a teacher) also manifests as something akin to storytelling (Gomez et al., 2000; Sydnor, 2014), or identity/self-forming (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999). Even in Ayers (1995) treatment of becoming, the focus is on the contingent and often underrepresented ways that we develop our selves as teachers and serve children and communities. But, I argue throughout this dissertation that because they are not yet fully fledged teachers, the meanings for the participants' future selves—the teacher in the

classroom, building the life and career as a teacher—derives from, and in response to, the imagined self-conception as a teacher they have cultivated. In other words, my treatment of “becoming” draws from all of these sources, but is rather specific in how those forces effect the teacher the participants imagine themselves to be. Ultimately, the participants in this study conceive of themselves based on what a “real teacher” does, which drives what they imagine what is and isn’t possible in their teaching. The consequence is that for each teacher in-becoming, imagining oneself as a teacher is both complex and determinative.

The myriad ways that the participants in the study imagined themselves and their social and professional contexts are all “correct,” in that their imagination enabled them to become the teacher they wanted within the realities of their learning to teach. All of the teachers in-becoming use the broader metaphors of who they perceive themselves to be personally and professionally to situate their understanding of complex terms of their practice. Whether through the “disruptions” that help underscore the possibilities and boundaries of their practice, or the “subjectivities” by which they come to understand their realities, the participants in this study shape and are shaped by their experiences in the field, and are the primary means that they have to articulate narratives in and about their practice as they become the teachers that they have long envisioned themselves to be. They each had wildly different experiences and the effects/consequences of those experiences are also divergent; but each in their own unique way, created the teacher that they believed they could be. However, despite different experiences, different outcomes, and differing ways of naming what they imagine themselves to be, they had similar processes, and those processes converged with their imagination to produce the ability to craft a self-conception of teacher based on his or her own lived experiences and idiosyncrasies.

The manifestations of imagination for the teachers in-becoming provide for teacher educators a way to understand that even for teachers in-becoming whose experiences in learning to teach are ostensibly the same, even literally experienced side by side, that the way they imagine themselves as teachers has more to do with their perceptions of the world as they experience it than with what actually may or may not happen in their day-to-day lives. The participants in this study are five unique, complicated, and talented young teachers who, at the end of their learning to teach field experience, find themselves faced with trying to articulate what they expect to be as teachers, and how they will shape their career for the foreseeable future. In seeking to clarify, organize, and provide significance for the ways in which teachers in-becoming use their experiences—and the messages, fears, epiphanies, possibilities, boundaries, conceptions of self that occur throughout the process of becoming—to constitute meaning for what they imagine teaching to be and to develop ways in which the versions of their practice might be brought to fruition, they find themselves having to continually shift their way of speaking as contingent upon with whom and how they interact with the world. Thus, what matters most are attention to the contexts in which teachers in-becoming learn, and providing ways for them to name their realities, without disrupting their emerging sense of self-conception as a teacher.

### **Educational Significance**

The first contribution of this study is in identifying a phase of learning to teach that I call in-becoming, where cognitive processes enable the use of imagination to facilitate a transition from being a student teacher to a self-conception as a teacher, allowing the beginning of induction teaching. I have argued that this has unique attributes that contribute to how the teacher in-becoming understands himself as a teacher. It might be regarded as a problem for teachers in-

becoming to imagine teaching where they are between a past and a future (Greene, 1995a). The imagination of teachers in-becoming who are no longer student teachers draw a bulk of experiences to form narratives and meaning of their perceptual realities stem from the halcyon days of learning to teach (Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; McLean, 1999). For some scholars, this would be the most interesting place to obtain data for this study. For others, it might be during the induction phase of teaching, after one has the ability to reflect on what they thought teaching was supposed to be about. While much of the theory and research that I base this study on (e.g., Ayers, 1995; Britzman, 2003; Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Dewey, 1934, 1938; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Egan et al., 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Greene, 1978, 1995a, 1995b; Sydnor, 2014) investigates one or the other phase of teaching, I believe now, as I did at the inception of this project, that only in the transformation that is facilitated by imagination, can we as researchers fundamentally understand the lived experiences of teachers in-becoming. I have made every attempt to situate the theoretical strands and the data within the body of literature informing the primary topics that this study sought to illuminate: teaching in-becoming, imagination, the lived experiences of teachers in-becoming, and how each effect teaching and teacher education.

I investigated the cognitive processes of becoming during the time of learning to teach that I chose to investigate in this study for specific reasons. Not because imagination doesn't occur elsewhere or even throughout the day to day realities of teaching, but because of the qualities that underlie the cognitive shift of being in-becoming—a belief of having left the security of teacher education, but with unlimited possibilities for an unknown future—where teachers in-becoming were able to assert and try against an imagined future, a brand of teaching that defined who they have come to be, and to be able to articulate how they've become the

teacher that they are. To be clear, because in-becoming is marked by cognitive processes, the transformation from student teacher to teacher, and being in-becoming, does not occur at a fixed point in time. Rather, it is unique in both time and context for each individual. This study contributes to understanding the cognitive processes of being in-becoming which gives emerging teachers the capacity to both fully understand their lived experience and to imagine the kind of teacher they want to be, in their own time, and on their own terms.

The second area that I believe this study contributes significantly to is in making imagination central to the task of learning to teach and as integral in the development of the self-conception one has of being a teacher. In making that case, I argue that attention to imagination, both as an individual aspect in understanding lived experiences, and as a mechanism for teasing out both possibilities and consequences of pedagogical acts, is an imperative aspect of learning to teach. Building on the work of Greene (1988, 1995a, 1995b) and Dewey (1934, 1938), I argue that imagination is “fundamental to learning to learn, essential to the feeling that life is more than a futile, repetitive, consuming exercise” (Greene, 1988, p. 48) for teachers, and as teachers in-becoming, the development of and consequences for how imagination in their teaching emerged created opportunities to understand implications for their teaching.

The significance of recognizing imagination as central to how educators perceive their lived realities (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Gomez, 2000; Greene, 1973, 1995b), and the agency they believe they possess to act in certain ways instead of others (Britzman, 2003; Greene, 1995b), should not diminish the equally important distinction that imagination, when placed central to the mechanisms of learning to teach, provides the space for educators to process experience, conceptualize possibilities, and construct self-conceptions that become the foundation of their daily work as teachers (Greene, 1995b). This study demonstrates the ways

that process occurs, but also suggests that teacher educators, mentor teachers, and other actors in the processes of learning to teach should take imagination seriously as both how emerging teachers come to understand the experiences they have in learning to teach (Cooper & He, 2012; Gomez, 2000; Sydnor, 2014), but how imagination works to help them determine why some forms of teaching are more permissible than others. The results of this study argue that attention to, and conscious interventions of, imagination in learning to teach produce teachers who are better able to negotiate the tensions that arise in their becoming of teachers, and who can envision a greater range of pedagogical and curricular possibilities.

### **Implications for Teacher Education Policy and Practice**

To address the implications for teacher education policy and practice, I rely on two considerations. First, I think about the various large-scale, or institutionally situated, forms of teacher education policy that are made. These decisions affect the institution as a whole and provide the structures and logistics by which student teachers become certified teachers. They vary widely in both content and structure (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). All teacher education experiences are different and all experiences have consequences (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Zeichner, 2002), and the goal of the practicum is to provide a reasonable facsimile of what it's like to be a teacher (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Jackson, 1999; McLean, 1999; Zeichner, 2002). Such variations in how teacher education is executed are based on institutional and cultural factors that arise out of the teacher education context. Some scholarship has sought to show which ones are better than others, either specifically, or by design (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012), the characteristics of those

teacher education programs generally reflect the proclivities of the institution, those charged with being stewards of it, and the socio-cultural context in which the university and the college of education itself are embedded. I view this as a positive reality about learning to teach. While all programs should be participating in continual self-assessment and rethinking policies to increase efficacy and to make them more equitable and socially just (my opinion), they should also first and foremost meet the needs of their students, the schools in the communities in which they are embedded, and the aims for which their teacher education program strives (or, the values upon which the teacher education program is based).

Thus, I don't view this study as contributing to teacher education policies that would substantially alter, codify, or advocate for certain experiences over others. Rather, this study demonstrates that within the formulation of the student teacher experience, there is capacity to rethink how policies can, and should, address issues related to the teacher in-becoming within already established institutional structures. To that end, I offer two policy interventions for teacher education institutions that I believe can help foster better imaginative teaching practices once the teacher in-becoming transforms from student teacher to teacher.

**Cultivating imagination in teacher education practices.** The first way that teacher education policy can reflect a commitment to both imagination and the teacher in-becoming is in developing strong logistics and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in teacher education courses to cultivate imaginative practices in teachers throughout the teacher education process. I would argue that there are numerous opportunities to invite imaginative practices throughout learning to teach, both formally and informally. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on two modest interventions that I believe would improve the capacity for emerging teachers to engage in imaginative pedagogies. Specifically, I argue for methods

courses to use an in-class activity and formal assignments to engage students in imaginative acts. There is demonstrable evidence that high-quality student teaching experiences have structured field experiences that are congruent with theorizing and research-based best practices that are part of methods courses (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). For that reason, the recommendations below are best instituted using a model of teacher education that is field based.

***Talk-time: Deconstructing practices.*** Building on the work of Missias and Brugar (2015), this in-class exercise is designed for methods courses that have a field-based component. The “Talk-time” exercise is designed as a whole class activity that asks participants to first deconstruct their real-life experiences in the classroom, then to imagine possibilities that might emerge from those experiences. There is an important note before proceeding however: this exercise can only be successfully implemented in courses where strong communities of practice have been established and cultivated (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and where there is discernible authenticity in the interpersonal relationships among the students participating. In short, if students do not trust each other, then this exercise may not be effective. Further, some teacher educators may therefore wish to alter this exercise to be conducted in small groups, or in a synchronous or asynchronous online environment, or even in the course of field instructor and mentor teacher triads, in order to facilitate the most effective discussions.

Missias and Brugar (2015) identify four significant aspects of this exercise. They are participatory “organic” conversation, eliciting descriptive narratives, interrogating feeling statements, and demonstrating similarity of experience. The findings in this study demonstrate that there is a need for teacher educators to facilitate the cognitive processes that converge with imagination to provide meaning to the lived experiences of teachers in-becoming. Each of the participants, in their own unique time, emerged as teachers in-becoming and imagined their



teaching based on a self-conception as teacher. Yet, the findings also suggest that this process was largely experienced autonomously, even in response to negative and highly emotive aspects of their lived experience in learning to teach. The exercise advocated by Missias and Brugar (2015) would enable teacher educators to mitigate feelings of isolation and enable teacher educators to help student teachers make sense of the messages, experiences, and qualities that define their emerging self-conception as a teacher.

Here, I add a fifth aspect of the work of Missias and Brugar (2015): participatory counterfactuals. This additional aspect of the exercise contributes to students envisioning and articulating possibilities that arise from experiences—which is a key attribute in the cognitive processes of being a teacher in-becoming. It further builds on the practical problem solving aspects of the exercise by introducing participatory counterfactuals as an active element of the discussion. By extending the conversation into imagining counterfactual options to the lived realities in the field (Byrne, 2005), students participating in the exercise are invited to activate their imagination in discerning a range of possible alternatives within the perceived realities of the experience. This element of the exercise might begin with a simple question such as “What might have you done differently?” It might also center on some of the more emotive or evocative elements of the experience and interrogate for the student alternatives from that particular moment. For example, when Allen froze and needed his mentor teacher to intervene when students began to have a physical altercation, as a teacher educator, I might use that moment as a means of exploring other possible actions.

The fundamental purpose of this final step building on the work of Missias and Brugar (2015) is to facilitate student teachers in articulating and naming a range of possibilities that are situated in real world experiences in their practice (Greene, 1978, 1995b). Consequently, they

would then have the capacity to describe why some choices are more preferable than others (Cherryholmes, 1999), or to conceptualize alternative practices in similar future situations (Greene, 1995b). Both aspects of this exercise then enable the imagination to become central to the development of dispositions and pedagogical choices for student teachers within the construct of the teacher education program itself.

*A letter to my future self.* A more formal mechanism in teacher education courses that is helpful in accessing imaginative practices for the teachers in-becoming is to construct an assignment where they write a letter to their future selves. The letter to my future self is a commonly-used device to help students reflect on their experiences and to articulate a vision for what they want to remember as they enter the field. I base this assignment on the reflective work of Carothers (1995) and Greene (1995b), as it has a number of elements that specifically are designed to help teachers in-becoming examine their experiences with respect to imagination. This assignment can, of course, be adapted based on the course, the students, and the pedagogical context in which it might be used, including as an element of evaluating field experiences.

More than a statement of teaching philosophy, the letter to future self enables students to provide theoretical underpinnings for the realities faced everyday in schools (Greene, 1978), as well as activates imagination in the framing and discussion of their curricular and pedagogical choices (Egan et al., 2007). The letter itself is developed at the end of the student teaching experience where most, if not all, students have transitioned to being in-becoming. While the letter might take a number of forms, the results of this study suggest that there are a few elements that should be included:

- The dimensions that students don't wish to forget about themselves, their teaching, their students, and their experiences.
- How their thinking evolved over the course of their learning to teach, and whether they find that to be positive or troubling.
- The mistakes they regret and the successes that made them proud—and why those happened.
- Advice to themselves—the ideals that they believe are at the core of their self-conception of being a teacher—that they hope to carry throughout their careers.

To be clear, each of these elements is essential in translating the methods used for accessing the cognitive aspects of in-becoming and imagination in this study to the real lives of teachers. Stated differently here, each of the suggested bullets conveys an aspect of imagination as it is used in this study. From creating meaning from experiences, to envisioning possibilities, to imagining themselves as the teacher that they someday will be, these dimensions are integral to addressing the perceived realities of being a teacher in-becoming. For the participants in the study, these were embedded in the conversations that opened up their thinking about what is possible as teachers, and helped them formulate complexity in the teacher they imagined themselves to be.

The letter to a future self assignment is an opportunity for the teachers in-becoming to use the real-world experiences of their student teaching to imagine themselves as active agents in constructing their self-conception of being a teacher (Greene, 1995b). Further, the effect is to enable the teacher in-becoming to extend the process of learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), and to do so with the authority to construct an imagined self within the boundaries of his

or her perceived reality (Cooper & He, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001; Gomez et al, 2000; McLean, 1999).

**Investing in vulnerability and the teacher in-becoming.** This recommendation explores the concept of vulnerability in the context of being a teacher in-becoming and argues that, because it is a component of imagining oneself as a dynamic teacher, investing in pedagogical strategies that cultivate dispositions of vulnerability will support imagination in teacher development. We have many roles in shepherding the next generation of teachers into the classroom, but one role as teacher educators that may go unsaid is to mitigate the feelings of vulnerability by revealing them as a common aspect of learning to teach and to help prospective teachers see the potential for their own growth in the support and shared experience of their peers (Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001). Cultivating spaces to be vulnerable throughout the teacher education process allows the teacher in-becoming transition from a feeling of isolation into imagining her practice as one in which she has both agency and meaning.

To invite pre-service teachers at all phases of their teacher education program into conversations where they can build on their personal and educational experiences and so they might understand their vulnerability as both natural and even a courageous aspect of their practice (Brown, 2012; Greene, 1995b) can only serve to support the audacious idealism that we hope to engender in them throughout the process. Using intentional practices to allow for vulnerability to be present in conversations about education, practice, and teaching both real and imagined, is the mechanism that enables teachers to embrace their imperfections and more authentically experience their lived learning to teach.

The cognitive processes of becoming for the teacher in-becoming produces a deleterious effect where they associate vulnerability within the context of their classroom, defined by an

absence of control—control of the classroom, of the students, of the content, and of their ability to engage students in effective learning practices (Dale & Frye, 2009). Therefore, it becomes a pedagogical imperative that pre-service teachers “experience the joys and delights as well as the discomforts and tensions of vulnerability and uncertainty” (Dale & Frye, 2009, p. 124).

Still, the realities of teaching with all of its uncertainty (McDonald, 1992), invariably comes to prospective teachers, which this study has demonstrated has an effect on how they imagine themselves as teachers. They have felt the vulnerability of teaching for the first time as a form of dissonance that they are unsure of how to process, and now that they are in the phase of unbecoming need more than ever the tools in which to process their experiences (Danielewicz, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Greene, 1995b). Further complicating feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty are the fears that they are alone, that their peers do not share their sense of being vulnerable, and that it is somehow a defect of their practice that they must hide and suppress. Jack, more than any other participant, was the prime example of this. The participants in this study had to traverse the uncertainty of becoming, the fear of being inadequate, and the struggle for worthiness. Additionally, they were each willing to be open to sharing in the lives of children, of being responsible for being part of a school community, and of being open to demonstrating a love of and meaning for subject.

An underrecognized aspect of the significance of vulnerability is in the act of giving student teachers the permission to fail, and to fail spectacularly, in real-world settings without serious repercussions for their practices. Building on the work of Feiman-Nemser (2012) and Danielewicz (2001), the idea that student teachers should be given permission to try different pedagogical strategies, curricular interventions, and teaching personae, especially those that fail, as they develop their self-conceptions as teachers produces for the teacher in-becoming not only

a sense of safety, but that he or she is never fully finished developing. Being able to claim failure as a positive mechanism for teaching growth ultimately supports imaginative practices by adding further texture to the experiences of learning to teach.

The challenge for teacher educators is authentically creating pedagogical acts and interpersonal relationships such that we are “creating the conditions and providing the kinds of support and challenge needed to assist a beginning teacher to learn to manage his or her own vulnerability, to get beyond self-concerns, to become or remain teachable, and to maximize growth” (Bullough, 2005, p. 37). Bullough (2005) identifies several lenses through which teacher educators can understand the role of vulnerability in the development of pre-service teachers. There is an interplay, he suggests, that both confronts beginning teachers with failure within their shifting identities, and in pushing the boundaries of what they are capable of when supported and challenged in professional learning environments. Each of the participants in this study demonstrated some degree of vulnerability in their approach, but the greater degree to which they felt that they had a place in which to express that vulnerability, gave them the license to employ greater imaginative practices as teachers. While pre-service teachers across learning to teach can benefit from making their vulnerability explicit to their teacher education, having that disposition as a teacher in-becoming develops the capacity to be more reflective practitioners once they’ve left their teacher education program, and stimulates imaginative practices.

Teacher education programs differ substantially in content and presentation and each addresses the development of teachers in different ways (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Employability is important, and helping them craft the necessary components and dispositions for being successful on the market, is a logistical, if not pragmatic, imperative for which teacher education programs should assume

responsibility. But what happens after they have prepared their résumés and practiced their interviews is equally important in developing their self-conception as a teacher. The findings demonstrated in this study suggest that if greater attention is paid to that phase of teaching, then teachers leaving teacher education programs will imagine, and have a better capacity to produce in their own practices, teaching that reflects the commitments of the teacher education program. The findings then challenge the traditional and long accepted notions of “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975), and instead provides support for contemporary conceptualizations of the term (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014) and further suggests that researchers are more attentive to reshaping this long established norm in educational research.

Crafting elements of teacher education at the end of the student teaching experience that honors what it means to be a teacher in-becoming, and creates opportunities for teachers in-becoming to actively theorize their imagined self-conception as a teacher. In turn, programmatic structures can only serve to strengthen and sustain practices of teachers in-becoming that invite possibilities from their pedagogical and curricular choices. We know from the research that the first year especially and the first few years are challenging (Beebe & Corrigan, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Stanulis & Ames, 2009; Stanulis & Bell, 2017; Wilks & Ross, 2014), so by acknowledging and crafting programmatic interventions with respect for the teacher in-becoming—at the end of the student teaching experience, but before having to go on the job market—teacher educators are positioned to help teachers in-becoming: a) make sense of their experiences in learning to teach in a highly personalized and intentional way, and b) further theorize pedagogical values and craft their pedagogical strategies to give structure to the kind of teacher they imagine themselves to be. The data from this study suggests that the in-

becoming phase is an ideal time to do so, as they are free from other school interests as teachers, but also free from responsibilities of coursework.

To be vulnerable, and to open oneself, one's passion, one's uncertainty (McDonald, 1992), and one's knowledge to indifference, rejection, or even to the prospect of sharing those parts of oneself with others is as courageous an act as there is. And teachers do it every single day. The greatest of teachers learn how to incorporate that vulnerability as part of their everyday practice (Missias & Brugar, 2015). This requires of us as teacher educators to also be vulnerable in expressing our own uncertainties, and our own sense of instability, to open spaces in our teacher education courses where conversations about the lived experiences of student teacher are welcome and contribute to the development of pedagogical practices. By allowing our students to see a part of ourselves that echoes their own perceived inadequacy and weakness, however unfounded, is really a moment for us to build a relationship that goes beyond the curriculum we impart and to be grateful for the moment that allows us to reflect on our shared experiences and to be part of a community of emerging teachers who rely as much on the things they don't know as the things that they do. Currently, in collaboration with Brugar, I am working to identify specific practices that can be implemented in teacher education courses, especially methods courses, that will provide the classroom contexts in which vulnerability can be cultivated and used for a pedagogical purpose (Missias & Brugar, 2015).

### **Limitations**

There are three major limitations to my study. First, the assertions can only be applied to these student teachers and can't authentically be extrapolated to other sites and settings. That the teacher education program in which the participants were embedded is nationally recognized for its rigor and innovation further adds to that limitation. The intent of this research isn't to provide



specific points in which specific interventions will lead to specific outcomes that can be replicated. Rather, because it “is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 27), the research findings here are designed to help us better understand *these* participants and to enlighten us to better understand what is a unique, and under-theorized, place in learning to teach. Additionally, it may help shape our thinking as teacher educators, and attune us to the language and processes that our students are going through as they march toward certification. It may help us conceive of pedagogies that are more inclusive, or help foster imaginative ways of understanding one’s lived experiences in the classroom throughout learning to teach.

Second, the data sources I collected, although rich, can only tell part of the story about what it means to be a teacher in-becoming. Further research must be developed to understand the contexts and practices associated with that phase of learning to teach. There are numerous other avenues for research which would add further texture to the lived experiences of teachers in-becoming and to investigate imagination in the context of teaching. For example, one might approach the concept of teachers in-becoming from: the standpoint of the relationship between mentor teachers and student teachers; or the experiences that student teachers have with field instructors, mentor teachers, school personnel, or other stakeholders in their placements; or how student teachers imagine particular kinds of curriculum, and their relative agency in deploying them. In each avenue of research, the applying the principles and theories of imagination in the experiences of student teachers would further extend the findings in this study. This study was intentionally and demonstrably limited in its approach to these issues so as to provide a thorough treatment of the data.

Finally, imagination, because it is a contested term in the literature, offers other ways of knowing and applying the term. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that while I believe the approach I took for this study regarding imagination provided robust data and an effective means of both understanding and applying the term, other scholars might find other avenues for approaching the concept that are equally valid. I chose to investigate the data using a narrow definition of the term imagination that primarily builds on the works of Dewey (1934, 1938) and Greene (1973, 1981, 1988, 1995a, 1995b) because their attention to the relationship between experience, possibility, perception, and imagination provides for a deeply established theoretical framework upon which to analyze the data collected. However, there are other theoretical and empirical approaches used elsewhere in philosophical, rhetorical, educational, psychological, and neurological research which maintain validity. I must, therefore, acknowledge that a particular limitation of this study is that others might approach the same research questions differently.

### **Future Research**

As a researcher, I wish to be attuned to the areas in which this study might inform and direct future research practices that I (or others) might undertake. I list here, and briefly describe, three priorities for my own research that I envision myself pursuing. Throughout this research, I will continue to build on the body of research that is primarily used throughout this study including and especially the concepts of imagination established by Dewey (1934, 1938), Greene (1995b), Egan (1992; also in Egan et al., 2007).

1. Further examining the phase of learning to teach called being in-becoming.

As I mentioned, while the data presented here are robust and illuminating, they do not tell the whole story. Further research must be committed to this phase of learning to teach to better understand the conditions and contexts in which it is situated and the mechanisms by which it

operates. My further research in this area would seek to address this time in learning to teach largely through further qualitative studies.

2. Research into the role that vulnerability plays in learning to teach, particularly with respect to imagination and the teaching in-becoming.

Vulnerability as an aspect of teacher education emerged from this data as an ancillary, yet significant, issue that I believe warrants further research. There is a body of educational research that investigates this phenomenon, and I believe that contributing to that field with particular focus on imagination will help the field better serve the needs of students.

3. Placing the interrogation of in-becoming within social education and social studies curricula.

Despite all of the participants being social studies teachers, I chose to frame this study in a more generalized way, focusing on their lived experiences as student teachers and teachers in-becoming. I was intentionally less adherent to the effects of being a teacher in-becoming with respect to the subject matter, and in discussing the ways that social studies curricula shapes and is shaped by the teacher in-becoming. I would like to pursue further research that links social education and social studies education with respect to imagination and the role of the teacher in-becoming in understanding the consequences and effects of particular visions and versions of social studies education.

## **A Final Word**

As I write the last chapter of this dissertation, and bring my analysis of the lives and experiences of the participants in this study to a conclusion, I can't help but reflect on why I took this project on in the first place. To be sure, some aspects of this study were unexpected—including and especially identifying a phase of learning to teach called in-becoming—while

others reinforced what I had seen in my students back then. Still, I believe the findings in this study help shed light on a transitory and even transformative phase of learning to teach, and help all of us—teachers, student teachers, teacher educators, and even policy makers—understand the lived experiences of these participants. I hope that in doing so, we can attend to their needs in our own day-to-day practices, and in controlling the things we can control, ameliorate to whatever extent we can the conditions for teachers in-becoming under which they come to know themselves as teachers.

I believe in the imperative for teacher educators and teachers to work together to help give support for future teachers and future iterations of what constitutes teaching. I have made a case in this study to be attentive to, and to privilege, the role that imagination can have in bolstering innovative practices and in giving teachers the capacity to identify pedagogical practices that align with imagined selves. To do so requires a consistent commitment to supporting, challenging, and developing those teachers who come after us. To that end, I want to close this dissertation with a hope. Allen reminded me of our collective responsibility to teaching and to students when he said, “Further down the line, I think I’d like to offer up my room to interns. We’ve all been there and they need a place to go. I think I could learn a lot from them, and them from me.” My hope is that future generations of teachers have this same commitment, and that through the ideas generated in this study, can provide for those future interns and student teachers the space to fully become teachers.

## APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A: Interview Protocols**

While the questions presented here serve as a guide for the interviews, following the conventions of semi-structured interviews, these serve only to provide a basic structure. Each interview differs as to the questions in the protocol that will be utilized based upon the direction of the responses by participants and the need for probing/clarification questions.

### ***First Interview Protocols***

- Tell me about your background. How would you describe yourself to a stranger at a party? How would you describe yourself to a teacher you met at a conference?
- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- Based on your experiences in becoming a teacher, finish this sentence: “Teaching is \_\_\_\_\_.” Explain.
- Describe an important experience that has impacted the way you teach.
- Describe the relationships that you think have been the most important to your teacher education.
- What is it like to think about teaching in your field experience?
  - What do you think you do well?
  - What do you think you do poorly?
  - What scares you?
  - What excites you?
- Describe a time in the last year where you felt like you were teaching like you imagined you would.
- Do you feel any restrictions in your teaching? What are they, and why?
- What is your relationship like with your mentor teacher? Do you call him/her by his/her first name?
- Did you have any epiphanies this year? If so, what? If not, why not do you think?
- How would you describe your teaching style?

### ***Think Aloud Protocol Instructions and Second Interview Protocols***

1. Primary Instruction for task completion:

In this experiment, I am interested in what you think about when you are completing tasks that I give you. In order to do this, I am going to ask you to think aloud as you work on the task that you are given. What I mean by think aloud is that I want you to tell me everything that you are thinking from the time you first see the task until you have completed the task. I would like you to talk aloud constantly from the time I present each task until you have completed the task.

What I mean by talk aloud is that I want you to say out loud everything that you think to yourself. Think, reason in a loud voice, and tell me everything that passes through your head

during your work including thoughts, feelings, and explanations. Just act as if you are alone in the room speaking to yourself. If you are silent for any length of time I will remind you to keep talking aloud. Do you understand what I want you to do?

## 2. Practice Questions

Before we turn to the real experiment, we will start with a practice problem. I want you to talk aloud while you do this problem. I will ask you to multiply two numbers in your head.

Talk aloud while you multiply 24 times 34. (816)

## 3. Tasks for Completion of TAP:

Task 1: “Review your unit. Try to describe everything about how and why you constructed it as you did.”

Task 2: “Review your unit. Describe everything about how you actually taught it.”

Task 3: “Again, review your unit. Describe how and why you would change, alter, or modify this unit now to make it more effective. Feel free to make notes and use whatever materials at your disposal to complete this task.”

Interview protocols:

- Why did you choose this unit to share for this study? How does it connect to your teacher education?
- What is UBD? Where did you get it? What do you think about it?
- How does this style of lesson planning help you think about what is possible?
- How does this unit reflect who you are as a person?
- Tell me about what constitutes a unit in your mind? What is important to include in units?
- What do you believe is the idea relationship between planning and teaching?
- How do you go about planning? How do you know when it's time to alter your plan?
- Did changing your course usually become more teacher dominant or student directed? Why?
- What do you feel like you need in order to teach this unit like you really want?

### ***Exit-Interview Protocols***

- If you had to write a short story about you becoming a teacher, how would you go about it? What would you include?
- Think about the word Identity. What do you think that means, and what does it mean for your teaching?
- Tell me about a time when you felt most confident.
- Tell me about a time when you felt most vulnerable.
- Imagine a powerful experience that you wish you could provide for your students. Describe it, and whether or not you think it is possible.
- What does imagination mean to you in terms of your teaching? How do you know when you're being imaginative?
- What kind of teacher do you imagine yourself to be like?
- Describe how you approach teaching.
  - What are your commitments to teaching?
  - What are your commitments to Social Studies?
- If you could teach social studies in any way free of any restrictions or political consequences, how would you do it? Why would you do it that way? What would you need to teach that way?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Why? What does it look/feel like? What is your teaching style?
- What would your classroom look like? Why?
- If they made a movie about you, what Hollywood movie or actor would be most like you?



## APPENDIX B: Table of Imagination Terms

Table 1

*Phenomenological Terms of Imagination (Casey, 2000, pp. xxv, 38, 40, 48)*

Term	Definition	Corresponding Ideas
Imagination	The complete phenomenon, composed in each case of an act phase, wherein imagining is enacted, and an object phase, comprising the totality of what we imagine in a specific act of imagining.	<p>“Imaginative Experience” which expresses the intentionality of the act</p> <p>The act phase of imagination consists of a mental act or act of consciousness wherein the mind directs itself onto and absorbs itself in a specific content. The act phase is concerned with the performance of imagining.</p> <p>The object phase is the intentional object on which the act phase is directed. Otherwise thought of as the product of imagining, the object phase brings together four distinct properties: objects proper, states of affairs, the imaginal margin and the image.</p>
Imagining	Taken in a broad sense, synonymous with “imagination”; more narrowly, will denote imagination in the act phase.	
Imaginative	The primary adjectival form of “imagination.”	
Imaginal	An alternative adjectival form of “imagination.”	Refers to semi-technical act phase imagination such as “Imaginal Time” or “Imaginal Space”
Imaginary	As an adjective, this term often denotes fictitious states, and thus is to be used infrequently; as a noun (e.g. “the imaginary”) it designates the totality of a given range of imagined objects.	
Image	In the noun form, denotes the manner in which the imaginative presentation is given as a component of the object phase.	This definition is contrasted from the locution “mental image” to which the term image is often attributed.

Imaginative Presentation	Loosely refers to the object phase of the imagination in its entirety, or the whole of what is imagined on a given occasion.
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