

A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENT TEACHERS

Fanni L. Coward, Shirley M. Matteson, Doug Hamman

Center for Teacher Development and Research, Texas Tech University

This case study considers the centrality of the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), formerly National Middle School Association teacher preparation standards (NMSA, 2006) to the development of teacher identity in middle level student teachers. Initial survey and transcriptions of 4 audio-taped interviews were analyzed. Standards were used to examine whether the values of AMLE manifest themselves in the developing professional identity of middle level student teachers. *Courageous, collaborative leadership* and *School-initiated family and community partnerships* were found to be difficult characteristics for the participants to develop at the early stage of becoming a teacher. Discussion includes suggestions to teacher preparation programs for fostering these characteristics within the identity of new middle level teachers.

This We Believe, the seminal publication of the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), formerly National Middle School Association (NMSA), opens with this statement:

Every day, millions of diverse, rapidly changing 10- to 15-year-olds make critical and complex life choices and form the attitudes, values, and dispositions that will direct their behavior as adults (NMSA, 2010, p. 1).

We would also argue that middle level pre-service/novice teachers, just as their students,

are making “critical and complex life choices” as they form teacher identities that will guide them as future middle level educators. As these novice teachers “define themselves and to others” (Lasky, 2005, p. 901) and understand as a teacher “how to be, how to act, and how to understand their place in society” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15), they are integrating who they are as teachers into other parts of their lives. Good teaching demands personal investment and reflection of *self*, and the personal investment and reflection of *self* also influence novice teachers’ actions and beliefs.

Fanni Liu Coward, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education, Texas Tech University, College of Education, Lubbock, TX 79409-1071. E-mail: fanni.coward@ttu.edu. Phone: (806) 742-1997, ext. 301.

Middle Grades Research Journal, Volume 7(4), 2012, pp. 31–42
Copyright © 2012 Information Age Publishing, Inc.

ISSN 1937-0814
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.

The ways in which teachers form their professional identities are influenced by both how they feel about themselves and how they feel about their students. This professional identity helps them to position or situate themselves in relation to their students and to make appropriate and effective adjustments in their practice and their beliefs about, and engagement with, students (James-Wilson, 2000).

The role of teachers and the characteristics of effective teachers are often prescribed by organizations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Institutions of Teacher Education, AMLE, and individual teacher education programs. For example, AMLE notes many elements which are critical to developing a successful middle school, such as curriculum, pedagogy, and programs that are based upon the varying needs, interests, and abilities of middle level students. Specifically, AMLE's 2010 publication of *This We Believe* outlines 16 characteristics of middle level education including:

- educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them;
- students and teachers engaged in active, purposeful learning;
- a shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision;
- leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration;
- the school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all;
- every student's academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate; and
- the school actively involves families in the education of their children partnerships (NMSA, 2010, p. 14).

Furthermore, the document describes the essential attribute of *challenging* as "recognizing that every student can learn and everyone is held to high expectations" (p. 14). These seven characteristics and the essential attribute of challenging noted above helped guide the researchers conducting this study. Faculty

members in teacher education programs also often endorse these national standards. In addition, they advocate for issues related to multicultural education and social justice through education. But in all of these, teacher identity is rarely an explicit part of either the curriculum or valued outcomes of preparation programs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

Standards advocated by national organizations or political action groups may often result in a description of teachers and teaching that is unrecognizable to new teachers and teacher candidates. Within the field of teacher identity research, researchers point to the important difference between identities that are central to the individual versus those that are more peripheral. Gaudelli and Ousley (2009), for example, viewed these prescriptions for teachers as "the suit of clothing," which can be put on and taken off with little attention to the meaning for their teaching. Like Gaudelli and Ousley, we are concerned with the assumption often made by teacher preparation organizations that the teacher role can be worn like a one-size-fits-all suit of clothing. Ideally, teacher identity should instead be "one's skin, an embodied feature of the person that is necessarily tied up with one's experiences, beliefs and worldview" (Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009, p. 931). Thus, it is personalized and negotiated within the context of teaching.

In this study, we explored the current challenges in teacher preparation programs through a case study of two student teachers using the framework of professional identity development. We did not intend to argue the adequacy of the teacher role prescribed by AMLE, but rather, to examine how the teacher role is manifested during student teaching and how the process of transitioning "from clothing to skin" develops during student teaching. Specifically, this study sought to investigate:

1. Which AMLE beliefs are prominent in the interviews of the middle level student teachers?"

2. What are the implications for middle level teacher preparation programs?

Teacher Identity

Teacher identity and teacher self are intriguing notions that have emerged as focal points of teacher-development research. It is a common theme uniting previously divergent teacher research areas (i.e., beliefs and attitudes, life history and personal narrative) that share one or more of these basic assumptions about identity: (a) identity is influenced by context, (b) identity is formed through relationships, (c) identity is changing, and (d) identity involves meaning making (Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Many researchers have suggested that teacher identity may be instrumental in addressing pressing educational issues such as school reforms and teacher retention (Brunetti, 2001; Soreide, 2006).

Interestingly, some aspects of teacher identity may be easier to develop than others (Conway & Clark, 2003). In their review on the nature and influence on teacher identity, Day, Kingston, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) suggested that developing the teacher identity is like “mobilizing” many different identities and that “such mobilizations occur in the space between ‘structure’ (of relations between power and status) and ‘agency’ (in the influence which we and others can have); and it is the interactions between these which influences how teachers see themselves” (p. 613). These interactions in the space between structure and agency may help to explain why some features of identity are more readily developed than others, especially in the earliest phases of teacher development.

Student Teaching

It is difficult to overstate the complexity and importance of the practicum experience to the development of new teachers (e.g., Smagorinsky, Jakubiak, & Moore, 2008). What has emerged from numerous studies of the student-

teaching practicum is the critical nature of “the quality of the modeling and the opportunities to practice skills” (e.g., LePage et al., 2005, p. 353) during successful field-based experiences. The amount of time spent in classrooms and the quality of those experiences is critical. Preparation programs “that include more practicum experiences and student teaching, integrated with coursework, appear to make a difference in teachers’ practices, confidence and long-term commitment to teaching” (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005, p. 411).

The context of the student teaching assignment is particularly relevant to the development of professional identity because the very term *student teacher* implies an individual who plays seemingly dichotomous roles. It is in the back-and-forth within these roles, carried out in contexts, that the tensions and opportunities for teachers’ professional identity development begin to emerge, and where the reconciliation of competing demands between preparation and practice begin to take place (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). Researchers have repeatedly found evidence of the changes that occur during student teaching among the characteristics associated with professional identity such as developing pedagogical content knowledge, fostering feelings of certainty, and establishing a sense of efficacy for teaching (Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Hong, 2010; Watzke, 2007). Given the explicit nature of expectations for middle level teachers set forth by AMLE’s mission statement, it seems critical to examine both the presence and centrality of these expectations to the identity of middle level teacher candidates.

Middle School Teacher Preparation Programs

AMLE’s guidelines for professional preparation of teachers of 10- to 14-year-olds (NMSA, 2006), include both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform documented an increase in the number of

states with specialized licensing requirements, but also noted that only

[Twenty-one] of the 43 states that offered some form of middle-level teaching credential (a license, certification, or endorsement) required middle-level teachers to have this credential. In the majority of states, almost any kind of teaching credential allows a teacher to take a middle-level position. Such leeway is rarely permitted for those teaching elementary or high school. (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002, p. 4)

Some policymakers have argued there is no need for specialized preparation in order to understand and work with young adolescents, even though “there is a critical shortage of qualified middle school teachers” (Hines, 2005). Since there is overlapping grade levels in many state certification programs, prospective teachers are often encouraged to pursue certificates that cover more grade levels, such as nine grades for K-8 teachers as opposed to five for Grade 4-8 teachers. As a result, many middle level teachers have not received rigorous preparation focused on three core areas: academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and equity and cultural diversity.

The Middle Level Teacher

Perhaps at no other grade span are the novice educators as challenged to develop their own teacher identity while being exposed to so many students seeking to find their own identity. Middle level educators are continually interacting with young adolescents who are undergoing a wide range of social, physical, intellectual, moral, and emotional changes. Given this unique situation, we wondered why there have been relatively few investigations concerning the development of teacher identity with preservice middle level educators (Hines, 2005; Parkinson, 2009; Pendergast, Whitehead, de Jong, Newhouse-Maiden, & Bahr, 2007; Tambyah, 2010). Wenzel (2007) noted a lack of respect for those working in middle

schools and pointed out that college and university preparation programs often have an “endorsement” for middle level certification. Furthermore, concerns about middle schools often are trivialized compared to issues involving high school education. Wenzel candidly asked

Why does it [middle school] seem to be the hardest level in K-12 to staff and keep staffed by certified and highly qualified teachers? Why are middle school teachers looked upon as crazy for wanting to work with such an “awkward and difficult” population? (p. 32)

The case study presented here gives voice to prospective middle level teachers who are often an overlooked and underappreciated population of educators. We will use Carol and Michelle’s (pseudonyms) own words to provide critical insights to the development of their identity as middle level educators.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative design, which permits the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the participants’ frame of reference and allows insights to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2002). In this process, we were able to understand their experience while giving a voice to the participants. We also used AMLE’s belief statements regarding effective middle level teachers as a framework for our analysis. As the student teachers spoke about who they are as teachers, we specifically wanted to examine which AMLE characteristics are prominent in their interviews about teacher identity. Furthermore, we considered these emerging identities from their experiences in light of possible implications for middle level teacher preparation programs.

Participants

The participants in this case study were two, White, female, middle level student teachers. During the data collection phase of this study,

Carol and Michelle were completing student teaching in their fourth and final semester of education coursework. Carol's certification was in middle level language arts and social studies, while Michelle was certifying in middle level mathematics and science. Carol and Michelle were enrolled in a traditional educator preparation program in a large public university in the southwestern United States. Both were members of the same cohort of middle level preservice teachers. In other words, Carol and Michelle started their education courses the same fall semester. Their education coursework was taken over four semesters or what the institution calls "blocks." The first and second authors taught courses to Carol and Michelle during Block 1, and the second author also had Michelle for her mathematics methods and integrated science and mathematics courses in Blocks 2 and 3.

The university's middle level education program provided one unique experience to all middle level educators in Block 1 that is particularly noteworthy. Carol and Michelle and their fellow cohort members observed fifth graders for an extended period of time in an outdoor setting at an alternative/adjunct educational facility. The cohort of approximately 50 middle level preservice teachers was split into two sections and worked with different groups of fifth graders. That nontraditional educational setting provided the preservice teachers opportunities to bond together as colleagues while simultaneously working with the fifth grade students. This experience was frequently alluded to throughout the remaining semesters of the preservice teachers' training. Besides the focus on content and pedagogy, this experience provided the preservice teachers with an extended period in which to observe and interact with young adolescents. The two groups were together from early in the morning into late evening for academic activities and also had the opportunity to eat meals together and participate in unstructured activities. The second author chaperoned one of the trips, which was considered by the middle level education faculty to be an important opportunity in

which to observe the temperament and professional dispositions of the preservice teachers.

The data used for this study were collected during an investigation focusing on the development of teacher identity with 14 preservice teachers certifying in elementary, middle level, and secondary education. Carol and Michelle were the only middle school participants. The third author conducted the interviews with Carol and Michelle. This was intentional as the first and second author already knew the participants from earlier courses and there was a possibility of influencing Carol and Michelle's responses due to this relationship. Additionally, both the first and second author had knowledge of Carol and Michelle's outside interests, such as Carol's church activities and Michelle's intention to enroll in graduate courses.

Data Sources

The data sources for this study included Carol and Michelle's initial responses to open-ended survey items and two interviews conducted by the third author. Each interview occurred on the campus where the two preservice teachers were student teaching. The first interview occurred approximately three weeks after student teaching had started. Each interview was audiotaped and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were semistructured, with 10 specific sections covered during the interview. The interview included questions focusing on teacher self-concept in relationship with the cooperating teacher, teacher possible selves, teacher concerns, and others. The audiotapes were transcribed and summarized as soon as feasible after they were conducted. The second interview occurred near the end of the semester during the second content placement, meaning the student teachers had moved to a different campus and grade level and were teaching in their second content area.

Carol's Field Placement. Carol was seeking certification in language arts and social studies. She had two field placements lasting

approximately seven weeks each. Her first placement was in social studies in a Title I school. Her first cooperating teacher was a competitive athletics coach and seventh grade history teacher. Her second placement was in language arts. Her cooperating teacher was the reading instructor for grades 6 through 8.

Michelle's Field Placement. Michelle was seeking certification in mathematics and science. She also had two field placements lasting approximately 7 weeks each. Her first placement was in a fourth grade science classroom. Michelle's second placement was teaching sixth and eighth grade mathematics in an all-girls charter school. This campus also had more access to technology than the fourth-grade classroom.

Data Analysis

Coding Categories. In order to facilitate the coding of AMLE's characteristics of effective middle school teachers, key words were used as categories, including (1) age group, (2) active learning, (3) shared vision, (4) leadership, (5) environment, (6) adult advocate, (7) partnerships, and (8) high expectations. These key words became the primary analysis descriptors when the first and second author coded the two sets of interviews.

Interrater Reliability. The first and second authors, who are both qualitative researchers and accustomed to coding transcriptions and developing themes, conducted the data analysis. However, in this study, the coding categories were determined prior to the analysis of the transcriptions. The first author's research interest has been teacher identity and she has published articles on that topic. The second author has over 25 years of experience as a middle school teacher in various content areas. In addition, she is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early Adolescence Mathematics. Both authors, as previously indicated, have been instructors of middle level preservice educators.

Procedure. In order to ensure that there was consensus about the interpretation of the

predetermined coding categories, the authors read and coded Carol's first transcription independently in one session. The coding of each page of the transcriptions was subsequently shared and negotiated. Due to only having two participants in the interviews and only two rounds of interviews, interrater reliability was not considered to be a major concern because of the continual verbal sharing and subsequent negotiating of coding themes. This analysis process was also followed for Michelle's first interview.

Both Carol's and Michelle's first interviews were coded in one session. A summarization of the coding categories appearing in each interview was also created and the authors discussed possible means for displaying that data. It was agreed that a table would be created to facilitate discussion. It was then agreed that coding would continue independently and a second meeting was held for sharing and negotiating the coding categories for the second interviews.

Identification System. An identification system was also devised to create an audit trail, which facilitated data triangulation. For example, CI2.2 identifies information found in the second section (.2) of Carol's (C) second interview (I2), whereas MI1.8 identifies information found in the eighth section (.8) of Michelle's (M) first interview (I1).

FINDINGS

The preinterview surveys of Carol and Michelle foreshadowed the identities that these middle level student teachers wanted to develop. For example, Carol believed she was called to be a teacher, whereas Michelle sought "to be a positive influence ... and give students the same passion for learning" that she had.

The data analysis first focused on answering the question, "Which AMLE beliefs are prominent in the interviews of the middle level student teachers?" The number of times a particular code appeared in each transcript was counted (see Table 1) in order to facilitate this

analysis. After counting the coded comments of both Carol's and Michelle's transcriptions, it became apparent that the same categories emerged as focal points of their interviews. The categories, arranged from greatest to least frequency, were (1) age group, (2) active learning, (3) shared vision, (4) environment, (5) high expectation, and (6) adult advocate. The categories of leadership and partnership were the least mentioned, with only Carol discussing them.

Table 1 shows that the frequency with which Carol and Michelle mentioned these beliefs in their interviews was very similar. We also considered that the relationship with the cooperating teacher seemed to influence the number of times the belief of shared vision was mentioned. The influence of the cooperating teachers will be addressed in a subsequent section.

Age Group

Carol and Michelle most often commented about student characteristics of the age group and did not seem surprised by the behavior(s)

they observed during their student teaching. Carol stated

the students are very real, and I think that's what I like. When they get up in your face, it's what they know. They don't know any different from that. And so, I would rather deal with students like that who don't know any better than to deal with students who know better, and get up in your face anyway. (CI1.1)

Michelle admitted to being somewhat uncomfortable in the first field placement. Although her certification was in Grades 4 through 8, her lack of experience with certain grade levels was evident in her comments to the interviewer as she shared

It has been hard to try to get down to the level with fourth and fifth graders because I've been used to the sixth, seventh, and eighth. Last semester I was with 8th graders. So trying to make sure I cater to what a fourth grader needs compared with what an eighth grader needs in class, it has been a lot different. (MI1.2)

Table 1
Total Frequency of References Made in Relations to AMLE Values

	Carol ¹			Michelle ²		
	Interview 1	Interview 2	Total	Interview 1	Interview 2	Total
Age group	+++++++	+++++++	17	+++++++	+++++++	21
Active learning	+++++	++++	10	+++++	+++++	14
Shared vision	++	+++++	8	+++++	+++++	14
Environment	++	+++++	9	+++++	+	10
High expectation for students	++++	++++	8	+++	++++	7
Adult advocate	+++	++++	8			0
Leadership	+		1			0
Partnership		+	1			0

Notes: ¹Carol: *Emerging leadership* appeared in the first interview 1 time; *High expectation for self* appeared only in the second interview and occurred 7 times. ²Michelle: *High expectation for self* appeared in the first interview 3 times; *High expectation for self* appeared in the second interview 1 time, however Michelle's second placement was in a charter school where all students are required to apply for entrance to the school. Therefore, her comments for this category would be limited because she noted how the charter school already set high expectations for students and for teacher.

Active Learning

The second most commented upon area in the interviews was active learning. The definition used for data analysis was intentionally planning or considering the need for students to engage in a variety of learning experiences.

Michelle understood that activities were beneficial to students' development of conceptual knowledge.

I want my kids actively learning hands on. Being hands on is the most important to me, even in math, because, to me that helps them construct their knowledge better than any other way because they are constructing it as they are doing labs, or using manipulatives. (MI1.3)

She continued to elaborate on her vision and role in classroom instruction.

every single day, we're doing some type of hands-on activity, whether it is a lab or making some type of diagram that will help them understand. And we breakup, we'll have 15 minutes of lecture if necessary, then we'll do our lab, wrap it up at the end, and just have the kids up, moving around. We have a lot of ways we help them remember. We do hand motion, and all sorts of things like that. (MI1.3)

Shared Vision

The third most frequently mentioned category was shared vision. Carol noted that she only really had the opportunity to work collaboratively with her second cooperating teacher, while Michelle was able to work collegially with each of her cooperating teachers. In both instances, Michelle and her cooperating teacher made decisions based upon their shared vision of classroom behavior, student work habits, and the content that needed to be developed. Michelle mentioned this collaboration several times.

We talk about ways she [the cooperating teacher] has used it [a lesson plan or activity]

in the past, or ways to improve it, or just whatever I want to do to adjust it, if I want to change something. But mostly for fifth grade, what she had from last year is mostly what we're using. And with fourth grade, it is trying to get new lesson plans because she hasn't taught four grade before. So we've been looking for new things and trying out stuff like that. (MI1.6)

Environment

As with most novice educators, there were numerous comments about classroom management issues. Since their respective cooperating teachers had already established classroom procedures and routines, both Carol and Michelle had few opportunities in which to affirm or reinforce the inviting, supportive, and safe environment that was already in place. Carol shared one such incidence with the interviewer.

I had a situation with a student last week. She looked like she was about ready to rip somebody's face off. At the end of class, I told her to have a seat, and we can talk in a little bit. I got the rest of the kids out, and so we talked a little bit, and I tried to encourage her and build her up with some of the things that she was talking about. (CI2.3)

High Expectations

High expectations was fifth in order of frequency, however, as indicated in the footnotes for Table 1, this belief was manifested as both high expectations for the student and high expectations for self (the preservice teacher), although the table reflected only the student count and the count for the teacher appears in footnotes. The dichotomy was not surprising, given the AMLE essential attribute of "recognizing that every student can learn and *everyone* [emphasis added] is held to high expectations" (NMSA, 2010, p. 14). Carol made comments about having to convince her students that they were more capable than they themselves believed.

They're like, "Miss, I can't figure this out." And I'm like, "Well, what can we not figure out? We have to first figure out what the question is asking. I am not a 'I'm going to give you the answer' teacher, I will give you the tools to figure it out." (CI1.3)

Both Carol and Michele expressed high expectations for self, with Carol mentioning that belief more frequently in the second interview. She observed

when I went through their response logs last week, my third period class was just not where they needed to be. And so, I felt very unsuccessful that I hadn't noticed it before. We're at Chapter 5 already, and I should have caught that before Chapter 5. That they were not able to do and to, ... they are not on the same level as my other classes, and so I have now learned that I will have to ... we finished Chapter 6 today, and come tomorrow, we'll have to do the summaries together, and we're going to have to do more things together. And so it just frustrated me that I hadn't caught that. And I just feel that I should have been able to see that before Chapter 5. (CI2.8)

Michelle also made comments that indicated she had high expectations for herself, but not to the frequency that Carol made them. Michelle noted "even when I have bad days, like I didn't do everything I could to teach them, or to make sure that everyone is actively engaged, I still know that I can improve myself everyday" (MI1.10).

Adult Advocate

The belief of an adult advocate for every student only emerged in Carol's comments and was often tied to comments about characteristics of the age group or the classroom environment. Carol appeared to have a stronger connection with the belief of adult advocates than Michelle.

I hope to be that teacher, that if there is a problem, the students will feel comfortable

that they can talk to me, but know that if there is a big problem, if it is gonna involve parents, administration, that they know I'm going to get those people involved. But I also want them to know that I am a confidant, someone they can come to and tell those things to. (CI2.3)

Leadership and Partnership Beliefs

Beliefs reflecting "courageous, collaborative leadership" and "school-initiated family and community partnership" were largely missing from the participants' interviews. Carol hinted at partnerships, as shown in the previous excerpt, and her comments about leadership appeared in a brief discussion about responsibilities and decision making. Beyond these two indirect comments, leadership and partnerships beliefs were not expressed.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The ordering of the beliefs by Carol and Michelle was not unanticipated. From a cursory examination of the teacher preparation program in which they were enrolled, we note that there are areas for improvement that can be made in the two areas of leadership and partnerships. Again, if these standards were related to multicultural education and social justice, it would most likely be a description of teachers and teaching that would be unrecognizable to the new teachers or teacher candidates. In other words, those standards would likely remain *clothing* for the new teachers, not *skin*, and they would only wear the *clothing* when the occasion calls for it or not at all.

How to instill an attitude of leadership appears to be a significant challenge for teacher preparation faculty members. Day et al. (2006) pointed to the agency-structure tensions and its influence on teacher identity, and how these interactions between agency and structure may explain why some features of identity are more readily developed than others. Even though Carol and Michelle appeared to be growing more comfortable and confident

in their role as classroom teachers, their power and influence at the school was very limited as student teachers. The previous field experiences in their teacher preparation program also reflect similar limitations. Therefore, this quality of leadership might be an unrealistic goal for them to achieve during their teacher preparation program. In addition, novice teachers may not believe that they are the instructional leaders in the classroom. As the instructional leader, they must be “committed to and knowledgeable about this group, educational research, and best practices” (NMSA, 2010, p. 14). Continual support beyond the traditional teacher preparation courses seems critical for new teachers.

Additionally, our findings point to the importance of seeking avenues to add partnerships into specific middle level education courses. We must move past the idea of talking about partnerships to requiring, for example, that preservice teachers participate in service learning activities, volunteer for science fairs, tutor small groups or individuals, or engage in other partnerships with family and the community members. As mentioned earlier, the quality of the modeling and the opportunities to practice skills are key to developing new teachers (LePage et al., 2005).

As teacher preparation faculty members, it was heartening to discover that Carol and Michelle clearly articulated their understandings of the middle level age group and their students’ need for active learning; were able to develop a shared vision with their cooperating teachers; understood the necessity for a positive learning environment; and set high expectations for students and themselves. We also noted that Carol and Michelle, as with most novice educators, were initially focused on classroom management and student characteristics. As the semester passed, there was a shift in Carol and Michelle’s comments to more discussions concerning activities and content knowledge of both the students and themselves, and an increasing emphasis on establishing positive, yet challenging relationships with their students. This is consistent with

Fuller’s concerns-based theory (for a review see Conway & Clark, 2003; Rutherford & Hall, 1990) of teacher development, in that the student teachers’ concerns shifted from personal capacity to management of the classroom, to impact on students. It is progression of inward-focused concerns to outward-focused concerns. Like Conway and Clark (2003), our results indicated that the shift of concerns seems to happen much earlier than the time predicted by Fuller’s model. Furthermore, in their study, Conway and Clark (2003) emphasized the organizational and contextual influences on this shift of concerns and concluded that a teacher preparation program that is rooted in a reflective practitioner model would be more likely to encourage development of teacher identity and foster a reflexive disposition that are necessary for healthy development of teacher identity.

LIMITATIONS

We acknowledge several limitations to this study, including the small number of interview participants. In addition, the study encompassed only one semester of student teaching. Subsequent studies should be longitudinal and could include interviews concerning teacher identity when the preservice teacher is first admitted into the program, periodically throughout education courses, and also a follow-up in the first few years of teaching.

In regards to the interview protocol, having noted a lack of comments concerning leadership and partnerships, subsequent surveys should include items that probe into those two areas. In addition, gathering and including more complete information from the school, students in these student teachers’ classes, and from the cooperating teachers would provide more holistic pictures of these issues.

REFERENCES

- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the

- literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 29-64. doi:10.1080/03057640902902252
- Brunetti, G. J. (2001). Why do they teach? A study of job satisfaction among long-term high school teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28(3), 49-74.
- Conway, P. F., & Clark, C. M. (2003). The journey inward and outward: A re-examination of Fuller's concerns-based model of teacher development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19, 465-482. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(03)00046-5
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hammerness, K., Grossman, P., Rust, F., & Shulman, L. (2005). The design of teacher education programs. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 390-441). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Day, C., Kingston, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(4), 601-616. doi:10.1080/01411920600775316
- Gaudelli, W., & Ousley, D. (2009). From clothing to skin: Identity work of student teachers in culminating field experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 931-939. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.017
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *Discovery grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: AVC.
- Hines, M. T. (2005). Leaving one major behind. A self-conceptual look at when pre-service teachers decline as to why. *The Journal of the New England League of Middle School* 17, 26-31.
- Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1530-1543. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.003
- James-Wilson, S. (2000, April). *The influence of ethnocultural identity on emotions and teacher*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 899-916. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.003
- LePage, P., Darling-Hammond, L., Akar, H., Gutierrez, C., Jenkins-Gunn, E., & Rosebrock, K. (2005). Classroom management. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 327-357). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. (2002, April). *Policy statement: Teacher preparation, licensure, and recruitment*. Newton, MA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.mgforum.org/Portals/0/MGFdocs/TeacherPrep.pdf>
- National Middle School Association. (2010). *This we believe: Keys to educating young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: Author.
- National Middle School Association. (2006, February). *AMLE, formerly National Middle School Association's position statement on the professional preparation of middle level teachers*. Westerville, OH: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.nmsa.org/AboutNMSA/PositionStatements/ProfessionalPreparation/tabid/287/Default.aspx>
- Parkinson, P. T. (2009). Field-based pre-service teacher research: Facilitating reflective professional practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 798-804.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. London, England: SAGE.
- Pendergast, D., Whitehead, K., de Jong, T., Newhouse-Maiden, L., & Bahr, N. (2007). Middle years teacher education: New programs and research directions. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 34(2), 73-90.
- Rodgers, C. R., & Scott, K. H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre, & K. E. Demers (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed., pp. 732-755). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group/Association of Teacher Educators.
- Rutherford, W. L., & Hall, G. (1990, April). *Concerns of teachers: Revising the original theory after twenty years*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Boston, MA.
- Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity: Learning to be a teacher. In P. M. Denicolo & M. Kompf (Eds.), *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for*

- teaching and learning in schools and universities* (pp. 5-21). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smagorinsky, P., Cook, L. S., Moore, C., Jackson, A. Y., & Fry, P. G. (2004). Tensions in learning to teach: Accommodation and the development of a teaching identity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(1), 8-24. doi:10.1177/0022487103260067
- Smagorinsky, P., Jakubiak, C., & Moore, C. (2008). Student teaching in the contact zone: Learning to teach amid multiple interests in a vocational English class. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(5), 442-454. doi:10.1177/0022487108324329
- Soreide, G. E. (2006). Narrative construction of teacher identity: Positioning and negotiating. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 12(5), 527-547. doi:10.1080/13540600600832247
- Tambyah, M. M. (2010, September). *Teachers' conceptions of essential knowledge for integrated social education: A middle years of schooling perspective from Australia*. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association annual conference, University of Warwick, Warwick, United Kingdom.
- Watzke, J. L. (2007). Longitudinal research on beginning teacher development: Complexity as a challenge to concerns-based stage theory. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 106-122. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2006.04.001
- Wenzel, A. (2007). The red-headed stepchild: Give us some respect. *Middle Ground*, 10(3), 32-33.