

FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER:
PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR NEW WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHERS
DURING THE FIRST YEARS OF TEACHING

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Clay and my daughter Megan.

It is also dedicated to the students I have taught who are now teaching.

I could not have done this without you.

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Most new teachers begin their careers in a difficult position. Having just completed their student teaching, they find themselves in a “liminal,” in-between state: not students anymore, but not quite full-fledged professional teachers yet either. This transitional time tends to be characterized by deficit discourses (Griffin, 1997; Kelchtermans, 2019; Sagor, 2000) along with ambiguity and shifting meanings as teachers work to make sense of their new professional environment. Unfortunately, though, early career teacher attrition is a large contributor to teacher shortages in the United States, and World Languages is a curricular area particularly impacted by these teacher shortages. This study applies a Third Space theoretical framework (augmented by figured worlds and authoring the self frameworks) to propose a possible model for novice World Language teacher support in order to help provide a bridge across this liminal space between teacher education and professional teaching. In this qualitative case study, four recent teacher education graduates in the first year of professional practice met monthly in a group facilitated by their former university supervisor. Drawing data from these group meetings, individual interviews with each participant, and a researcher reflective journal, analysis reveals that the space provided by the peer support group provided multiple opportunities for the novice teachers that they might not otherwise have had: to exercise agency in situations where they had been feeling powerless; to engage in a process of authoring of the self as they supported each other in negotiating conflicting discourses they were encountering regarding the nature of what

constitutes “good teaching;” and to collaborate and experience deep and occasionally transformative learning via a Zone of Proximal Development that they created together.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Most new teachers begin their careers in a difficult position. Having just completed their student teaching, they find themselves in a “liminal,” in-between state: not students anymore, but not quite full-fledged professional teachers yet either. This liminal period is characterized by “instability, ambiguity, and shifting meanings” (McCaw, 2021, p. 397). Adding to this difficulty, new teachers tend to be looked upon from a deficit perspective and tend to view themselves that way as well (Kelchtermans, 2019). Britzman (2003), in a qualitative study of two student teachers and the “significant others” involved in their preservice teaching experience, explores ways in which “teachers construct themselves as they are being constructed by others” (p. 26). The tensions new teachers often experience in this process can make it difficult for them to develop a sense of teaching efficacy, development which is crucial to motivation (Karabenick & Noda, 2004) and leads to resilience and improved response to setbacks and student achievement outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Specific to World Language teachers, a sense of self-efficacy has been linked to an increased likelihood of teacher retention (Swanson, 2012). A sense of self-efficacy has also been identified as an important component of a teacher’s professional identity (Canrinus et al., 2012). And, addressing the professional identity formation specifically of two new world language teachers, (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) concludes that support in this area is crucially important both during teacher education and new teacher induction. Given these many factors, it is clear that novice teachers need significant support as they begin their careers.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher shortages were a well-documented problem even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 44% of new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll et al., 2018). World Languages is a curricular area with particularly dire teacher shortages. In 2017, 44 states and the District of Columbia were not able to hire enough World Language teachers to meet curricular demands, a more serious problem than for any other subject (Swanson & Mason, 2018). The pandemic has created even more complications with teacher recruitment and retention (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Fullard, 2021). Given this grave teacher shortage, I have been alarmed by how often I have been contacted by recent graduates of my university's language teacher education program who are ready to leave the teaching profession. A significant contributing factor to these retention problems is a lack of support for new teaching professionals; Farrell (2012) compares the typical experience of novice teachers to "hazing," and Ingall (2006) even refers to teaching as a profession that "cannibalizes its young" (p. 140). Although many school districts have new teacher orientation programs, and possibly mentoring programs of some description, the structure and execution of these programs lacks consistency. And when novice teachers do not feel supported as they begin their careers, their dissatisfaction with teaching increases and they become more likely to abandon the profession (Farrell, 2012), thereby exacerbating the teacher shortage (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Background and Rationale

I often become quite close to students when I supervise their semester of student teaching, and they usually bond with the rest of their cohort during our weekly seminar meetings. Many of my students experience what I refer to as the "existential crisis of student teaching" during that semester, and oftentimes my individual interactions with them as well as our group seminar sessions become something akin to emotional therapy. I make an effort to remain in contact with my teacher education program's alumni during the first few years of their practice,

and try to connect with them periodically to see how they are doing, where they are working, etc. It is difficult to hear back from them after their first months or years on the job that they are either considering leaving the profession or have already decided to do so. Because of this, and in hearing about the uneven experiences these new teachers have had with mentoring and induction programs in their districts, I decided to find a way to provide more support to our program alumni in order hopefully to improve their experiences as novice teachers, and also in consideration of our program outcomes in terms of early career teacher retention in the field.

In order to get ideas of how to do this most effectively, I invited a group of recent program graduates, novice teachers in the first 1-3 years of their teaching careers, to attend my seminar for the then-current group of preservice teachers to answer questions and talk about their experiences in the “real world” of professional teaching. I then invited them to stay after the meeting so that they could catch up with each other, but also so I could ask them about the mentoring and induction programs in their districts, what support they felt had been useful, what support they would have liked to get but did not, and how the university might be able to help recent graduates as they are beginning their careers.

This session was much more instructive than I ever imagined. Not only did I gain tremendous insight into the inconsistent structure and execution of individual school districts’ mentoring and induction programs, but I also saw the way the graduates were supporting and learning from each other as they shared their stories. It struck me as an enactment of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, where learning is a social process, with language, specifically dialogue, being of key importance. I also felt as if I were witnessing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in action, which Vygotsky imagines as an area between a child’s actual current developmental level when working independently and the level of potential development

when working with a more knowledgeable adult or when collaborating with more capable peers. Once the child is able to internalize knowledge via the Zone of Proximal Development, it becomes part of his or her “independent developmental achievement” (Vygotsky, 2005, p. 40). In the case of the Zoom sessions, the novice teachers were taking turns playing various roles in the ZPD, alternating between acting as the more capable peer and as the child working to internalize knowledge that is just outside of his or her developmental level via dialogue with more knowledgeable others.

This led me to wonder if a group such as this—of recent program graduates getting together to talk about their experiences, vent to each other about challenges they face, work on their developing professional identities in a safe and supportive space, and learn from each other in pursuit of an increased sense of self-efficacy—might be just what I was looking for in terms of a way that my university teacher education program could provide support to novice teachers during their formative years in the profession. In my way of thinking, if I can help them as they are in their liminal period, the delicate transitional space between student and teacher, and therefore help them become stronger and more self-assured teachers, it will increase their level of satisfaction with teaching, and even enhance my own sense of self-efficacy as my professional identity as a teacher educator continues to develop.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Given the unexpected results of the initial meeting of program graduates, I decided to conduct a study to examine further if this model might be a worthwhile approach to recreate on a regular basis. The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the experiences of a small group of novice world language teachers from the same university teacher education program who met as part of a teacher support group for recent program graduates. The teacher support

group, which met monthly, was composed of program graduates who were in their first full year of professional teaching practice. Participation in the group was voluntary. The experiences described and analyzed in the study included both those specifically related to participation in the support group, as well as the participants' discussions of their experiences as early-career teachers.

Given the dire teacher shortage in our field, it is crucial that we, as World Language teacher educators, explore the issues that novice teachers encounter during their first years on the job so that we can better prepare our preservice teachers for what to expect in the field, and also better support our graduates once they leave our programs. Better preparation and better support as they are beginning their careers could lead to an improved sense of self-efficacy, which could lead to a stronger sense of professional identity and hopefully improved job satisfaction and retention outcomes.

Social Justice Implications of the Study

Because teacher shortages disproportionately impact high-minority and high-poverty schools and students (Zeichner, 2009), the social justice implications of improving teacher retention outcomes are immediately evident. However, the social justice implications of supporting novice teachers go deeper than the immediate effects of improved retention outcomes. To begin with, there are the deficit discourses surrounding teachers which cause qualified people either not to pursue teaching, or to leave the field once there. We see examples of these deficit discourses in the tendency to blame teachers for students not meeting achievement goals (Sagor, 2000), and also in professional development models where deficiencies are assumed so they offer "prescriptive remedies and packaged answers to alleviate those deficiencies" (Griffin, 1997, p. 10). Increasing novice teachers' sense of self-efficacy and

strengthening their professional identity development will help alleviate the deficit view they tend to have of themselves (Kelchtermans, 2019), which may be a first step towards not allowing themselves to be constructed discursively by others (Britzman, 2003; Gee, 2000) using a deficit perspective.

In addition to the deficit discourses surrounding the field of teaching in general, there are additional gender-related issues to consider given that 77% of public school teachers are women (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Maher and Rathbone (1986) observe that teaching is generally considered a “woman’s job,” while teachers are viewed through a lens of hegemonic masculinity reinforced in schools with a “general conceptualization of the white, middle-class male as the ‘universal’ human being, whose traits and virtues determine societal standards of achievement” (p. 230). They also propose an important question regarding women who are being trained to teach:

If women are generally socialized into passivity, reticence, and acceptance of external authorities, how can we best help female students in particular to chart a course toward an active personal autonomy in teaching? Establishing one's authority and finding one's voice—as a leader, organizer, and teacher—constitute formidable tasks for any inexperienced teacher, especially in a culture that does not tend to take its young women (or its classroom teachers) very seriously. (p 227)

This question is relevant to the participants in my novice World Language teacher support group, all of whom were women. (While I have had a percentage of male preservice teachers in my program that tracks the national statistics per Ingersoll et al. (2018), I did not have any during the semesters that produced my study participants.) The group provided participants with the opportunity to practice finding their voices in a supported community; or in pedagogical terms,

the “guided practice” prior to the “independent practice” in the possibly hostile environment that, quoting the above passage, “does not tend to take its young women (or its classroom teachers) very seriously.” Or, to put it in Vygotskian terms, it would be the work done in the Zone of Proximal Development prior to the knowledge being internalized and used independently. Or, taking it further and providing an “anticipatory set” to my theoretical framework as I will describe shortly, it provided a safe space in which to practice authoring the self.

Research Questions

While recognizing that in qualitative research, the researcher serves as the research instrument, and there is no avoiding that my “own biases, predilections, preferences and choices will seep into the picture” (Yin, 2016, p. 40); nonetheless, I wanted to try as much as possible to follow the data from my participants wherever it would lead me without imposing my own agenda up front and attempting to remain “open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 137). My central question for this study was, therefore:

- What happens when a group of novice world language teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as part of a teacher support group?

I had three subquestions in addition to the central question. Two of these were specific to the experiences of novice teachers during their transition from student to teacher, and the third pertained to my own positioning in the study:

1. What are novice world language teachers’ experiences during the liminal period of transition from student to teacher?
2. How do these experiences intersect with their professional identity development during this time?

3. In what ways will the novice teachers' experiences during this study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator?

Ultimately, I hope that the answers to these questions will help me as a teacher educator better support both current preservice teachers and program alumni.

Local Context

The study participants were all recent graduates, within the first full year of their professional teaching practice, of the teacher education program where I work as a university supervisor and instructor of the practicum seminar teacher candidates attend during their semester of student teaching. The teacher education program is located within a public university in southeastern Pennsylvania, well known in the region for its teacher preparation programs. The teacher education students take most of their education classes within the College of Education, but their content-area classes, methods class and student teaching supervision are handled by the Language Department which is part of the College of Arts and Sciences. During the study, the participants were teaching in different public high schools in southeastern Pennsylvania, of varying size, socioeconomic situation, and level of diversity in the student and teaching population. Because of the widespread locations of the participants, and out of respect for the limited time of the novice teachers, interactions will take place synchronously on Zoom and asynchronously via a platform that will be determined by the participants (described in detail in Chapter Three).

Theoretical Framework

There are two theoretical components that shaped my approach to the data in this study, that converged when the novice teachers met in their support group. The first of these involves

theory pertaining to novice teachers, and their understanding of the world and their evolving role in it during this unique point in their professional lives. And the second involves theory pertaining to what can happen when space is created for them during this unique time in their professional experience so that the novice teachers are brought together to support each other and learn from each other.

Figured Worlds, Authoring the Self

Holland et al. (1998), in their seminal work on identity and agency, draw from the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, suggesting that both cultural and heuristic processes are important in identity development because they make room for improvisation or agency. They are particularly concerned with the situatedness of identities as they intersect with “our participation, especially our agency, in socially produced, culturally constructed activities” (pp. 40-41) that they refer to as figured worlds. Within different figured worlds, people learn to recognize each other as particular types of characters or actors, with a discernible status within that world. Additionally, within these figured worlds, people attach value and significance to some types of actions and not to others.

They elaborate four characteristics of these figured worlds: 1) they are historical phenomena to which people are recruited, or into which they enter, which develop through the work of the participants; 2) they are social encounters in which position and influence matters, to which some may be denied entrance altogether due to social status; 3) they are socially organized and reproduced, and both their existence and significance depends on participants to perpetuate them; and 4) they distribute people by spreading them over many fields of activity, so that “[c]ultural worlds are populated by familiar social types and even identifiable persons, not simply differentiated by some abstract division of labor” (p. 41). Figured worlds as such become so significant that they:

provide the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted. They also provide the loci in which people fashion senses of self—that is, develop identities. (p. 53)

An important figured world that the authors postulate is that of “dialogism,” which is based on Holquist's (1990) interpretation of Bakhtin. The figured world of dialogism is one in which sentient beings always exist in a state of being “addressed” and in the process of “answering” (Holquist, 1990, as cited in Holland et al., 1998, p. 169).

Bakhtin's (1981) theory that informs this idea involves an authoritative discourse, or “the word of the fathers” (p. 342), a taken-for-granted understanding of how the world is, that enters into dialogue with what he refers to as an internally persuasive discourse. This kind of discourse, in contrast to authoritative discourse, “is not finite, it is open, in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean” (p. 344). Holland et al. (1998) remind us that Bakhtin refers to the meaning we make as a result of this process as “authoring the self,” and that the “the site at which this authoring occurs is a space defined by the interrelationship of differentiated ‘vocal’ perspectives on the social world” (p. 173). They also make comparisons between this process of authoring the self via the process of dialogism, where the internally persuasive discourse mediates authoritative discourse into new forms of inner speaking, thereby changing “the nature of subjectification” (p. 182), and Vygotsky’s notion of knowledge and understanding being developed and internalized via a social process that occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):

A Bakhtinian “space of authoring” is then very much a particular “zone of proximal development,” and one that is extremely important in an explication of the development of identities as aspects of history-in-person. Bakhtin does not take development as the

center of his concerns, as does Vygotsky. Yet he does write about differences between the neophyte, given over to a voice of authority, and the person of greater experience, who begins to rearrange, reword, rephrase, reorchestrate different voices and, by this process, develops her own ‘authorial stance.’” (p. 183).

Britzman (2003) devotes quite a bit of time analyzing the way novice teachers struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses in the process of positioning themselves “in contexts that are already overpopulated with the identities and discursive practices of others” (p. 221). In this way, this process of dialogism is shown to be an important part of the teacher’s identity development process, or “authoring the self,” as the teachers are negotiating figured worlds with the goal of positioning themselves in their new social community.

Third Space

In beginning my discussion of Third Space theory, I want to invoke again the idea of liminality which has been applied to novice teachers (Cook-Sather, 2006; McCaw, 2021) because of their state of being in-between as they transition from student to teacher. *Limen* is the Latin word for threshold, and liminality is a term that was originally used in anthropology (Turner, 1977; van Gennep, 1960) to refer to the “middle space of ritualized rites of passage” (McCaw, 2021, p. 396). It evokes a sense of the in-between, similar to the threshold between two spaces. This concept has been applied to novice teachers because of their status of being in a transitional state between student and teacher (Cook-Sather, 2006; McCaw, 2021). A unique feature of the liminality of the novice teacher’s position that distinguishes it from the liminal phase in its anthropological context is that in sacred ritual, generally there is a period of separation during the transition period from student to teacher: “[t]heir shift must be undergone in the ‘light of day,’ or at least under the fluorescent lights of the classroom” (McCaw, 2021, p. 397). And the public nature of the transition process can amplify the stress caused by the

“instability, ambiguity, and shifting meanings” (p. 397) which are characteristic of this liminal period. However, although this period is characterized by instability and continual movement, it can result in powerful growth and transformation (Cook-Sather, 2006). All of this evokes Bhaba's (1990) idea of a Third Space, which he conceives of as an “‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture...And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (p. 56).

Gutiérrez (2008) conceives of the Third Space as “a transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened” (p. 152). She also associates it with Vygotsky’s ZPD, but conceives it more as “interdependent zones of proximal development” (p 153). In her study, Third Space is created in the context where “hybrid language practices link the past to the present and future...to build community and extend the means by which students can engage and make meaning.” The Third Space becomes a space of transformation, by “exploiting the dialectic between the individual and the social, between the world as it is and the world as it could be” (p. 160). Novice teachers encounter many tensions that they must negotiate as they work through the invisible “borderland” (Alsup, 2006), or liminal period, between student teaching and professional practice. Holland et al. (1998) refer to Bakhtin’s “space of authoring” that they compare to Vygotsky’s ZPD, and my goal with the novice teacher group was to create an actual space for these processes to unfold safely among supportive peers.

Background, Role and Positionality of the Researcher

I have been a teacher since 1994. I began teaching English as a Second Language, but moved on to teaching Spanish in 1999. I have taught elementary, middle, and high school, as well as university and adult education courses. I have taught in the United States and abroad, in

brick-and-mortar classrooms and online. In 2018, I had my first opportunity to be a university supervisor for a student teacher who was getting her degree through an online university, but needed a supervisor for her student teaching in local schools. In 2020, I was hired by a university where I had previously worked as a Spanish instructor to supervise all of the world language student teachers for the Language Department, which is the position I held while conducting this research.

As with the novice teachers in my study, therefore, I would consider myself as being in a liminal period as my professional identity shifts from teacher to teacher educator. In the role of teacher educator, I often find myself crossing imaginary boundaries that exist between the university and K-12 schools. Also, as an adjunct professor at the university where I work, where we as a group are referred to as “temporary faculty,” I am employed there, but always have a feeling of “not quite.” As such, I can identify with feelings of instability that are characteristic of liminal periods of transition which my study participants may also be feeling, although at a different point in their career trajectories.

My role in the support group sessions was that of participant-researcher. Although my primary interest was in how I could support them as novice teachers, and how I could develop my practice to better support future preservice teachers, I could not ignore that as a researcher who was also participating in the support group sessions, and as someone who was undergoing my own identity development processes and negotiating my own figured worlds, it would be crucial for me to fully and consistently consider my own positionality, personal experiences, and engagement as part of the study (Patton, 2002; Paulus & Lester, 2022).

My participants all had me as their professor and university supervisor for their student teaching. As part of their student teaching experience, I made every effort to treat them as

professionals and approach them more from a position of an instructional coach than from a position of authority. However, given that I assigned them a grade for their student teaching, and I was the one who signed off on their certification at the end of the semester, it would perhaps be impossible to fully remove my position of authority from the dynamic. As participants in this study they had graduated, and I did not have any position of authority with them, but it was important for me to remember that they might still see me using this lens, and that I needed to be very aware of potential power dynamics.

As part of this active awareness, it was important for me to be ever-vigilant that I was working “*with* the community instead of *on* them,” and to “acknowledge, understand, and negotiate around [my] researcher privilege and power” (Cohenmiller & Boivin, 2022, pp. 20–21). As an additional consideration, with the first years of teaching being “chock full of emotional drama” (Intrator, 2006, p. 233), it was also important in my role as participant-researcher to “negotiate [my] power to allow emotions to exist, not to contain or infer from them, but instead to care for the participant[s]” (Cohenmiller & Boivin, 2022, p. 18). I considered it crucial to maintain self-reflexivity throughout the research process to ensure that I was putting the needs of the novice teachers ahead of my needs as a researcher, believing that ultimately it is them to whom I was accountable. This active awareness and reflexivity as a researcher led me to a process of authorship of the self that I will describe in detail in Chapter Six.

Definition of Relevant Terms

Novice teacher- for purposes of my study, novice teachers are teachers who are in the first full year of their professional practice. While there can be inconsistency in terminology in the literature between “novice teachers,” “new teachers,” “beginning teachers,” and possibly other terms, I am choosing to use novice because of its alignment with the field of world

languages. World Language teachers will generally be familiar with the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) terminology, where beginning speakers of a language are referred to as being at the “Novice” level.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)- Vygotsky (2005) imagines this as an area between a child’s actual current developmental level when working independently and the level of potential development when working with a more knowledgeable adult or when collaborating with more capable peers. Once the child is able to internalize knowledge via the Zone of Proximal Development, it becomes part of his or her “independent developmental achievement” (Vygotsky, 2005, p. 40).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the ongoing problem of teacher shortages and issues with retention of novice teachers, which is a problem that has had a significant impact on the field of World Languages. I described my personal experience and frustration with this phenomenon as a teacher educator, arguing that a lack of support, or perhaps a lack of the proper kind of support, might exacerbate this problem. I addressed my rationale for a study that both examines the experiences of novice teachers as well as providing additional support for them by conducting a monthly peer support group during their first year of professional practice. Following this, I introduced possible social justice implications, research questions, local context, theoretical framework, and definitions of relevant terms. The chapter then ends with a summary and a description of the overall organization of the study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One lays the groundwork for the study by providing the background, rationale, local context, theoretical framework, and other details as described in the summary above. In

Chapter Two, I posit the argument that novice teachers experience a sudden and jarring conflict between figured worlds that they have trouble processing in the beginning of their careers. I explore literature related to figured worlds theory and how this relates to novice teachers, language teachers specifically, and also to teacher identity and agency. Additionally, I explore literature related to the concepts of liminality and Third Space, to show how these can be applied to a peer support group setting with the goal of allowing novice teachers to process the figured worlds conflicts they experience in a productive and meaningful way.

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach for the study, including details about data collection and analysis, strategies for validating findings, and potential ethical issues. Chapters Four and Five detail findings from the study. Chapter Four shares stories from the first half of the school year through which the novice teachers reveal evidence of conflicts they experience between different figured worlds of education that they have trouble processing, and that create stress for them as they transition from students to professional teachers. It is in this chapter that I address two of my research subquestions: 1) What are novice world language teachers' experiences during the liminal period of transition from student to teacher?; and 2) How do these experiences intersect with their professional identity development during this time?

Chapter Five explores the support group meetings themselves, showing how the needs of the novice teachers shifted over the course of the year, and describing the role that participation in the support group played in the development of agency, authoring the self, and sociocultural learning by means of a Zone of Proximal Development that was created. In this chapter I address my primary research question: What happens when a group of novice world language

teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as part of a teacher support group?

Finally, Chapter Six examines my own experience as a participant-researcher during the study, describing a process of authoring the self that I underwent as I negotiated my various roles during this time. In this chapter, I address my final research subquestion: In what ways will the novice teachers' experiences during this study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator? I then explore the experiences of the novice teachers as they ended their time participating in our support group, and conclude the chapter by providing my closing thoughts on this project along with possible implications for future practice.

Although this study only follows the first year of professional practice of four novice World Language teachers who are all graduates of the same teacher education program, and who are all practicing in a similar geographical area at a specific point in time, and therefore results may not be generalizable to the population of novice teachers at large, I hope that the issues that these teachers discuss still may provide insights into the experiences that novice teachers encounter during the liminal stage of transition from student to professional teacher, and how these impact the development of their professional teaching identities. I also hope that the study may provide insight on this form of alumni support for graduates of teacher education programs as they begin their professional teaching careers.

Chapter 2- Review of Literature

Throughout teacher education, teacher candidates are encouraged to set their students up for success. Unfortunately, given the abysmal early-career teacher attrition rates, it would seem that this message is of the “do as we say, and not as we do” variety. One of the issues that novice teachers are confronted with from the very beginning is what Veenman (1984) refers to as “reality shock.” He uses this term to indicate “the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life” (p. 143). He goes on to say that the term reality shock is a misnomer, because it suggests that it will pass quickly, whereas “[i]n fact, the reality shock deals with the assimilation of a complex reality which forces itself incessantly upon the beginning teacher, day in and day out. This reality must be mastered continually, especially in the first period of actual teaching” (p. 144). But why, then, is setting foot into the classroom as a teacher such a shock to the novice teacher when they have spent most of their lives in school either as students or as teachers-in-training? And would it not seem that student teaching would have prepared them for what to expect, so that their transition to professional teaching would not be such a shock to the system?

My argument is that the reality shock that Veenman (1984) describes is caused in large part by a sudden and jarring conflict between various figured worlds that the novice teacher has trouble processing, and which creates confusion in terms of their own identity and positioning in their new environment. In reviewing the literature on this topic, I will examine Holland et al.'s (1998) theory on figured worlds, and also how figured worlds of education that novice teachers have created vis a vis their educational biography and teacher education then come into conflict with what they encounter in their professional practice. I will also review Holland et al.'s

incorporation of authorship of the self into their figured worlds framework as a space of agency, where new identities can be developed and transformation can occur.

In this chapter, I will also explore the concept of liminality as it has been applied to this border space as a novice teacher transitions from student to professional teacher. I will explore its anthropological origins, which lead to association with deficit discourses that frame its link to teaching, but also its unique characteristics that lead to the possibilities of transformative learning taking place during this time. I will explore Third Space theory, and I will argue that Third Space provides an opportunity for this transformative learning to take place among all the noise and chaos that characterize the first years of teaching. And finally, I will describe other recent work that has been done in the area of novice teacher peer support, and how this informed my study.

Figured Worlds

Figured worlds are part of Holland et al.'s (1998) larger theory of self and identity. They describe a figured world as being a cultural phenomenon that is 1) "embodied over time, through continual participation" (pp.52-53); and 2) "peopled by the figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it" (p. 51). About figured worlds, they say:

The production and reproduction of figured worlds involves both abstraction of significant regularities from everyday life into expectations about how particular types of events unfold and interpretation of the everyday according to these distillations of past experiences. (p. 53)

In other words, figured worlds are the way people understand and expect the world to work, and they identify themselves and their position in the figured world accordingly.

Figured Worlds of Novice Teachers

Students enter their teacher education programs with figured worlds of education already in place that are based on their educational biographies. Lortie (1975) refers to the “apprenticeship of observation” that all aspiring teachers undergo prior to beginning their teacher education:

Education students have undergone diverse prior experiences and their assessments will presumably reflect personality differences, varieties of social experience, and the different contexts within which their assessments were made...Those providing instruction to teachers, therefore, confront classes composed of students who possess varying definitions of good teaching and cathect diverse models of the occupation. (p. 66)

Richardson (2003) also observes that novice teachers have had considerable experience with the nature of the work in comparison with novices in other professions. As such, she says:

...teacher candidates bring with them a set of deep-seated and often tacit beliefs about the nature of teaching, learning, and schooling. For the profession of teaching, however, these preexisting beliefs and understandings may be somewhat distorted for purposes of considering the teaching role since the teacher candidates experienced teaching as students, not as teachers. These particular views of teaching, which were set within a framework of studenting, may be narcissistic, idiosyncratic, and somewhat simplistic. (pp. 5-6)

Britzman (1986) addresses some of the “cultural myths” of teachers and teaching that likely have formed part of the student’s educational biography, which, as a “cumulative social experience, becomes part of the implicit context of teacher education” (p. 443). Although Britzman’s work

predates Holland et al.'s theory of culturally reproduced Figured Worlds, she observes that these cultural myths:

...contribute to the student teacher's taken-for-granted views of power, authority, and knowledge, while serving to mystify school structure. Cultural myths, then, provide a set of ideal images, definitions, justifications and measures for thought and activity, and sustain a naturalized view of the reality it seeks to encode. (p. 447)

She argues that, in general, “the underlying values which coalesce in one’s institutional biography, if unexamined, propel the cultural reproduction of authoritarian teaching practices and naturalize the contexts which generate such a cycle” (p. 443). She says that three important factors shape students’ understandings of the way education works (i.e., their figured world of education), and that these elements also serve to perpetuate the interests of the dominant society: 1) that “social control is a significant dynamic in classroom life” (p. 444); 2) curriculum is compartmentally organized; and 3) schools are hierarchically ordered.

The three cultural myths that emerged through the course of her study were 1) everything depends on the teacher; 2) the teacher is an expert; and 3) teachers are self-made. She says that these myths emphasize the rugged individuality of the teacher, minimize the role that the institution and society plays in a teacher’s success or failure, thus allowing for victim-blaming, and lead to teachers reproducing rather than challenging their institutional biography.

Ultimately, she says:

[t]he values embedded in the institutional biography become sedimented, and serve as the foundation for the cultural myths which legitimize a hierarchical image of authority, a

reified view of knowledge, and a rugged individualist stance. Each of these particular views of power helps maintain the institutional push for social control. (p. 453)

According to a longitudinal study by Horn et al. (2008) of students through teacher education, including student teaching, and into their teaching careers, learning to teach involves assembling a repertoire of practices from what they refer to as “TEPWorld” and “FieldWorld,” along with a smattering of practices from “RealWorld” (which would be the equivalent of Lortie’s (1975) apprenticeship of observation). The authors point out that images of teaching can be different in these figured worlds. For example, they describe a teacher who conceives of teaching as being able to transmit knowledge clearly, which is a knowledge-transmission model of learning more consistent with FieldWorld as opposed to the constructivist learning model more valued in TEPWorld. They also point to identification and negotiation as being two important processes in identity development, with identification being the ability to incorporate new information or systems into one’s existing identity, and negotiation being the ability to modify one’s identity based on new information or systems.

The process of negotiating conflicting Figured Worlds does not always go smoothly, though, as we see in Sydnor's (2014) study of a preservice teacher. Sydnor refers to Bakhtinian (1981) theory of authoritative discourses, positing that each Figured World has its set of authoritative discourses that are part of its taken-for-granted understanding of the way that world works. Among her findings, Sydnor discovers that there are two distinctive Figured Worlds for the new teacher examined in the study: the world of teacher education, which is a world of Vygotskian theory, differentiation, critical thinking, social justice, student engagement, etc.; versus the world of elementary school, which is based on her apprenticeship of observation and her time spent in the field during student teaching, and which is a world of grades, data, high-

stakes testing, worksheets, compliance, teacher evaluations, etc. Sydnor identifies the authoritative discourses of each of these worlds, which for teacher education were constructivism, engagement, and authenticity, and for student teaching were control, standardization, and productivity. In the case of this study, the tensions between the two sets of authoritative discourses were so great that most of the new teacher's attention was taken up by this conflict. Ultimately the authoritative discourse of the elementary school won, as she was not able to enact any of the practices associated with the teacher education discourse.

Figured Worlds of Language Teachers

While novice teachers in general, such as the example in Sydnor's (2014) study, have issues of conflicting figured worlds to contend with as they begin their careers, there are also issues of this kind that are particular to language teachers.

In an earlier article, Varghese et al. (2005) provide an example of a figured worlds of language teaching dilemma that is based on one of Britzman's (1986) cultural myths described earlier: the myth of "the teacher is an expert." This cultural myth conflicts with the reality of any language teacher who is not a perfectly balanced bilingual, meaning that he or she is "approximately equally fluent in two languages across various contexts and domains" (Baker & Wright, 2017). This is generally considered to be an idealized concept, given that "rarely is anyone equally competent in two or more languages across all their domains" (p. 9). The perception, then, of any language teacher would be that he or she would be considered a native speaker (NS) or nonnative speaker (NNS) of the language being taught, and that the opposite would be true for the dominant language of the students he or she is teaching. Nonnative speakers of the dominant language (English in US schools) can experience both professional and social marginalization in schools (Varghese et al., 2005), which can lead to identity issues within

the novice teacher's figured world of language teaching. The nonnative speaker (NNS) label is not just problematic for teachers who do not speak the dominant language, though. There is also a "non-native speaker bias" (Burke, 2013; Valmori & De Costa, 2016) in which native speaker (NS) teachers "more often than not...are validated at the expense of NNS identities, which are denigrated because they are not associated with the mythical standard variety of a given language" (De Costa & Norton, 2017, p. 8).

Varghese et al.'s (2005) article describes a study of a NNS English-speaking graduate student in an MA TESOL program who experienced a tension in her figured world of language teaching when she began teaching, because she had internalized the cultural myth of Teacher as Expert. Since she was not a native English speaker, she considered herself to be still a learner of English, and therefore not an expert. Nonnative speakers of the language they are teaching may find themselves experiencing this tension as well, where they experience an "insecurity in their faith in themselves as expert speakers" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 26), given the pervasiveness of this cultural myth.

Another tension that novice language teachers face regarding their figured world of language teaching has to do with the devaluing of language teaching as a profession (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Varghese et al., 2005). De Costa and Norton (2017) list causes such as high-stakes testing, the loss of teacher tenure, and the emphasis on "market-place utility" (p. 5). Crookes (1997) writes in general about four areas that are indicative of a deskilling of professional language teachers: 1) the curriculum is mandated not by teachers but by outside authorities; 2) education and schooling are two different functions that are at odds with each other; 3) teachers are isolated from each other and are not able to interact; and 4) due to limited resources, teachers are forced to compete with each other. He points out that there is a hierarchy

that begins in university language programs, where the language teaching and teacher education is at the lower end of the academic hierarchy while the literature teaching is considered more academic, and carries higher prestige.

This same situation regarding lack of prestige in language teaching continues when novice teachers arrive at their professional positions and find that the language courses are considered electives, or that they are physically separated in the building from the “core academic” classes. Crookes (1997) points out that language teachers often have to advocate for their jobs, or for the existence of their programs, given that we live in a monolingually-oriented culture where the importance of studying another language is not presumed. He posits that teacher education programs do not prepare students “to be organizers or to see themselves as ‘language activists’” (p. 74), in that they need to advocate for the importance of their roles in the schools, and that “...in these times of declining enrollments and reduced educational budgets, foreign language teachers may not be prepared for the ultimately political struggles in which they will need to engage if they are to obtain jobs and maintain programs” (p. 74). When language teachers enter the profession, their figured world of language teaching is more idealized, based on second language acquisition theory they have learned in teacher education and a conviction that what they are doing is meaningful and important work leading to intercultural communicative competence and increased global understanding. Political struggles, and having low prestige in the academic hierarchy, are incompatible with novice language teachers’ figured world of language teaching as they enter the profession, and this contributes to their experience of “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984).

Figured Worlds, Teacher Identity, and Agency

While figured worlds can create tensions for novice language teachers in general, they also can provide a context for understanding the role that teachers' agency has in constructing and reproducing these worlds, as well as developing their own identities within them. Varghese (2018) in particular advances Holland et al.'s (2018) theory of figured worlds as a useful construct in understanding language teacher identity. In particular, she notes that figured worlds are helpful in examining "how motivation, learning, conflicts, and agency play into the construction of a figured world for language teachers according to their contexts and the type of language teachers they are in the process of becoming" (Varghese, 2018, p. 82).

One important factor in identity development within figured worlds resides in Bakhtin's (1981) concept of "authoring the self." To begin with, in this process, Bakhtin, whose work heavily influenced Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of figured worlds, suggested that there was an ongoing dialogical relationship between authoritative discourse, the taken-for-granted "word of the fathers" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342), that enters into tension with what he refers to as internally persuasive discourse, which "is not finite, it is open, in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean" (p. 344). This dialogical relationship, according to Bakhtin, determines one's ideological becoming. Holland et al. (1998) remind us that Bakhtin refers to the meaning we make as a result of this process as "authoring the self," and that "the site at which this authoring occurs is a space defined by the interrelationship of differentiated 'vocal' perspectives on the social world" (p. 173).

While not about teachers, we see a clear example of authoring the self within an educational figured world in a study by Calabrese Barton and Tan (2010) of an after-school

urban science program for 10-14 year olds. They observe that the students, upon initial entry into the figured world:

gain social positions that are accorded by the established members of that world...[that] are inextricably entangled with power, status, and rank...How novices choose to accept, engage, resist, or ignore such cues shapes their developing identity-in-practice and determines the boundaries of their authoring space, which is driven by a sense of agency. In the struggle to establish an identity in a new figured world, it is important to consider the influence of the other worlds one simultaneously inhabits. (p. 193)

The students in the study, through their engagement with the project described in this article, authored themselves as “community science experts” through the making of a community-based documentary. In doing so, they “problematized established symbols of science, authored alternative identities, and displayed agency in their transforming acts that challenged how science should be presented, contemplated, and understood” (p. 224).

Urrieta (2007) uses Holland et al.’s (1998) figured worlds theory in a study of four groups of Chicano activist educators to examine how their Chicano activist identity production occurred. He notes how it is composed of two processes: conceptual identity production and procedural identity production. Conceptually, people reorganize their subjectivities around certain ideas or issues, becoming invested in a new figured world and possibly reinterpreting their own past as a result. Procedurally, “people increase their participation in the activities that produce and enact the cultural forms particular to that new view of the world” (p. 126); for example, taking up cultural artifacts of the new world. In the case of the participants in this study, the example was given of displaying Mexican flags. Both of these shifts occur as the result of individual agency.

Varghese and Snyder (2018) examine the process of (re)construction of figured worlds of dual language teaching of four preservice teachers in a mainstream teacher education program with a monolingual teaching ideology. They note the connection between the novice teachers' agency with the "contexts and interactional resources" (p. 145) afforded them. They note that:

...[i]n being agentive, they drew on their prior experiences as language learners and Latinxs in the United States, affordances in the program as well as the larger state context, to contribute to their figured worlds of dual language teaching...At the same time, due to their program and the neoliberal framing of larger prevalent language ideologies, there were limitations in the figured worlds available to them and their own constructs of these worlds. (p. 145)

One of the biggest challenges that these teachers faced was the monolingual ideology of their teacher education program, which, of course, mirrors the cultural majority of the US educational system. However, a major advantage they had in the program that helped them progress in their dual language project was that they had support of people in positions of power in the program: "Spaces were opened up for teacher candidates to gain insights and practices into DL teaching mainly by their field placements, their mentor teachers, and the director of the program" (p 157). Such spaces are extremely important to novice teachers, as is agency in authoring of the self.

Third Space in Teacher Education

Liminal Space—Challenge and/or Opportunity?

As I discussed in Chapter One, liminality is a term that originated in anthropology (Turner, 1977; van Gennep, 1960) to refer to the "middle space of ritualized rites of passage" (McCaw, 2021, p. 396). This concept has been applied extensively to novice teachers. I will explore the relevance of liminality in this section, but first, it is important to consider its

anthropological origins. Turner's (1977) work goes into extensive detail about what happens in the liminal space, and much of it is not pleasant. For example, the liminaries undergoing the rite of passage are often sequestered from society, and "ground down" so they can then later be "positively refashioned into specific shapes compatible with their new postliminal duties and rights of a new status and state" (p. 37). Turner goes on to describe the "grinding down" process, which:

...is accomplished by ordeals, circumcision, subincision, clitoridectomy, hazing, endurance of heat and cold, impossible physical tests in which failure is greeted with ridicule, unanswerable riddles which make even clever candidates look stupid, followed by physical punishment, and the like. (p. 37)

I believe that anyone who is in their first year of teaching would likely read this description and feel like it resonates on some level! There are many negative symbols that accompany this liminal state of being in its anthropological context. People in this state, for example, might be associated with symbols of death, painted black, covered in dust or identified with feces, forced to let their hair and nails grow, or made either to speak in whispers or to remain silent (p. 37). Therefore, while emerging on the other side of the liminal space is something to be celebrated, the liminal space itself is something dark and mysterious, that is to be feared.

There are no specific borders placed on the liminal period of a novice teacher, but many studies examine liminality in the context of preservice teaching, which would be on the early side of the transition between student and professional teacher. While I am not examining the preservice teaching experience in my study of teachers in the first year of their professional teaching careers, it is necessarily part of their overall liminal experience while transitioning from student to professional teacher, which makes it worth considering how the literature treats

liminality in this context. Gao and Benson (2012), in a study of preservice English language teachers, noted that such teachers' liminal positionality—that they did not fully belong to the teaching community—led to both spatial and social marginalization. For example, some were placed in unused storage spaces in the building that were physically separate from other teachers, and therefore they were not a part of “mainstream staff activities and collegial socialization taking place among regular teachers in these schools” (p. 134). Sinner (2012) characterizes the liminal nature of the preservice teaching experience as uniquely traumatic. The trauma for the preservice teacher in Sinner's (2012) study is created by power dynamics with the mentor teacher in the placement classroom, and also the constant surveillance aspect of student teaching which both leads to control and uniformity and also makes her feel vulnerable. This eventually leads to a devolving emotional state and physical illness, which is reminiscent of the “grinding down” process referenced in Turner's (1977) anthropological description of liminality. Student teachers, because of this, experience “potentially lasting and painful scars that reshape identity” (Sinner, 2012, p. 611). According to White and McSharry (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the liminality experience of preservice teachers. Based on surveys and focus group interviews with preservice teachers in their university program that were conducted in June 2020, they found that many were either stripped of responsibility to which they had grown accustomed in their placements, “clearly indicating their ‘not yet’ status,” others were “overwhelmed with responsibility and alone in dealing with it” (p. 325). They felt isolated and were removed from human contact, which added to the traditional sequestering or removal from society that is part of the traditional anthropological framing of the liminal period, which might be why the experience of liminality would have been amplified for them.

Moving on to the next phase in the transition from student to teacher, Petersen (2017) examines liminality as it affects novice early grades teachers in South Africa. Petersen's (2017) perspective seems to take a deficit view of the novice teachers, showing them as being "somewhat unrealistic and/or unprepared in what they should expect in this period" (p. 3). The novice teachers blamed both teacher education and the schools themselves for their difficulties in transitioning to the school environment. They had trouble connecting their teacher education coursework to the realities of the classroom, indicating that their professors had been too out of touch with current conditions to be able to prepare them adequately; but at the same time, they faulted administrators and senior teachers at the schools for expecting them to be professional teachers but not showing them how to do this. The author concludes that teacher education can better prepare preservice teachers for the "insecurity, uncertainty, and disequilibrium [that] are entirely normal in the changeover from university to the school classroom" (p. 6), but at the same time, school leaders can be more proactive in coordinating support for the novice teachers before they even arrive at the schools.

Pierce (2007), in a study of four mid-career entrants to the teaching profession, refers to liminality in the transition to teaching as being similar to puberty, or an awkward "hatching" process (p. 32). She describes the disillusionment new teachers feel when they arrive to their new positions, in that "they have theorized and perhaps even idealized the profession during preservice and are not prepared for the cultural cold shoulder inside schools once they have been hired to teach" (p. 32). They remain on the margins of the school culture, and just as happens in Turner's (1977) description of anthropological liminality, they find themselves feeling forced to remain silent: "[t]hey learned to remain silent and suppress questions and insecurities lest they call even more attention to their professional puberty and expose professional immaturity or

incompetence” (p. 47). Similar to Petersen (2017), she proposes that this awkward liminal stage is inevitable and that teacher educators should prepare preservice teachers for it, to possibly “prevent them from being confused into silence when they enter the field or altogether abandon the profession” (p. 47).

These studies all view liminality in terms of its challenges. However, there are some studies that view the space of liminality with optimism and possibility. Chang (2018) examines a period unique to English language teachers in Hong Kong, which is the period between teacher education and their high-stakes teacher examination period. Chang emphasizes that this is a period where the liminaries have no status or position, but at the same time, they exist in a state of pure possibility given that “the liminal period can be a stage of reflection, growth, and identity reconstruction” (p. 50).

McCaw's (2021) study identifies some themes that have a more traditional deficit-based framing of liminality, such as “being a stranger” and “being a fraud,” which are based on new teachers’ reactions to photos they are shown. The “being a stranger” theme was connected with liminality in that the new teachers suddenly found themselves feeling like a stranger as a teacher in a place where they had already spent a large part of their lives as students. One of the new teachers even had a literal feeling of crossing over a threshold into a strange place, in that he was taken aback when he walked into the classroom for the first time and was both intimidated and experienced a “vivid shock” (p. 399). McCaw notes that this process can take a significant amount of time, and also that paradoxically, the process of being a stranger to belonging involved transitioning from one form of invisibility—that is, the invisibility of people not knowing who you are, or not recognizing your identity as a teacher—to the invisibility of being familiar to all and blending into the surroundings. The “being a fraud” theme connected in that

the new teachers were feeling a disjuncture between how they perceived themselves (i.e., not yet an adult) and how others perceived them: an exemplary adult to be trusted and obeyed, i.e., the teacher. This created feelings of anxiety about their true identity being revealed, that is, the self-perception that they did not really know everything and did not belong there. Interestingly, though, the third theme McCaw identifies, “dancing in disequilibrium,” opens up the possibilities for viewing the period with optimism. This theme related to one of the photos that a new teacher identified with, which was of a dog running through shallow water. The teacher noted that the dog could be perceived as either being chased by something terrifying or as playing joyfully, or dancing through the water. The teacher relates this to teaching by saying that teachers are always in a state between knowing and not knowing, just like learners of anything, so they should get comfortable with that and learn how to dance in the disequilibrium. The author notes that this opens up the possibility of agency within the space of liminality, that teachers could use this space as a space of transformative learning.

McCaw’s (2021) study expands upon Cook-Sather’s (2006) earlier study in which she paired eight preservice teachers with five experienced teachers in an asynchronous, e-mail based mentoring program. She refers to what is created as a result of this interaction as “liminal space” in that it “exists parallel and in addition to the spaces in which the preservice and experienced teachers live their daily lives” and therefore, drawing from Turner (1977), she refers to it as a “newly defined ‘in-between’ place” (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 114). She found that participants appreciated a dynamic outside of “power relations that characterize day-to-day educational relationships” (p. 120), and the ability to bring up issues they might not feel comfortable raising in their usual context. They said that they were comforted in knowing that they had someone to

vent to who would listen and respond when needed. She felt that the liminal space created by the email group released “liminal energies” and provided a space that was full of possibility:

Participants in this suspended space are released to imagine and enact the otherwise unimaginable or impossible, and through such imagining they can transform themselves in unique and powerful ways. (pp. 120-121)

These works all point to an important conclusion about liminality: that if that space is specifically created, it can be a place for novice teachers to exercise their agency and where transformative learning can occur.

Third Space For Agency, Authoring the Self, and Opportunities for Transformation

Cook-Sather’s (2006) idea of liminal space, as a place of endless possibilities to enact the “otherwise unimaginable or impossible” and thus “transform themselves in unique and powerful ways (pp. 120-121), is evocative of Bhaba’s (1990) idea of a Third Space, which he conceives of as an “‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture...And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (p. 56). Gutiérrez (2008) conceives of the Third Space as “a transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened” (p. 152). She also associates it with Vygotsky’s ZPD, but conceives it more as “interdependent zones of proximal development” (p. 153). In her study, Third Space is created in the context where “hybrid language practices link the past to the present and future...to build community and extend the means by which students can engage and make meaning.” The Third Space becomes a space of transformation, by “exploiting the dialectic between the individual and the social, between the world as it is and the world as it could be” (p. 160).

In the field of teacher education, Third Space is seen as useful in negotiating the area between various binaries that exist; for example, university versus K-12 schools, theory versus practice, teacher versus teacher educator among others. Cuenca et al. (2011), for one, attempts to blur the binary spaces between two distinct spaces generally involved in student teaching, that is, the schools and classrooms where the student teaching takes place, and the university where the student teacher's coursework happens. University supervisors work with student teachers in both settings, and often feel like outsiders in both places as they are not quite fully university faculty, but they are also removed to an extent from the K-12 schools as they are not currently practicing teachers there. These two physical spaces also represent the discourse of dichotomy between theory and practice that exists and creates tensions between members of these two communities. In this study, university supervisors conducted biweekly "breakout" sessions with student teachers to provide additional meeting time, with the idea of creating a Third Space, "helping supervisors in our program forgo feelings of 'outsider' status, and enabling the development of meaningful collaborative relationships with student teachers" (p. 1069). They ultimately questioned whether the results could truly be labeled Third Space, but the space created did allow for diminishment of "counterproductive features of our hierarchical position" and "creative interventions...for all of us" (p. 1079). They also stressed the importance of striving to, as teacher educators, "create spaces for deliberation and communication resulting in ways of doing teacher education that, in turn, can create new and powerful spaces for deliberation and communication to better serve future teachers" (p. 1076).

Chan (2020) explores how virtual mentoring creates a Third Space by removing power dynamics from mentor/mentee relationships during student teaching, having a positive impact on student learning. In this study, virtual mentors were graduates of the same teacher education

program and were teachers at different schools than that preservice teachers' placements, so they had no evaluative role. This created a Third Space that transcended both the university and the K-12 school spaces so that both mentors and mentees were freed from traditional hierarchical relationships found in both places. A new kind of interaction formed as a result in this safe space. Mentors enacted hybrid identities, "for example as insiders and outsiders, and as mentors and learners" (p. 206), which also made it easier to talk about problems and personal experiences.

Nazari and De Costa (2022) describe a professional development course where teachers were set up as a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998) to narrate Critical Incidents that happened within their classrooms to each other. The findings were that the Critical Incidents negatively influenced the teachers' emotions, but that participating in the Community of Practice and working on the issues together gave them an enhanced sense of agency in that they had more confidence in dealing with these kinds of issues going forward. They were also better able to regulate their emotions in the face of these incidents in real time. Finally, they developed further expertise in storying the critical incidents which aided them in being able to share them with colleagues in the future. The article cited Communities of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and not Third Space, but they created the online community in a "Telegram" messaging application. It appears, then, that since this was a space that was created outside of the normal school boundaries, and the normal school day, and that since it was an unusual kind of interaction that did not generally occur, that the potential for this qualifying as a Third Space exists, especially since the combined elements of enhanced agency and transformative learning resulted.

Finally, Strom and Lesperance-Goss (2015) conducted a study in which they attempted to create a third space for new teacher induction that was "a hybrid 'in-between' induction space

that was neither completely the district nor the university” (p. 250). Similar to the group in my study, this was a group of novice teachers who had recently graduated from the same teacher education program. The facilitator of the group was a doctoral student, who felt that her positionality as such “may have assisted in the creation of a safe space where we could be vulnerable together as we worked through the tensions of first-year teaching” (p. 250). Based on situations that arose in the novice teachers’ professional environments, specifically that they were to be evaluated based on students’ scores on high-stakes testing, the novice teachers decided together to create their own artifact-inquiry project in which they collected artifacts they felt reflected good teaching, reflecting on what this meant and coming up with a rubric. The authors note:

...we deliberately sought to create a third space induction experience, one that broke with the traditional experiences afforded new teachers that often result in teacher socialization into traditional patterns of transmission teaching, collegial isolation, and ultimately, a reproduction of societal power imbalances. (p.258)

The novice teachers in this support group had been struggling with the new method of evaluation based on high-stakes test scores, because this was an example of conflicting Figured Worlds of Teaching, and specifically in this case, authoritative discourses from these Figured Worlds regarding what entails “good teaching.” Just as with the novice teacher in Sydnor’s (2014) study, there is the world of Teacher Education, which is what is driving the novice teachers to plan inquiry-based teaching methods that would be time-consuming and lead to not all the material being covered, and the world of the School, which is demanding that she teach to the test and produce high test scores as a measure of good teaching. The Third Space created by the induction group allows the novice teachers to exercise agency in deciding their own criteria for

good teaching, thereby also exercising agency in authoring the self in relation to their new Figured World, the world of the school.

Connection to Other Current Work in Novice Teacher Support

The studies mentioned in the previous section have in common that they explore the idea of Third Space as conceived in the context of teacher education, which has been viewed as useful for negotiating the area between perceived binaries (Cuenca et al., 2011), for transcending traditional hierarchical relationships and to create a safe space where new kinds of interaction are possible (Chan, 2020), to develop agency and allow for transformative learning experiences that would not occur in more traditional spaces (Nazari & De Costa, 2022), and to exercise agency in authoring of the self in a new figured world of education (Strom & Lesperance-Goss, 2015). In this section, I will briefly review some other recent work that has been done in the area of novice teacher support that has informed my approach to this study.

Recognizing the importance of mentorship in attempts to improve retention outcomes in world language education in particular, the Fall 2023 issue of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's (ACTFL) professional magazine was dedicated to this topic. In this issue, Urzúa and Asención-Delaney (2023) discuss a project that was implemented at the university level for beginning teaching assistants that they believe could apply to other educational contexts as well. Their project involves a form of "e-mentoring" in which participants respond to discussion board questions related to domains in the Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning (TELL) framework (*Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning Framework*, 2014)—for example, lesson planning, student levels of participation and motivation, classroom management, etc.—and then interact with their peers. Discussions center around navigating challenges and successes of their first semester of teaching, and program

supervisors participate in the discussion by posting their own reflections or answers to the weekly prompts, and responding to the participants' posts with comments and follow-up questions that deepen the conversation. The authors comment that, in addition to building community and encouraging reflective practice among the novice teachers, a benefit of this model is that it is asynchronous so that the teachers can respond at their convenience. This also allows additional time and space for the teachers to think about how they will respond to the prompts since they do not have to respond immediately, which can lower anxiety.

This project informs my study for several reasons. First, I see it is a recent application for world languages of something similar to what Cook-Sather (2006) achieved in her earlier study in which she attempted to create liminal space in her asynchronous, e-mail based mentoring program. In Cook-Sather's (2006) study, she found that this space removed the participants from power dynamics of everyday life, and that they felt more comfortable raising issues that they might not raise in their usual context. I think that the discussion board format of Urzúa and Asención-Delaney's (2023) e-mentoring project accomplishes the same goal. Additionally, with the supervisors participating in the discussion alongside the novice teachers, providing their own reflections and experiences, it could allow for additional vulnerability and blurring of traditional hierarchical relationships, leading to the creation of a safe and non-threatening space. While my support group meetings were synchronous, I wanted to add an asynchronous option because of the value I saw in this form of interaction, along with its opportunities for collaboration outside of meeting time.

The e-mentoring project described above was specific to novice world language teachers, which made it particularly relevant to my field, but other recent work that has been done with novice teachers in general has also informed my study. For example, Gordon (2020) performed

a study that focused on the transitional time between teacher education and professional teaching, interviewing novice teachers to see what was most effective in helping them with their transition process. As a result of the feedback, Gordon (2020) proposes an “educate-mentor-nurture” model for professional growth during this time, arguing that this helps develop a sense of self-efficacy and agency in the novice teachers, which will then lead to improved professional satisfaction and retention outcomes. Specific findings are that novice teachers need individualized support and nurturing in the transition process with more explicit links between teacher education providers and schools, along with the development of communities of practice. Further emphasis is placed on the development of critical reflexivity and agency in order to negotiate challenges and lack of predictability on the job.

Gordon’s (2020) study is relevant in that it emphasizes the importance of maintaining links between teacher education and schools, and developing communities of practice among novice teachers, both of which are goals of my study. The novice teacher support group space, I argue, lends itself to the development of critical reflexivity and agency, as the teachers will have the opportunity to discuss topics that are relevant to their practice, and engage in collective problem solving.

This same kind of collective problem-solving activity is a valued feature of Virginia’s Novice Teaching Academy, which is available for smaller school districts via a partnership with The College of William and Mary. For this project, master teachers are identified by district leaders to lead sessions as facilitators and mentors, and meetings are held five times per year in what is referred to as a “regional community of practice” (Hylton & Colley, 2022, p. 53). Hylton and Colley (2022) report from their findings that novice teachers particularly value open-ended conversation with their peers in which they can hear different perspectives on common problems,

share ideas, and work collaboratively to problem-solve specific challenges they are facing in their classrooms. They also comment that that the “cross-district community of practice is one of the keys to their being able to share their challenges, fears, and frustrations without fear of judgment or recrimination” (p. 55), thereby emphasizing the need for novice teachers to have a space where they can feel safe.

Finally, I turn abroad to Finland’s Peer Group Mentoring (PGM) model. An early study (Geeraerts et al., 2015) finds that this model strengthens professional identity and self-confidence, developing skills and knowledge among the novice teachers while also developing the work community. Geeraerts et al. (2015) also note, however, that the Finnish context is that teachers there have a respected role in society, similar in status to lawyers or physicians. This leads to a large number of applicants to teacher education programs, which allows the programs to be selective in the admissions process. As a result, there is much less oversight of novice teachers, and there is rarely a probationary period to ensure that they are meeting standards, because high quality of teacher education graduates is assumed. The PGM exists to assist new teachers in becoming new members of the work community and school culture, which can cause stress and decreased feelings of self-efficacy even in a culture where teachers are so highly valued. It is noteworthy that a culture that values its teachers highly provides this peer group model of novice teacher mentoring as standard procedure, either in addition to or entirely replacing a more transmission based, hierarchical, one-on-one model of experienced teacher to novice teacher.

A more recent study (Kiviniemi et al., 2021) shows the evolution of the PGM in Finland to a new hybrid form, which merges preservice and in-service teachers in different career stages, in group meetings that are facilitated by an experienced mentor. This model allows pre-service

teachers to integrate into the professional community as well as allowing for a positive professional development experience for the in-service teachers. The study was conducted from the point of view of the in-service teachers only, as they were the ones who were interviewed in order to learn about their experiences in participating in the group. Findings emphasized the sociocultural learning that occurred as a result of participating, in that the pre-service teachers had newer pedagogical and theoretical approaches to share while the in-service teachers were able to share everyday practices and challenges of teaching. They appreciated that there was no agenda imposed at the meetings, that nothing was expected of them, and that they could talk about any topic they chose, which they felt made the experience more enjoyable. Additionally, the in-service teachers found the experience of sharing their expertise to be an exercise in affirming their own sense of teaching efficacy. And finally, the teachers experienced positive feelings about welcoming and nurturing the next generation of teaching professionals, along with having contact with the university community and being a part of teacher education. They expressed that they felt like they were part of something important as a result of their contributions to the group.

A common theme in all of the recent work described in this section is that novice teachers benefit from support from their peers, and that it can be beneficial for this support to occur outside of the place of employment—whether that is an online space as in Urzúa and Asención-Delaney (2023) e-mentoring model for novice language teachers, a regional community of practice environment like Virginia’s Novice Teaching Academy (Hylton & Colley, 2022), or another offsite location such as Finland’s hybrid Peer Group Mentoring. Removing the novice teachers from their place of employment to interact with other novice teachers, with the guidance of an experienced facilitator, can remove power dynamics and hierarchical structures that might

occur in the workplace, leading to an increased sense of security when sharing experiences. These recent studies also signal a value in allowing for free conversation in the peer support group without imposing a strict agenda. This allows the novice teachers to raise topics that are relevant to them, thereby increasing opportunities for meaningful sociocultural learning among participants. And finally, I also note the theme of value in building a community of practice outside of the workplace, whether that means networking with other novice teachers within the same district or regionally, or connecting in-service teachers with pre-service teachers, to enhance possibilities for learning. Key elements of my study—that is, bringing together graduates of my teacher education program who work in different schools for monthly peer support group meetings outside their workplaces, allowing them to control the agenda and discuss freely what is on their minds relevant to their teaching practice, encouraging them to view this space as a safe environment where they can say anything without being judged, and in the end, returning to share what they have learned with a new group of pre-service teachers—build upon these ideas.

Conclusion

Novice teachers experience a “reality shock” due to conflict between their ideal vision of teaching versus the reality they face in the classroom (Veenman, 1984). I argue that this is because of tension due to conflict between various figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) the novice teacher has trouble processing, and which creates confusion in terms of their own identity and positioning in their new professional environment. They have had to incorporate new information and systems into their existing identities and modify their identities accordingly (Horn et al., 2008) while negotiating their identities and positioning in the figured worlds of education they encounter during their “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) as students,

during their teacher education program, during their student teaching, and during their professional careers. While they work internally to negotiate their positioning in these figured worlds, they are heavily influenced by authoritative discourses such as the “cultural myths” of teachers and teaching (Britzman, 1986), which often conflict with their internally persuasive discourses, leading to an ongoing dialogical relationship between these two discourses that Bakhtin (1981) referred to as “authoring the self.” Holland et al. (1998) consider this to be an important factor in identity development within figured worlds.

World language teachers have dilemmas involving discourses from different figured worlds that are particular to their field. One of these is dealing with the cultural myth of “the teacher is an expert” (Britzman, 1986), because unless the teacher is a perfectly balanced bilingual, which is exceedingly rare (Baker & Wright, 2017), the teacher cannot be an expert in both the language being taught, and the language of the students (Varghese, 2018). Another dilemma world language teachers often face is that of the lack of prestige afforded to world languages as an academic subject in schools (Crookes, 1997). This reality creates a tension with their own perception, based on the figured worlds they experienced as students during their “apprenticeship of observation,” and also during teacher education.

With all of these competing discourses, and new information and systems to be processed and negotiated into their existing identities so that they can understand their new figured world of education and position themselves in it, it is no wonder that novice teachers feel overwhelmed during their first year of professional practice. There has been considerable literature which has examined this period of a novice teacher’s career using the concept of “liminality,” (Turner, 1977; van Gennep, 1960), an anthropological phenomenon applied to rites of passage in which people transform from one state to another, with the liminal period being characterized by

negative symbols, darkness, being removed from society, and generally something to be feared. Some of these negative associations can certainly apply to novice teachers, for example spatial and social marginalization (Gao & Benson, 2012; Pierce, 2007), and trauma, similar to the violence of having to be stripped down to nothing so you can be built back up and emerge on the other side (Sinner, 2012). While liminality is often viewed in terms of its challenges, though, it is also sometimes viewed with optimism and possibility, as offering tremendous potential for reflection, growth, and transformation (Chang, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006; McCaw, 2021).

In order for liminality to afford this positive outcome, and based on the conclusions of Cook-Sather (2006) who felt that the liminal space created by her email support group created “liminal energies” and provided a space that was full of possibility, I would argue that a space needs to be created specifically for novice teachers to be able to transcend the negative aspects and associations of liminality, and exercise the agency needed in order to make this period a time of reflection, growth, and transformation. Third Space (Bhaba, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), conceived as an “inbetween space” for “translation and negotiation,” (Bhaba, 1990, p. 56), and with its potential for transformation, expanded learning, and development of new knowledge (Gutiérrez, 2008), seems to create possibilities for novice teachers to practice negotiating tensions between figured worlds, and between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses that are in conflict as they adjust to their new professional environment.

While it is not guaranteed that any space where teachers interact outside the traditional boundaries of the school will automatically qualify as a Third Space, my hope is that my novice World Language teacher support group achieved this. By creating an online support group that was separate from both the university and the schools where the participants taught, I believe that the participants had the experience of it being safe, non-evaluative, and away from the power

dynamics of their day-to-day work environments. As my findings show in Chapter Five, it provided them a safe ZPD for dialogism to occur, so that they could negotiate competing discourses and practice authoring the selves in their newly understood Figured Worlds. And ultimately, I believe that we did create a space with “liminal energy” (Cook-Sather, 2006) where transformative experiences could occur.

Chapter 3- Methodology

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the experiences of a small group of novice world language teachers from the same university teacher education program who meet as part of a teacher support group for recent program graduates. The experiences to be described and analyzed will include both those specifically related to participation in the support group, as well as the participants' discussions of their experiences as early-career teachers. The central question for this study, in order to follow the data wherever it leads, and attempt to remain "open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 137), is: What happens when a group of novice world language teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as part of a teacher support group? And my two subquestions specific to the experiences of novice teachers during their transition from student to teacher are: 1) What are novice world language teachers' experiences during the liminal period of transition from student to teacher; and 2) How do these experiences intersect with their professional identity development during this time?

Qualitative Research Approach

I chose a qualitative design for my study. Qualitative research lends itself to exploring the experiences of novice teachers, "because of its priority devoted to representing the views and perspectives of a study's participants" (Yin, 2016, p. 9). Specifically, the study was a case study, given that the novice teacher support group meetings were the primary subject of the research. This makes it a case with clear boundaries, delineated by specific participants and time (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which was limited to that required for data collection (see Figure 1 for timeline). It was also delineated by place given that the participants work in the same general

geographic area and were graduates of the same teacher education program at the university where I teach. To focus further, the case study was an *intrinsic case study* because “the focus is on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation...[t]his resembles the focus of narrative research, but the case study analytic procedures of a detailed description of the case, set within its context or surroundings, still hold true” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 99). While a common criticism of case studies is due their lack of generalizability due to their intensive focus on and analysis of singular unit (in this case, the particular group of novice teachers) bounded by space and time, others argue that case study research can lead to insights that influence policy, research, and procedures (Hancock et al., 2021; Yin, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

My role in the novice teacher support group meetings was that of participant-researcher. I served as a facilitator for the group, but allowed the group participants mostly to take the discussion wherever it would go. We did not have a set agenda at the meetings, and each participant was able to bring up any topic they would like. Given that my concept behind the group was centered more around peer support as opposed to mentoring from someone they may view as being in a position of authority, my goal was to direct the proceedings as little as possible. While I was not currently in a position of authority with them at the time of the support group meetings, having been in this position in the past I feared that it was possible that they might still see me using this lens.

We did, however, conduct one-on-one interviews at the midpoint of the study to assess participants’ satisfaction with this format. At that time, based on input from the participants, we made changes to the way the group operated which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Five. Because of this, and also based on an evolution of my own idea of the relationship between the

researcher and the researched due to a process of authorship of the self that occurred over the course of the study, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Six, I adjusted my approach and became a more vocal participant in the group.

There were several considerations that informed the way I approached my role as participant-researcher and facilitator of the support group throughout the study. First among these was respect for the emotional nature of the first years of teaching (Intrator, 2006), and how this might create intense or uncomfortable moments. Fox (2008) speaks of the importance of listening mindfully, moving beyond “polite correctness” and engaging in “mindful presence” which also causes us to be vulnerable with our participants (p. 344). Mindful listening was a large part of my participation in the group meetings, and just as Fox (2008) says, I think that a tone of polite correctness would not have been appropriate in my role given the intensity of the emotions the novice teachers were discussing in our sessions.

Also as group facilitator, while I did generally remain in the background as much as possible at meetings, I needed to consider group dynamics as part of my role. Norsworthy (2017) addresses the relationship between researchers and participants in her article, asking questions that it was important for me to consider continually at meetings, such as: “What are the dynamics among project participants? Whose voices are being heard? Whose are not? How do we bring in those on the margins?” (p. 1039). She also talks of the importance of “radical reflexivity,” which is a term that I appreciate and strived to embody in my work. She says that her project “illustrated the importance of a relationally based approach in which power is explicitly shared and collaborators exercise empowerment and authority over their own lives by moving in a direction that is most congruent for them” (pp. 1040-1041), and also that we must always “bring a humble mind...working from the assumption that we all will be learning from

one another” (p. 1041). In keeping with these goals for my study, in Chapter Five I explore the role the support group played in the teachers’ development of agency and reclaiming of control in situations where they had previously felt powerless. And as I detail in Chapters Five and Chapter Six, I believe that the teachers and I learned from each other through the experience of participating in this project.

Context/Setting of the Study

The participants in the study were four recent graduates, within the first year of their teaching practice, of the teacher education program where I had served as their university supervisor and instructor of the practicum seminar during their semester of student teaching. For the duration of the study, the participants were teaching in different public middle or high schools in southeast Pennsylvania, of varying size, socioeconomic situation, and level of diversity in the student and teaching population. Participation in the group was voluntary, and with all group meetings conducted virtually and outside of our places of employment as part of the goal of attempting to create Third Space. Because of the widespread locations of the participants, and out of respect for the limited time of the beginning teachers, all interactions between participants take place virtually: synchronously on Zoom and asynchronously via the WhatsApp messaging platform.

Study Participants

Each of the four participants in the study graduated completed their semester of student teaching the semester prior to beginning the study; that is, they finished student teaching in May, began their professional teaching positions in late August, and completed their first interview as part of this study in September. Ingersoll et al. (2021) characterizes today’s teaching force as both “greener” (i.e., less experienced), and more female. In 2017-2018 the average teacher was a

beginner in their first year, with 76.2% of all teachers being female—this is in contrast to the average teacher with fifteen years’ experience, 71.6% of whom were female in 1987-88 (Ingersoll et al., 2021). The teachers in my study reflect both the “greener” and “more female” demographics. All four participants were females in their early to mid-twenties, having just completed their undergraduate degrees from a mid-sized public university in southeast Pennsylvania. Three of the participants were White with English as their first language and Spanish as their second, and one was Mexican-American whose first language was Spanish and who was an English Language Learner (ELL) while a student in the public K-12 school system.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

Although the support group sessions were the main focus of the case study, I also conducted three individual interviews with each participant over the course of the study to find out about their individual experiences both as novice teachers in general, and also with the support group specifically (see Table 1 for data collection timetable, and Appendix A for interview protocols). These interviews allowed me to apply a critical bifocality lens (Weis & Fine, 2012) to participants, giving insights into their individual “big pictures” in addition to the close-up details observed in group settings. As an example, hearing about their educational backgrounds gave me insight into possible Figured Worlds of Education (Sydnor, 2014), and knowing about the structural context of the schools where they were teaching provided insight into issues they raised in the group sessions, and how they were negotiating their positionality in relation to these issues.

Interviews lasted for approximately one hour each, and were conducted via Zoom. The first interview occurred at the beginning of the school year prior to the first support group

Table 1*Data Collection Timetable*

Month	Action(s)
August	Speak to potential participants, confirm participation, gather consent forms Begin researcher reflective journal
September	First individual semi-structured interviews conducted (entry) Recorded any observations, recurring themes, etc., in researcher reflective journal (<i>monthly throughout study</i>)
October	Group meeting #1 via Zoom, 1-hour session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants elected at this meeting to use WhatsApp platform to communicate asynchronously between meetings
November	Group meeting #2 via Zoom, 1-hour session
December	Group meeting #3 via Zoom, 1-hour session
January	Second individual semi-structured interviews conducted (midpoint)
February	Group meeting #4 via Zoom, 1-hour session
March	Group meeting #5 via Zoom, 1-hour session
April	Panelist presentation and informal gathering Group meeting #6 via Zoom, 1-hour session
May	Third individual semi-structured interviews conducted (final)

meeting. I conducted subsequent interviews midway through the study to check in, and at the end to find out about their overall experiences. I used semi-structured interview protocols (Carspecken, 1996) (see Appendix A) with lists of topics to cover with each participant during the three interviews, along with questions prepared to elicit conversation, but my goal was to allow the participants to direct the conversation as much as possible in an attempt to maximize their voices and minimize my filter.

Researcher Reflective Journal

I kept my own reflective journal, based on my fieldnotes during and after group meetings and interviews, and also about the research process itself as it unfolded. Keeping detailed description and documentation of my thoughts and procedures as I worked through the research process helped to clarify my thinking, and provided an audit trail to enhance transparency of the methods I used to reach my conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jasper, 2005; Yin, 2016). This should add to what Yin (2016) refers to as the “methodic-ness” of the study, meaning that the researcher is careful, deliberate, and self-reflexive about his or her positioning in the process. There are references to my researcher reflective journal in the analysis found in Chapters Five and Six.

Video of Support Group Meetings and Panelist Presentation

The teacher support group meetings served as the main source of data collection. These occurred six times over the school year at one-month intervals (with one month off for mid-point interviews in January). These group meetings occurred over Zoom, and lasted for approximately one hour. These meetings were recorded and I wrote memos in my reflective researcher journal following each meeting. As part of my strategies for humanizing my research methods, I planned for co-production and power sharing with my participants where possible (Cohenmiller & Boivin, 2022). Participants had significant input into the structure of group meetings, as I describe in further detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Towards the end of the study, the participants spoke as a panel via Zoom to a group of then-current student teachers. This panel presentation was also recorded, along with an informal meeting with the participants following the presentation.

Participant Asynchronous Interaction

Participants had the opportunity to interact asynchronously between Zoom group meetings. As part of the power-sharing process, participants decided the format for this asynchronous communication, and had control over how often they used it and what they discussed there. At our first support group meeting, the group decided that they would like for this communication to occur via group chat using the WhatsApp messaging platform. In addition, at our third group meeting, the community decided that they would like to set up a shared Google folder where they could collaborate on teaching materials. While the participants did use these platforms to interact and collaborate, as discussed in Chapter Five, specific data from these sources was not analyzed as part of the findings for this study.

Data Analysis Procedures

I followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) 6-phase suggested method as a framework to conduct a thematic analysis of the data. Phase 1 of their method is to immerse yourself in the data, which began with the process of transcription. I uploaded audio recordings of the interviews and Zoom recordings to otter.ai for transcription, and edited these for accuracy. Braun and Clarke emphasize the importance of reading through the entire set of data at least once before beginning the coding process, “as ideas and identification of possible patterns will be shaped as you read through” (p. 87). As I edited the transcripts and read through them, I took extensive notes in my researcher reflective journal. I invested a lot of time in this process, taking notes manually in the margins of the transcripts and also electronically in my researcher reflective journal (see Figure 1 for an example of these).

Figure 1

Excerpt from Researcher Reflective Journal with Notes During Editing of Transcriptions

October Meeting-Preliminary themes emerging:

- Discourse conflict of what is good teaching? Lots of material here as they try to sort this out, they are having lots of conflicting ideas here, lots of conflicting input and voices
 - Issue where teachers are longing for collaboration but teachers with whom they might collaborate do things differently, in ways they do not agree with
 - Administrators having a different vision and trying to assert it onto their teaching
 - Trying to figure out the correct use of English, there is some conflict here, administrators want them to use it a lot, they have been taught that they should not use it much at all (ACTFL guidelines), but then they talk about the cultural lessons where they feel like it is appropriate (IPD)
 - Plan plan plan, stress stress vs. winging it in the moment and having it work great, relating with the kids, playing around- 'hard to let go of that perfection piece"- wanting to be perfect
 - Professional distance vs. relationship building with the kids- being an "adult" vs. bonding with them, "us vs them" kind of thing
- Emerging identities, authoring of the self occurring through dialogue in this meeting space
 - Selena as a Mexican American finding that she is not represented in the Spanish curriculum and is taking steps to change this, talks through this issue in a supportive space and talks about how she is using this as an educational opportunity for her students

Additionally, before beginning the coding process, I watched the Zoom video recordings and added to my researcher reflective journal, continuing to immerse myself in the data with the goal of using a top-down approach to get a holistic overview prior to diving into the analysis (Erickson, 2004). This allowed me to observe the meetings in a new way, since I participated in them in real time. From this point, I was ready to proceed to Phase 2 of the analysis, which was

generating initial codes. I performed manual coding of transcripts and my researcher reflective journal, using *in vivo* and descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2009). I continued memoing throughout the analysis process, as part of the reflective journaling described earlier, in order to chronicle my thinking as it evolved (Watt, 2007).

Phase 3 according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is searching for themes among the codes. They suggest using visual representations such as tables and/or maps to begin grouping like codes together and searching for overarching themes. After performing multiple passes through the data to combine like codes, I made a table to begin identifying preliminary themes that grouped similar codes together (see Table 2). I included quotes from the data to make sure that the data seemed relevant and came from a variety of sources, for purposes of data crystallization (Tracy, 2010) as I describe in the section on strategies for validating findings. As I was working through these themes, I used visual mapping to combine themes from the table (see Figure 2 for an example).

Phase 4 is to review and refine themes until the point where you are ready to return to the data set both to “ascertain whether the themes ‘work’ in relation to the data set...[and] to code any additional data within themes that has been missed in earlier coding stages” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Phases 3 and 4 demonstrated the recursive, rather than linear process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as I found myself returning to tables and other visual representations to organize my thinking throughout the analysis process.

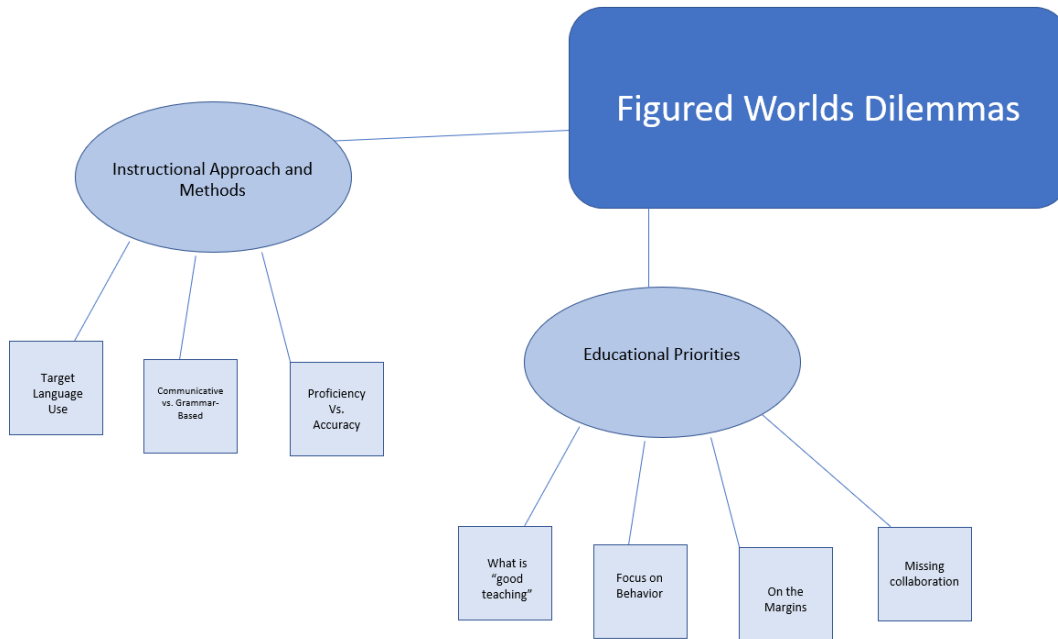
Table 2

Preliminary Themes

Possible Theme and Example Codes	Data Source	Quotes
Figured Worlds: World Language Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devaluing World Languages Not a Part of the Team Teaching Methods Theory vs. Practice Target Language 	October Meeting, Selena	"But what I'm saying is that, like, here...it's very, like even the principal and the superintendent have said 'Oh, you guys should put translations on like, you know, all your things. There should be English. Like, you know, learning a foreign language has been difficult for a lot of these students.' And I was like, Yes, but that is not the way...English, English English."
	Interview 2, Bridget	"To me, like I, and I don't want to sound like elitist or like, I'm better than gym or, but like, it does, like, feel that way. I'm like, I mean, and it's because we are expected to operate like we are a core class, I have to give quizzes and tests and projects, and participation points and homework and all of that, like I'm supposed to operate at like, like a, like one of the core classes. But like they don't take it, like, seriously though, because that's how it feels to me and the other foreign language teachers. That's how it feels to us. It's like, how can we like, we're, supposed to treat this like a core class, but they're not treating us like one. The kids aren't, and the admin. Like, if you wanted us to, like, I don't know, I just feel like they have such these high expectations and like, there's no way that we could meet them unless we had the kids every day. And it was like we were considered like a real class."
	Interview 1, Kenzie	"I think I'll back it up with the evidence I learned in school. And I'll say, this, this is a theory, you know, this one theory, or this is getting the kids involved and that they, like I said, they enjoy it, they will remember it, I want the kids up and moving around, there's... times change, like, and I don't want them to sit there and translate. I want them to really get like comprehensible input. Let's do a fun picture. Let's let's, you know, there's just so many things that I could, I will just back it up with everything I learned and, and I can keep, you know, evidence, I can say, Well, look, it might have been a goofy fun social media project to you, but look at their their amazing results, look what they produce on their own, and look at how it actually showed me that they can use the language. Rather than just translating something on a piece of paper, they're actually engaging in it, like, look at their performance, just, I don't know, just stuff like that. I wouldn't fight with them, I would just, I will respect their point. But just say, you know, this is my style. That's why I always highlight the way that I did my demo lesson is how I would teach. You know what I mean? And they clearly liked it."
Unexpected Teaching Conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Collaboration Teaching Conditions Unhelpful Colleagues Unhelpful Administration Traveling Teacher Student Behavior 	Interview 2, Kenzie	"I mean, I went to a really good high school, you know, there was bad kids here and there. But it was never disrespect. It was just like being goofy like saying, you know, saying something once in class that was goofy, but nothing rude towards the teacher, not disrespectful, not being defiant. So it's very different like this. Here I see disrespect. And there I just saw like immature kids, but not disrespect. So that's the difference. [Here] Some kids say to me fuck you. I had some kids say this is my phone, you're not taking it...Like if we're doing a white board game, they'll write this is stupid, and they'll hold it up. They will make a phone call in the middle of my class. The list goes on and on. It's just, it's insane. It's insane."
	Interview 2, Selena	"...I still miss that teacher collaboration. I still feel like I really need that at work. It's hard to do that, because I'm between two schools. And then the teachers at the school that I end with, for example, at the end of the day, I mean, they all go home right away, and they have things going on. So sometimes it's just me after school, really, at all, like, it'll be like 3:10 and I'm like, the only language teacher there...And when they ask like, you know, somebody like, Hey, could you say after a couple minutes, but sometimes I feel a little like guilty asking if I should ask that because I don't want to, you know, keep them away from whatever they have going on. But I feel like teacher collaboration is something I miss."
	Interview 2, Regina	"Something that has surprised me--definitely, this is a sort of a negative one. But I mentioned earlier, about the pencils. Sometimes, I am surprised by the lack of, I guess, preparation sometimes. And or just the fact that there are some days where I really sit down with myself. And I feel like, Can I really teach these kids Spanish, if they're not doing these basic things like coming to school with their laptops charged? And bringing pencils. And it's not just like one or two in every class? It's too many, like, at least five or six in every class that do this constantly. And that has been a big shock, because I did not, I just did not expect that at all. "
IPD Self Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress vs. Mental Health Letting go Hard to ask for help Setting Boundaries Perspective Not enough time in the day 	October meeting- Selena	"But I feel like I'm also really working on not normalizing being super, super stressed and being always like, plan, plan, plan. Like I'm really trying to figure out how to not normalize this like, like that they, that, I've heard a lot of teachers say like oh, like, your first year is gonna be horrible... And I'm like, don't say that, like, no, it'll be fine. It's gonna be fine."
	October meeting- Bridget	"Yeah, it's, it's, I feel like I want to be at that mentality where I can, like, just not have my whole life revolving around planning all the time. But I definitely guilty of putting too much pressure on myself to do that all the time, and to constantly be planning and to make sure everything's perfect... And I feel like I just, I, that's my, that's probably my biggest thing is just like, I feel like I spend all of my time planning, like, constantly, and just trying to keep up with it all. And then, you know, I know that it's supposed to get better after the first year, but like, every time every day, I come home, and I'm just like, Okay, I'm gonna lay on the couch for 15 minutes, and then I'm gonna plan I'm gonna, I'm gonna get ready and see what I can do. Because there's really not, there's really not enough time in the day. Like, I don't know how your schedules are, I have one prep period. But that's like after teaching the same thing, three periods in a row. And then I'm like, brain dead, and I can't do anything. So I don't know, just time management, and like, putting too much pressure on myself for things to be perfect has been difficult for me."
	November meeting- Regina	"I think too...and I don't always take my own advice, but just something that I'm happy when I do do it...but just like even if it's 15 minutes of whatever it is, like just doing something for you that makes you happy. Like, for me right now it's making my scrapbook from Disney World you know, and I didn't do that yesterday, and I was so upset because I needed it yesterday. And it's hard, like, when you have that bad day. It's almost like I reward myself when I have a good day by doing the things I love, but I'm trying to, like, teach myself too to like, okay, even when I have a bad day, I deserve to do something I love and just do that for yourself as much as you can. And like I said, I'm no one that's like perfect at it, but I believe that it is a good thing, it's a healthy thing, and when I do do that on my bad days, on my good days I do feel better for it."

Figure 2

Thematic Map Refining Preliminary Themes from Initial Table



Phase 5 is the final review of the dataset along with finalizing the refined list of themes and corresponding codes. For the previous phases, I had not been focusing on the way these would appear in my chapters, but in phase 5 I began doing this. I also began considering more closely my theoretical framework and research questions when making decisions about themes to include or omit. And finally, after I felt as though I had reached a point of data saturation where further analysis would yield no benefit, I was ready to proceed to phase 6 of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) framework which was to write the research narrative.

Strategies for validating findings, trustworthiness, and assessing quality

In order to address the question of quality in my study, I turn to Tracy (2010) and the “big tent” criteria for quality in qualitative research that she lays out. First, she posits that the

topic must be a worthy one, meaning that it is “relevant, timely, significant, or evocative” (p. 840). I do believe that my topic is a worthy one, given the teacher shortage and retention crisis mentioned in my introduction, and on a personal level, given my sincere desire to support the graduates of my teacher education program. As for rich rigor, which is her second criterion, I hope that by carefully and thoughtfully applying the methods I have learned throughout my doctoral program, under the watchful eye of my committee, that I will pass this test as well. For sincerity, Tracy indicates the importance of self-reflexivity of the researcher, and also transparency about the methods and challenges. I hope that my positionality reflections and researcher reflective journal satisfy this criterion.

Continuing with Tracy’s (2010) list of criteria, credibility is something I hoped to achieve through crystallization of data sources, that is, gathering multiple types of data and employing multiple methods, although “the goal of doing so is not to provide researchers with a more valid singular truth, but to open up a more complex, in-dept, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Meaningful coherence was something I strived for throughout the analysis process, considering my research questions and keeping them in mind as I examined my data. Tracy’s final criteria are resonance and credibility in the final writeup. While I cannot comment on that myself, it is my hope that the importance with which I regard the topic of novice teacher support and identity development, and my sincere desire to support my past, current, and future students as they begin their teaching careers, is evident.

In addition to applying Tracy’s (2010) “big tent” criteria for quality, given that I used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) framework for thematic analysis, I would be remiss not to apply the Braun and Clarke (2021) guidelines for quality in thematic analysis as well. While this is mainly a detailed checklist with description of things not to do, for example, “problem seven: confusing

codes and themes” (pp. 13-14), and “problem eight: confusing themes and topics,” (p. 14), this article is a valuable source for this method of qualitative analysis and one I referred to regularly in my work.

To conclude this section, Figure 3 provides an overall summary of the study design, including research questions, data sources, analysis approaches, and strategies for validating findings.

Figure 3

Data Sources and Analysis Approaches

Research Questions	Data Sources	Data Analysis Approaches
<p><u>Central Question:</u> What happens when a group of novice world language teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as part of a teacher support group?</p> <p><u>Subquestions:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are novice teachers’ experiences during the liminal period of transition from student to teacher? 2) How do these experiences intersect with their professional identity development during this time? 3) In what way will the novice teachers’ experiences during the study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator? 	<p>Transcripts of Zoom meetings edited in Otter.ai</p> <p>One-on-one semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Researcher reflective journal</p> <p>Participant interaction in asynchronous spaces determined collaboratively (WhatsApp, Google Drive)</p>	<p>Thematic analysis of data using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) 6-phase suggested method as framework</p> <p>Reading and memoing of transcripts, fieldnotes, and reflections for emergent ideas. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018)</p> <p>Narrative discussion of findings and interpretation from data analysis, including dialogue for support (Creswell & Poth, 2018)</p> <p>Crystallization of data sources for validity (Tracy, 2010)</p>

Potential Ethical Issues

Given the sensitive topics that were certain to arise as novice teachers discuss issues they were facing as they transitioned from student to professional and negotiated a new work environment, it was important to protect them from any negative repercussions due to stories they might tell. Therefore, it was crucial that privacy be maintained throughout the study, and that I was sensitive to this when writing my research report. Pseudonyms were used for each

teacher, and place names were either fictionalized or purposely nonspecific in order to protect identity throughout the findings. I also was selective when choosing which data to include in my findings, in an attempt to omit stories that might be uniquely identifiable to outside parties.

Another important issue is that of preserving participants' voices in the narrative research. Cortazzi and Jin (2009) caution against a research story that becomes an interpretation for outsiders, or a researcher "imposed version" (p. 29). They compare this to translation from one language to another, and how the original meaning can be lost in the process. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) address this issue by saying that using extensive quotes and the participant's actual language can help with this, along with paying careful attention to the setting and details of context. Constant reflexivity regarding my positionality was important in this regard as well, to ensure that I was representing my participants' experiences as novice teachers accurately and not through the lens of my own experience.

And finally, regarding language, Fine and Torre (2021) instruct us as researchers to ask ourselves: "How are we describing ourselves and the people and communities with whom we are collaborating? Have we removed deficit, damaging, and condescending language?" (p. 39). Therefore, it was important that I was cautious not to revert to the same kinds of deficit-centered discourses regarding teachers and teaching that I am trying to call attention to and disempower through supporting and empowering novice teachers as they begin their careers.

Structuring the Findings

In this chapter I have reviewed my research questions, provided context to situate this study in time and place, and have detailed my data collection sources and analysis procedures. As indicated in my purpose statement, the experiences to be described and analyzed in this study

will include both those specifically related to participation in the support group, as well as the participants' discussions of their experiences as early-career teachers.

Chapter Four focuses on the first half of the year, and is a thematic analysis of the teachers' experiences as novice teachers based on the issues they raised both in the support group meetings and one-on-one interviews. This chapter will address two of my research subquestions: 1) What are novice world language teachers' experiences during the liminal period of transition from student to teacher?; and 2) How do these experiences intersect with their professional identity development during this time?

Chapter Five focuses on the second half of the year, and is devoted to the experiences within the support group itself. This chapter responds to my primary research question: What happens when a group of novice world language teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as part of a teacher support group?

In Chapter Six I explore my own experience with the group, and in so doing I respond to my third research subquestion: In what ways will the novice teachers' experiences during this study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator? In this chapter I also examine the experiences of the teachers as they ended their time as participants in our support group. And finally, I conclude with my final thoughts on the project, and address this study's possible implications for future practice.

Chapter 4- Fall: Reality Shock

For those who may like to skip to the last page of a story to assure themselves of a happy ending before getting through the hard parts, I will say at the beginning that all of the novice teachers who participated in my study remained in the teaching profession for a second year. I will also say that I believe that the space we created in our monthly group provided them with support and resources that they did not get elsewhere, and that it played a positive role in their professional identity development and allowed opportunities for authorship of the self that they might not otherwise have had. I will talk about that further in Chapter 5. But before I begin a discussion of the functioning of the group, I think it is important to explore two of my research subquestions: 1) What are novice world language teachers' experiences during the liminal period of transition from student to teacher?; and 2) How do these experiences intersect with their professional identity development during this time?

In Chapter Two, I posited the argument that the reality shock described in literature by (Veenman, 1984) that is experienced by early career teachers may be caused by a sudden and jarring conflict between various figured worlds that the novice teacher has trouble processing, and which creates confusion in terms of their own identity and positioning in their new environment. In this chapter, I will share the stories of my participants that illustrate this actually happening. I will describe some of the characteristics of their new figured world of education that they must come to terms with during the fall semester of our study, along with the conflicts they face from prior figured worlds along the way. These will set up some of the internally persuasive discourses that begin to emerge as they begin the process of authorship of the self in their journey of professional identity development over this first year of professional practice, that I will discuss further in Chapter Five.

Characteristics of the Figured Worlds Dilemma

Conflicting Messages on Instructional Approach and Methods

The novice teachers in this study all emerged from teacher education with deeply ingrained ideas of what is involved in effective world language education. Some of these principles include the American Council for Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) guidelines of 90% use of target language in instruction, high-leverage teaching practices such as extensive use of comprehensible input, with an emphasis on communicative proficiency over grammatical accuracy, contextualized thematic units versus grammar-based instruction, recycling of material that has already been learned so that students are constantly practicing it to enhance their proficiency, and many opportunities for students to practice using the target language in class so as to gain communicative competence as opposed to more traditional teacher-centered grammar instruction with repetitive mechanical exercises, often in the form of written worksheets where students fill in blanks with vocabulary words, or conjugate verbs. When I supervise student teachers, sometimes I run into the situation where their mentor teachers teach with more of a traditional style, involving the dreaded grammar instruction in English with a “plug and chug” worksheet to follow, where the students learn how to conjugate verbs but would not be able to carry on a conversation in the target language after a full year of such instruction. This is something we work around during student teaching, but when novice teachers find themselves in a department where this is the norm and they are the outlier, it can create a major reality shock situation for them where they find themselves suddenly alone. Unfortunately, this was a common situation with the participants in this study.

Teaching Methods: Kenzie's Story

In Kenzie's initial one-on-one interview at the beginning of the school year, she was excited to employ the methods she had learned in teacher education, but she expressed early doubts about being able to uphold the 90% target language utilization goal that had been held up as the gold standard given what she was encountering in her new teaching environment:

I'm looking forward to speaking in the target language, at least 80%. Now, the reason I say that is because when I came in for my demo, all the students said to me, Oh, this is the most Spanish we've heard all year. And so that shows me that the teachers there probably are talking English a lot, obviously. So I think it's going to be something new to them, and just from what I heard, they want to encourage that more. So I'm excited to really bring that acquire, learn, or acquire language, and how you do comprehensible input and speak in the target language. So really doing those things that I learned in college, and implementing them in my classroom. And I think it's gonna be something new for the kids there. Because I don't think they were used to that. But that's what you need. That's how you have to teach a language, you have to immerse them in it as much as you can. So bringing that new side of teaching a language to them, I think, is really beneficial. And so many teachers I was talking to, and again, everyone has their own thing—free will, free choice, do whatever you want—as you teach. But so many of the teachers, they were saying to me, oh, here, just you can do a translation page, or just try and have them translate from English to Spanish, Spanish English. And I was thinking to myself, that's not good, translations are not super good to do. Instead, let's do a picture. You know how we always said that. And so there's just so many things that I know are better to do, I think, to help them learn the language. So I can't wait to bring a new flavor

in the school. And I'm younger than all of them like I said, so kind of like a new way of doing things I guess? I don't know. Maybe they didn't learn stuff like that when they... and they're a lot older than me. So I just think it's like a new young face coming in full of energy, bringing in that new dynamic.

Later in the semester, at the November group meeting, she expressed much more frustration about not being able to teach in the target language as much as she would like:

When I first started in this school, I obviously slipped. I obviously spoke in at least 90% in the target language like you're supposed to. And let me tell you, these kids don't even know how to say "my name is." And I'm teaching Spanish two and Spanish three. My Spanish two knows way more than my Spanish three. And it is a shame. And it makes me think, what were you guys being taught these past couple years? And I remember when I did my demo lesson, they said to me that that was the most Spanish they've heard all year. And so it was such a drastic change. I mean, it still is because I did you know my student teaching at Garden High School, and they're all Hispanic there, so it was so perfect to speak Spanish at a place with such diversity. And now here it's very white dominated, which is fine. But I expected so much more though out of Spanish three, which is a high level, and they don't even know how to say my name is. So that's been a real challenge with me, just getting them to talk. And if anything in Spanish, they don't know anything. So I don't know what to do. That's been a real struggle of mine. It's very frustrating because I love teaching in Spanish. That's how you're supposed to do it. But I can't do that when they don't know anything. It's just so odd at a Spanish three level, it's very confusing to me. So I don't know what exactly to do. I shouldn't have to hold their

hands in Spanish three and tell them how to say “hi.” And “my name is.” It's just a shame. And it makes me wonder what happened *el año pasado*.

Here Kenzie refers back not just to her teacher education methodology training, but also to her previous figured world of education based on her student teaching experience at a high school with a large Hispanic population, where students were more accustomed in general to hearing Spanish in the community. When she finds herself in a school district that is predominantly White, where the teachers rely on a more traditional grammar-based teaching methodology and the target language is not used frequently in instruction, it creates a jarring conflict for her.

Teaching Methods: Selena's Story

Selena also teaches in a school district that is predominantly White, which is a sharp departure from her educational background as a Mexican American who came through the U.S. educational system as an English Language Learner in a local school district with a large population of Hispanic students whose first language is Spanish. Similar to Kenzie, she talks about how her students are not used to using the target language in class, and even says that the administrators at her school encourage World Language teachers to use English in their teaching, saying “even the principal and the superintendent have said like, ‘Oh, you guys should put translations on all your things. There should be English. Learning a foreign language has been difficult for a lot of these students.’” She feels like this over-reliance on English is not the only reason the students are not able to use the target language proficiently, though, and often discusses at group meetings how colleagues in her department use teaching methods that she thinks do not lead to effective language acquisition. She complains that they rush through material, focus heavily on grammar, and are not concerned about students actually attaining linguistic proficiency but rather just checking boxes on their list of grammatical topics to cover.

Here she contrasts what she might do to teach the present progressive tense versus what her colleagues' approach:

...the teachers, they just go so fast. It's one thing after another thing, and I'm like, but did your students understand it? No, everyone failed. Well, aren't you gonna maybe go back and maybe don't test it this time? How did you teach it? Oh, I gave them a packet. Okay, well, what did you do? Did you show them a video? No? And they didn't do...nothing. I don't know. Like, for example, present progressive. They were like, yeah, we did packets, I finished in a week. I'm like, okay, for Spanish two, because they were supposed to already know it from Spanish one, which they didn't. So they didn't do well in her class for one week of Spanish progressive. I took two weeks in Spanish progressive, but I didn't do this intense work. You know, this is a preview. And I used Disney Princesses because they do chores. I focus it on chores, vocab, verbs. And I use present progressive. I use Disney Princesses because they know Disney princesses. So they understood. They're like, Oh, *Cinderella está lavando* this. *Está limpiando* this. And so then we were talking about what you do, right? And she was like, Oh, my God, that's such a great idea. And I'm like, Yeah. And I was like, and she's been teaching here. 30 years, something? Yeah. Has she been doing packets all her life like this?

Selena shows here how she contextualizes her language instruction, using vocabulary and situations that are relevant to the students, and takes her time with the material so that the students have ample opportunity to engage with and practice the new topics in order to achieve proficiency. This is squarely within the parameters of the teacher education figured world of world language education. Seeing her colleagues teach the same topic, the present progressive tense, by simply giving an explanation of how it works mechanically and then providing

exercises in a packet, and then moving on to the next topic after a week, creates a dilemma, especially as she advances through the semester and continually finds herself lagging behind her colleagues time-wise in terms of progressing through material:

I stopped asking teachers because every time they would tell me I would be so far behind. So I think right now I started preterite with Spanish two. Which again is so different, because preterite wasn't even anything I taught in Spanish two at [my student teaching placement]. We taught that in May, for three weeks at the beginning of May. And that was because that was for Spanish three or something like that. Right now I'm teaching Spanish two without them being 100% on even the present tense. And so I'm like, I have to teach these kids preterite. I'm just doing it because these teachers have already done preterite in the beginning of December. And I just started right now. But I essentially feel fine with the kids where I'm at. No one's rushed. Do they still need more practice with present tense? Yes. But they're okay. Are they getting preterite? Yeah, they're getting preterite. They won't be 100% by the end of the unit, but they'll understand. So I feel like as long as they have an understanding of these things. It's Spanish two, they're in high school. I'm just trying to do the best I can at this point. Because like I said, I'd be like, "What are you guys doing?" And they'd be like, "Oh, we just finished preterite." And it was December 2. And I was like, "Okay. We're gonna do a project next week, and then that's gonna be it." And I'm like, oh, okay, so you're, you're gonna finish soon? And I haven't, I haven't started. Yeah.

All four of the study participants share similar stories of their colleagues teaching differently, with everyone sharing a laugh about it at the October meeting when Selena said:

I feel like there's been a lot of times where I stop and think and I'm like, wait, I didn't learn to do this. At college we were taught to do this, not that, like, why are the kids just writing? They're like, write the vocab word in Spanish, then write it in English, then write it in Spanish again. And then I'm like, "What's the point?" It's like, you want to collaborate, but then you hear what they're doing? And then you're like, okay, thanks [rolling eyes].

The novice teachers feel like their methods are more effective, but it is difficult to be alone in their thinking in their new figured world.

Conflicting Messages on Educational Priorities

In my experience, novice teachers generally enter the field excited about their chosen profession. They have chosen to teach world languages because something in their educational or personal backgrounds inspired them, whether it was a teacher from their K-12 experience or college, an experience abroad, or because they want to share their own language and culture with students. And their goals for teaching tend to center around building relationships with the students, and inspiring them to be excited about learning about another culture and communicating in the target language. The figured world of world language teacher education encourages this. In particular, the teacher education program these novice teachers have in common uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching which emphasizes the importance of relationship building with students, differentiated instruction, and student-centered learning experiences (Danielson, 2013), alongside second language acquisition theory and ACTFL's World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (*ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, n.d.). Not only does teacher education encourage the aspiring teachers to be excited about their chosen profession, but also, they tend to feel like these goals of building

relationships with students and teaching them about a new language and culture further important work in an increasingly globalized world. In other words, world language education matters, and they will make a difference as teachers.

Success and Student Learning: Regina's Story

The participants in this study showed that their goals aligned with these principles going into their professional careers in discussing some of their objectives for the school year. For example, Regina said that a sign of success for her would be:

...at the end of the year when my students show me what they know, and that doesn't mean a grade on a test. What can they communicate in Spanish? What have they learned about the Spanish speaking world? Another thing is just fostering an appreciation for the language and for different cultures from the Spanish speaking world. I feel successful if they learn things about it, and do appreciate it as well. And are convinced that this is meaningful. And this had a purpose that we did this. And, yeah, if they can hold a conversation with me in Spanish, and tell me about their day. And we're not going to talk about the past, but if they can tell me about what they're doing and what they're going to do, well, yeah, I'd be pretty happy.

Note that her goals are related to student communication (having a conversation with her in Spanish), relationship building (telling her about their day), and “fostering an appreciation for the language and for different cultures from the Spanish speaking world,” and that she specifically mentions that she prioritizes these objectives over quantifiable measurements such as “a grade on a test.”

Once the novice teachers exit the protective bubble of teacher education and enter the new figured world of professional teaching, though, they begin to encounter conflicting

messages about educational priorities. As described in the previous section on teaching methodology, this can arise in the form of colleagues in the language department who prioritize different learning objectives: for example, mechanical accuracy over communicative proficiency. But on a larger scale, and possibly even more upsetting, there is messaging from administrators, students, parents, and faculty in other subject areas that conflicts with the novice teachers' taken-for-granted notion that world language education is important, and that the work they are doing is both valuable and valued by others. In this section, I will share stories of the individual participants, and how their experiences in their new environments demonstrate this happening.

Unexpected Behavior, Unexpected Reactions: Regina and Kenzie's Stories

To reiterate an important point about figured worlds, a key characteristic of them is that they are socially reproduced, and are “peopled by the figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 51). In schools, a major contributor to the body of characters who carry out the tasks therein are the students. And if the students do not act the way the novice teachers expect them to based on their experience in previous figured worlds of education, it will create a conflict that they must try to negotiate.

Regina, who I generally found to be the most optimistic of the four participants, was bothered by this kind of figured worlds conflict during the fall semester as she settled into her new job. She gave some specific examples of student behavior that surprised her, which began with what she said at first seemed like a small thing—the students were not bringing pencils to class:

Something that has surprised me, definitely, this is a sort of a negative one. But I mentioned earlier, about the pencils. I am surprised by the lack of preparation sometimes.

And there are some days where I really sit down with myself, and I feel like, can I really teach these kids Spanish if they're not doing these basic things like coming to school with their laptops charged? And bringing pencils? And it's not just one or two in every class. It's too many, at least five or six in every class that do this constantly. And that has been a big shock, because I just did not expect that at all. And it's a different environment at my student teaching placement. Like, I didn't see that there, and I was also teaching different classes. But yeah, that's been a shock, just the lack of preparedness. And sometimes I just wonder what's going on, you know? Because they surprise me this... I don't mean it in a mean way. But they surprise me with their lack of awareness, or their, I don't know, they don't fully think about things. Like I gave the midterm, the first part of the midterm was reading and writing. And I had two kids that didn't even touch the reading. They didn't answer thirteen multiple choice. And that, to me, is so surprising. I don't know what to call that. But things like that, that students do, I just never expected.

Regina has always been a good student herself, and in the figured world of education based on her “apprenticeship of observation” as a student (Lortie, 1975), students come to class prepared with basic materials, and comply with minimal expectations such as attempting to answer all of the questions on a test. Her experience in student teaching reinforced her original figured world, because the students there acted the same way. Therefore, encountering unprepared students acting in a new and unexpected way created a dilemma for her. It disturbed her so much at times that she found herself thinking:

I don't know what to do about that or where to go. Because sometimes I just find that it's such a big problem. And then that's where I started thinking, oh my gosh, are they going to learn Spanish? How are they even...how am I even teaching Spanish when they can't

do these basic things? And I start thinking more broadly. And then I'm like, oh my God, I can't think about this. I need to plan tomorrow's lesson.

Although Regina entered the profession convinced that world language education was important and valuable work, the students' behavior of not coming to class prepared, and not completing basic tasks, is sending the message that they do not share this idea.

Kenzie also experiences student behavior that does not align with her expectations based on her prior figured world of education. At the first group meeting, she told the other participants about a student that day who had cursed at her in front of the class, which had really shocked her. She said that this was not the first example, though, of students treating her in ways she never would have expected. Expanding on that, she signaled the figured worlds conflict she was encountering based on her own experience as a student:

I mean, I went to a really good high school, you know, there [were] bad kids here and there. But it was never disrespect. It was just being goofy like saying something once in class that was goofy, but nothing rude towards the teacher, not disrespectful, not being defiant. So it's very different like this. Here I see disrespect. And when I was a student, I just saw immature kids, but not disrespect. That's the difference. Here kids say to me "fuck you." I had some kids say "this is my phone, you're not taking it." They write on the board. If we're doing a white board game they'll write "this is stupid," and they'll hold it up. They will make a phone call in the middle of my class. The list goes on and on. It's just, it's insane. It's insane.

As the semester went on, this conflict became all-consuming to Kenzie. She had trouble positioning her teacher identity in this figured world, with the students acting in this unexpected way. She felt confident in her teaching methods, but was having trouble applying them in this

environment. When she talked about mentor teacher, she said that they had a very good relationship, but the only thing they discussed was student behavior issues.

To complicate matters further, Kenzie found that the administration at her school was not acting in a way that she expected. Kenzie began talking about this at the November group meeting:

...everything you learned in college, some of it is like, we had a really fun experience, super bright, positive. But the real world and the teaching, it's like, I had no idea it was this political. I had no clue it existed. And it's a hard reality. It's kind of sad.

At that time, her main complaint was that administrators were not supporting teachers enough and assigning consequences for disrespectful behavior in the classroom. By January, though, the situation had deteriorated further. She described a faculty meeting where administrators had berated the teachers for the number of referrals they had been sending to the office:

But in this meeting today, he showed the number of referrals that were put in so far. He showed standardized testing results and stuff like that. And he was very direct, but indirect—nothing specifically said to anyone, but he was definitely coming at some people in like a slick kind of way. He said something like, “There's 317 referrals in here. And I think you know exactly what I'm thinking.” I forget what he said exactly, but my one friend, she's been there for 30 years, she stormed out of there bawling her eyes out. She felt so personally attacked. I mean, it's true. And after quarterlies we had the option, the admin told us to send kids down who are failing to do remediation work. But at the meeting we had, he said there's 123 kids down there that said a lot of itself. So kind of doing jabs here and there that says this is all on you guys. You had to be there...He

definitely was saying things that were like, these are the results of your teachings. It's a slap on the wrist.

The figured world of education into which Kenzie has entered as a novice teacher is one that aligns with Britzman's (1986) cultural myths which I explored in Chapter Two; specifically, the myth of "everything depends on the teacher." Britzman's study found that these myths minimize the role that the institution and society plays in a teacher's success or failure, thus allowing for victim-blaming, and leading to teachers reproducing rather than challenging their institutional biography if they do not examine and reflect critically upon the role these cultural myths may play in their professional environment. At Kenzie's school, it seems that the administrators are blaming the teachers for the students' behavior, and also for seeking support from administrators. Based on the messaging at this faculty meeting, the faculty is expected to handle situations themselves, and if they are unable to do so, it is problematic because either a) they were unable to control the student to begin with, or b) they were unable to handle the situation without administrative support.

Similar to Regina, Kenzie is faced with a situation in her new figured world of education where world language education is not valued the same way she is accustomed to from her experience in the figured world of teacher education. Significant characters in the new figured world, such as students and administrators, do not act in expected ways, and the novice teachers must negotiate how to position themselves to establish their professional identities and how to adjust their expectations given this "reality shock" (Veenman, 1984). Unfortunately, in Kenzie's case, by January this leads to her feeling miserable on the job: "my light has definitely dimmed...And I'm always looking forward to the weekend. I can't wait to get out and get off of work."

Not a Part of the Team: Bridget's Story

Bridget had a unique situation in terms of her figured worlds adjustment, because her first teaching position was at the middle school she attended as a student. On one hand, it might seem like this would make things easier given the familiarity of the environment. However, many things had changed since she was there as a student, and her positioning as a teacher made the familiar seem quite unfamiliar. Her description of her experience often evoked similar themes to McCaw's (2021) study on liminality, in which new teachers suddenly found themselves feeling like a stranger as a teacher in a place where they had already spent a large part of their lives as a student. In particular, she feels strange about returning to a school where she did not have a positive experience as a student, as she describes when talking about what it's like to work with people who used to be her teachers:

With some of them, it's weird. With others, it's just kind of funny. Like with my basketball coach, it's kind of weird, because I don't have great memories of him as a coach, so it's weird seeing him again. And in some ways, I feel like I've gone back in time. I'm like, I can't believe I ended up here at the place where I swore off for the rest of my life. I will never go here again. This is where I was the most miserable that I ever was. But that was also an incentive for me to go back here. And to try and make it a better place. And because I had really bad experiences there. And I hit a very low point in my life, and I know how hard it is to be at that age, 13-14 years old. It's not easy. And so I wanted to, on the social emotional side of it all, be a positive, trusting, uplifting adult for them, because there were people there when I was there who are still there now that were not like that. But it's weird. It's definitely making me feel some type of way. Yeah, it's really weird, because I don't know, it's like it pulls at your emotions a little bit. I feel

like I'm emotionally invested into this now. Whereas if I was at a different school, that I had no ties to, I wouldn't be feeling this way. But I feel like a moral obligation to try and actually change things and make it good for these kids.

Something that is particularly jarring to her, though, is the way world language education has changed in the school since she was a student there. The first indicator she has of this change is when she finds out her schedule for the school year, which she did not know until after she started the job:

My first week there. I was looking on Power School. And I saw 12 sections. And I was like, that's gotta be a mistake. I thought for sure when I saw 12 sections, and I was looking through all these classes, I was like, these cannot all be mine. Ain't no way. Lo and behold, they were.

The number of classes she taught, and the corresponding number of students (over 200), was something she regularly talked about at group meetings. She found it very difficult to stay organized and keep up with the overwhelming student load. Additionally, she did not like the way the schedule was set up, where world language classes met every other day, alternating with gym. She felt like this did not make sense, because in her mind, Spanish was an academic subject and should be treated as such, and alternating it with gym in this way caused people not to take it as seriously:

To me, and I don't want to sound elitist or like I'm better than gym, but it does feel that way. I'm like, and it's because we are expected to operate like we are a core class, I have to give quizzes and tests and projects, and participation points and homework and all of that, like I'm supposed to operate like one of the core classes. But they don't take it seriously though, because that's how it feels to me and the other foreign language

teachers. That's how it feels to us. It's like, how can we...we're supposed to treat this like a core class, but they're not treating us like one. The kids aren't, and the admin. I just feel like they have such high expectations and there's no way that we could meet them unless we had the kids every day. And it was like we were considered a real class.

This is very different than the way things were in her original figured world of world language education, from her perspective as a student in the same school years prior. At that time, she described, world languages were a core academic class that were taken every day. She also said that world languages were not available to all students, just those who were academically ready. For students who were not considered ready, there was an additional year of reading instead. In the current setup, all students take world languages beginning in seventh grade. She feels like this puts the world language teachers in a difficult situation, because:

...it's really hard to differentiate when you have honors kids with your average achievers, and kids who are still on a third-grade reading level in English in the same class. And you have to teach the same lesson to six different classes like that. It's impossible, almost.

She was so frustrated by what she perceived as the inefficacy of this teaching situation, feeling strongly that it was not the best way for students to learn a language given everything she had learned in teacher education, and also based on her own beliefs based on her experience, that she approached both the administration and the union. The response she got from both was basically "we hear you, but nothing will change." She felt like this was because "it sounds good on paper" that every student takes a language starting in seventh grade, regardless of whether or not that is actually the best approach.

As a result of this, Bridget was left feeling disheartened, having been faced with the devaluing of language teaching as a profession described in Chapter Two, on the figured worlds of language teachers. Crookes (1997), in particular, discusses the issues that language teachers face with finding themselves lower on an academic hierarchy when they arrive at their professional positions and find that the language courses are considered electives, or that they are physically separated in the building from the “core academic” classes. Bridget discussed this topic regularly at monthly group meetings. World language teachers at her school were not part of the academic “teams,” because world languages were classified as a special area subject along with classes such as art and gym. As described in a previous quote, she felt like this was unfair since she was expected to conduct her class as an academic subject with academic-style assessments, homework, and the like, while being taken less seriously due to the separate labeling, different scheduling, and marginalization from the academic teams. Additionally, this made her feel alone and unsupported:

We're not on teams, we're not included in teams at all. I don't get to go to team meetings. I don't get to learn things about my students. I'm just not on the team, that's a whole other issue too that I have. I would feel more supported if I were a part of a team. If I had other team members, I'd feel more connected to the rest of the faculty there. No, I don't really know anyone outside of my department, unless I go out of my way to make friends with them and chat with them. But I don't work together with other disciplines. We're like our own thing. We're totally separate.

Bridget’s new figured world of education involved both a devaluing of world language education compared to what she was accustomed to both in teacher education and in her background as a

student, as well as a resulting marginalized positioning in her professional community.

Unfortunately, similar to Kenzie, by January she was feeling worn down by the job:

I'm going through the motions... I show up. And I do my thing every day, and I try to do it well. It's just, I'm not super into it. Because of all those other factors, not because I don't like teaching and not because I don't like Spanish. I do. I love both of those things. It's just everything else.

Existing on the Margins: Selena's Story

While Bridget was feeling marginalized on her faculty due to the separateness of world languages as a special area subject, and not being part of the academic teams, Selena experienced a different feeling of marginalization in her new figured world of education due to her situation as a traveling teacher. While many teachers find themselves traveling between more than one classroom during the school day, possibly using a cart to go from room to room, Selena's job was based at two different schools. She did not teach in the same classroom twice at any point during the day. At one of the group meetings, the other teachers asked her how she handled this logistically:

I have a book bag that I use, right, a kid's book bag. And then I bought a tote bag to carry other stuff. But then I realized I was carrying so much stuff. I was hurting myself. I was hurting myself, I was hurting my arm. And then I was hurting my back. And then, I don't know if you've ever felt this, but when you hurt yourself and your legs, pain started to go to your leg, I was feeling that. And so I was like, it was a very tough week, that week, that realization of I need to go with as minimum as possible. I can have a cart, I guess, but there's really almost nowhere for me to put it. The faculty room is like a square. There's nowhere like a corner or anything. So it's like, yeah, I can go ask and everything

but that's not really the solution to my problem, a cart. That's not the solution to my problem.

She was operating out of bags, and it was causing her physical distress.

In addition to this, when she arrived to each classroom, she worried about where she would put her things, because the teachers with whom she shared the space were not always welcoming. She said that while the policy was that technically no one “owned” a room, the teachers who did not travel clearly staked their claim. As she described:

...maybe they gave me a side of the chalkboard or a side of the whiteboard or a side of the wall. But that's it for me to put things up for posters. But my mind isn't in posters. My mind is in where do I just put my stuff, or where do I... So I'm in, and I'm out. I have a backpack. I'm in, and I'm out.

Additionally, she did not have her own space for her planning and preparation period: “I have to work wherever there's space. And there's people coming in and out. It's too much, like, it's so hard for me to work and to concentrate and focus.”

The marginalization Selena experienced in this environment is evocative of the liminal positionality experienced by the preservice teachers in Gao and Benson’s (2012) study, in which they did not fully belong to the teaching community due to their spatial and social marginalization. Given that she traveled between two schools, she existed in a constant in-between state, with nothing to anchor her as she worked to negotiate her professional identity in her new figured world. Selena was feeling lonely, and was missing a sense of community and collaboration:

It's hard to do that, because I'm between two schools. And then the teachers at the school that I end with, for example, at the end of the day, I mean, they all go home right away,

and they have things going on. So sometimes it's just me after school. It'll be 3:10 and I'm the only language teacher there. So sometimes I feel like it could be nice. And when they ask somebody, Hey, could you say after a couple minutes, but sometimes I feel a little like guilty asking if I should ask that because I don't want to keep them away from whatever they have going on. But I feel like teacher collaboration is something I miss. Because of her inability to collaborate given the challenges she was facing in terms of finding space and time to connect organically with other teachers, she found herself feeling frustrated that there was not more time for collaboration built into the schedule. And the little time for collaboration that was made available to the teachers was micromanaged by administrators, so that the teachers had no say in how to use that time. For example, she described department meetings where the curriculum director assigned specific tasks for the teachers related to curriculum planning. And she also told a story that seemed to become a breaking point for her and that became a recurring topic of conversation at several group meetings, which was about the professional development sessions designed around a book that the administration assigned as required reading for all faculty:

I wish that, like you guys said, admin was nicer. And that they would give us more time to collaborate with teachers. There's no collaboration just to freely collaborate. I haven't gotten any of that. And it's something that actually pissed me off a couple weeks ago was we go into our mailboxes, and we had a book in our mailboxes, and it said "Read this book. We're gonna have three after school days when we're gonna talk about the book." And I was like, are you freaking kidding me? Read a book, it's about all this great stuff or whatever. I don't have time to read a book. I was like, I don't have time to read a book. That's not what I need help in... I was like, how am I, first year teacher, struggling, can't

sleep. Struggling. And I'm over here like, and I gotta read a book. And all these other teachers are like, yeah, well it's not that bad. I'm like, I don't care. That's you, this is me.

You also have to think about that. Maybe another teacher feels okay, but you don't.

Selena's situation had not improved by January. She still felt very isolated and lonely, and was longing for a sense of community that she was not able to establish. She became frustrated with her colleagues, and reflected on how she might do things differently if she were the experienced teacher:

I feel like, in a sense, if I knew a teacher was coming in new to the school, I would want to sit with them, and really talk to them. Help them because I know how it feels. It's like, it makes me feel like there's something missing. I know I'm a teacher, and I know that I went to school, and I did well. But it doesn't mean I know it all. Or that I, I won't, that I don't need that extra "Hey, let me sit down with you, you're new"... I really haven't had the opportunity of anyone to come to me, or really go to many people to go and ask about things. If I have, it's been my instructional coach, but it'll be about supplies or something. But I wish it was more community based maybe, a little bit more feeling like I belonged. I think it's just that sense of feeling lost. I don't like...I don't like feeling lost.

Longing for Collaboration

Selena was not the only participant in the study who felt like collaboration was a missing component as they worked to adjust to their new figured worlds of education on the job.

Collaboration is built into the figured world of teacher education, and it was difficult for the novice teachers to go "cold turkey" once they began their professional practice. In teacher education, the participants in this study had weekly practicum meetings in which they were able to share ideas with other members of their cohort. They also had liberal access to me as their

university supervisor, and could contact me via telephone or text message to discuss any issues they were having and to discuss lesson plan ideas. Additionally, they had extensive collaborative relationships with their mentor teachers at their placement schools. Regina reflected on this specifically at one point, remembering the time that had been built in to talk to her mentor teacher during student teaching:

I always felt there was always time to talk with my mentor, always. We would always have that last period of the day, where it was never spent, hardly ever, getting things done. Like, how was this? How can I improve this part of the lesson that I did? We were sharing ideas. And I realize now when we're in it, it's like nobody wants to do it. Because we're all like boom, boom, boom, get this done. I gotta do this, I gotta do that. But it was so helpful to just do that. Just, oh, what did you think? And obviously, that's not realistic in terms of having somebody watch me. Unless it's the administrators, but something I want to do more with my mentor now. Just bouncing ideas off of each other, or things like that. Because yeah, I miss that. We don't get that, we don't get that unless we force it. And it's hard to force it when you're so in the moment, while I have to fix what I need on Schoology for my next class, I'm not going to go spend my 20 minutes with my mentor collaborating, you know. It's so hard to do it... And when I have questions, she's there. But she'll be like...three o'clock. I'm done.

Similar to Regina, Kenzie had a positive relationship with her mentor on the job and was able to collaborate with her to a certain extent. However, the nature of their collaboration was strictly focused on management of negative student behavior as opposed to being directed towards topics that were more positive and relevant to Kenzie's figured world of language education (such as teaching using comprehensible input methods in the target language, etc.). And Bridget

had the opportunity to collaborate with the other Spanish teacher in her department, but she did not agree with this teacher's methods, so it led to conflict and therefore was not a positive experience for her. As our monthly meetings progressed, it became clear that collaboration was a need that our group might be able to fill for the novice teachers in the space we had created.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates certain elements of the “reality shock” that the four participants in this study experienced as they transitioned into professional teaching from teacher education. Not only did they have to become accustomed to teaching on their own, with much less support from mentors and peers; they also found themselves having to adjust to a new figured world of education, where ideas that they had previously taken for granted about education, world language education and the way particular roles are carried out by significant characters that populate these figured worlds, were suddenly turned upside down. Colleagues were often teaching in ways that were opposite to the methods they had been trained with in teacher education. Administrators seemed to have very different educational priorities, with world language education being very low on the agenda. Many students were not interested in learning, and other teachers answered questions as needed but otherwise showed little enthusiasm for exchanging ideas about teaching.

Revisiting Holland et al.'s (1998) figured worlds theory, it is within these figured worlds that people develop their identities, often using other people within the figured world as a point of reference in doing so given that figured worlds are socially reproduced. As such, Britzman (2003) says that novice teachers devote a lot of head space to struggling between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses in the process of positioning themselves “in contexts that are already overpopulated with the identities and discursive practices of others” (p. 221). Given all

of the conflicts between the figured world of teacher education and the figured world of the workplace as described in this chapter, internally persuasive discourses predictably began to arise among these novice teachers as well. This led to a process of authoring of the self in order for them to negotiate their figured worlds and position themselves in their new communities. I will discuss this, and how our support group played a role in this process, further in Chapter Five.

Chapter 5- Spring: Moving Forward Together in the Liminal Space

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the concept of liminality and how in its anthropological origins, the liminal space is something dark and mysterious that is to be feared. As applied to novice teachers in the literature I reviewed, the negative aspects of liminal positionality included spatial and social marginalization, isolation, awkwardness, insecurity, and physical illness. However, I also reviewed literature that pointed to a different conclusion—that is, that if a space is specifically created for them, it can be a place for novice teachers to exercise their agency and where transformative experiences can occur. I believe that our teacher support group provided this kind of space for the novice teachers in this study.

There were several ways in which the group filled the teachers' needs, needs which shifted over the course of the year. In the beginning, the group provided a safe space for them to vent to each other. As described in the previous chapter, this led the teachers to share the struggles they were experiencing and provide emotional support to each other. This lasted through most of the fall. But there was a significant shift around the midpoint of the year. In this chapter I will explore my primary research question: What happens when a group of novice world language teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as part of a teacher support group? Areas I will explore include: 1) ways in which the teachers shifted to a position of agency both by taking more control of the group meetings and by showing a desire to reclaim control in situations where they had previously felt powerless; 2) the process of authoring the self that occurred, along with examples of conflicting internally persuasive and authoritative discourses that the teachers were negotiating; and 3) the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development as it was enacted at our meetings, both in a more traditional

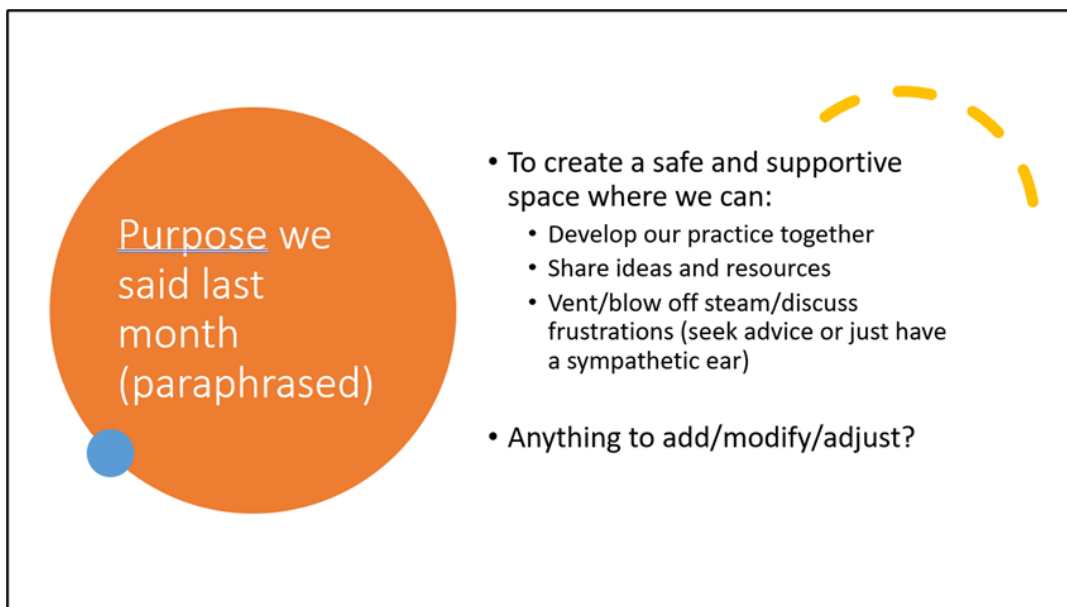
Vygotskyan sociocultural learning sense, and also in a way that is more reminiscent of Gutiérrez's (2008) associations between the ZPD and Third Space.

Taking Back Control of the Narrative

From the beginning, my goal was for the novice teachers to have control of the group meetings. My goal was to provide the space, and facilitate as needed, but otherwise to allow them to do whatever they needed to do during the one hour per month during which we met. I would open the meetings with a brief mission statement for the group and ask for their input, to see if they agreed on the basic goals. This was based on the initial one-on-one interviews I had with the teachers prior to the first meeting, where we discussed their goals for participation in the group. We revisited these every month, with the goal of framing the space and setting the tone for the meeting. Figure 4 shows a slide I used at the beginning of the November meeting for this purpose.

Figure 4

Slide Used for Meeting Opener



The slide features a large orange circle on the left containing the text "Purpose we said last month (paraphrased)". To the right of the circle is a bulleted list of goals. A yellow dashed arc is positioned above the list, and a small blue circle is at the bottom left of the orange circle.

- To create a safe and supportive space where we can:
 - Develop our practice together
 - Share ideas and resources
 - Vent/blow off steam/discuss frustrations (seek advice or just have a sympathetic ear)
- Anything to add/modify/adjust?

I would usually continue each meeting by speaking for a few minutes, checking to see if anyone had any modifications to the mission statement or to the agenda for the session, then I would step back and turn the meeting over to them. From there I often would not speak until the end of the meeting, and then only to revisit something someone had said briefly. We continued with this general meeting structure for the fall semester, during which time the novice teachers were mostly engaged in agenda item number three; that is, venting and providing each other with emotional support as they negotiated the many “reality shocks” they were encountering due to conflicts between figured worlds as described in Chapter Four.

Then, in our December meeting, which was roughly at the midpoint of the study, there was a moment that I marked in my researcher reflective journal as being a turning point. The other teachers in the group had been lamenting a lack of collaboration amongst their colleagues, which had been a recurring theme throughout the semester. Regina joined into this discussion, initially with the same frustrated tone:

Yeah, I didn't realize until somebody at my student teaching placement said this. I forget how he put it. But he basically said that teaching can be such a lonely profession. He put it in a much better way, but saying the same thing, that in terms of collaboration, or working with teachers, it just, it doesn't happen. And sometimes I think, well, we're the youngest where we're teaching. And sometimes I think in a few years, there'll be teachers like us coming in for their first year. And maybe we can set that norm of, let's collaborate, let's do this together, let's work together. But then that doesn't help anything, because that's something we have to wait for. But I don't know, I do think about that, and just trying to be intentional if somebody were to come in. But yeah, nobody wants to really do anything together like us. I spend all of my time with the French and German

teachers and the Japanese teacher, and we can bounce ideas off of each other, but it's not the same. Like the Spanish teachers, they're all great, but it just seems like nobody really wants anything to do with each other. And including my mentor teacher, everybody just sort of wants to get in and get out. And again, she's great. And when I have questions, she's there. But she'll be like, three o'clock. I'm done. I'm leaving. So yeah, it's hard.

Then, though, there was a sudden shift in her direction:

We should... we should have ... Do we have a folder? We probably have a folder. We should just put stuff in there.

This seemingly small shift ended up altering the tone of the group for the remainder of the year. Once Regina planted the idea of the group collaborating together, all of the novice teachers became excited. They had in common that they all taught Spanish 1, even though they were teaching in different schools. Given that they knew that they had similar ideas about teaching methodologies, having gone through the same teacher education program and having discussed the conflicts that they were having with others in their departments who did not have the same ideas they did about effective language teaching, they felt like collaboration would be a way for them to regain some of the sense of the unity that they were missing in their new environments. After reviewing the transcription of this meeting, I wrote the following in my researcher reflective journal:

This is an exciting moment. The idea really takes off. The group gets very excited. You see them seizing their agency. ***note: this is something that happens occasionally in the group. They'll talk through something and have these moments of agency where they're like YEAH we can do this or that. It happens individually sometimes, but this is a moment where they did it as a GROUP. Pretty cool. Like, we are a unit. We are together.

We are going to do this. We are going to help each other. We are going to create something together and share resources since we are all teaching the same kinds of things even though we are at completely different schools. Amazing. This is exactly the kind of thing I hoped would happen. They have the same kind of background from teacher education, methods, so they have common ideas about teaching and they are running into this situation at their schools where other teachers do NOT have these ideas. So they can work together in this way in a different kind of collaborative space that is not being created for them at their schools.

Once this trend had been established, the novice teachers began to show more of a desire to take back control of situations where previously they had been feeling a lack of control.

New Semester, New Meeting Structure

One way in which the novice teachers exercised their desire to exert control was to impose more structure on our monthly meetings. Whereas previously there had been a free-for-all “open mic” format as Kenzie described, which had suited their needs initially, in the January one-on-one interviews the teachers expressed a desire to steer the conversation into a more productive and collaborative format. For example, Selena said, “We haven't been as proactive mainly and really collaborating or helping each other. Sometimes I'm like, what else could we do to like really work together on something?” And Regina added:

I love that we can vent, but I also wish we spent more time talking about ideas. But I think we, because we get to the point where we're like, Oh my God, we could talk and we and we vent we vent we vent...But I want to make it more about what kinds of activities are we doing and sharing those ideas since we don't get to do it at the schools.

During the January interviews, I talked to the teachers individually about how we might structure the meetings so as to allow for the freedom of expression that they valued in the fall, but also provide a forum for them to collaborate more with each other so that they were fulfilling this need as well. We decided that moving forward, each teacher would come to the meetings with a specific topic they would like to discuss with the group. They would then direct the conversation for that portion of the meeting, with each teacher having approximately equal time devoted to her topic. We agreed that the conversation could go in any direction, but these would be the basic parameters, and that each teacher should finish her portion of the meeting feeling satisfied that her topic had been addressed sufficiently.

Reframing Topics, Reclaiming Agency

One example of this new system in action occurred at the February group meeting. Bridget was talking about behavior issues in her classroom, which during the fall meetings was a topic that was frequently raised. The framing in this session was different, though. In the fall, classroom behavior tended to be raised more in a venting manner that was seeking emotional support, where bad behavior was described in an exasperated way and others would nod their heads and respond empathetically. In this session, though, Bridget wanted to take back control of the situation, and offered specific questions to direct the conversation:

The behavioral issues have been getting out of control. That's my little rant. So I've been thinking about four questions here to kind of get the wheels turning. How do you effectively correct bad behavior in a classroom setting? What are effective forms of punishment, if you want to call it that? I don't like that word really, punishment... what are effective forms of correcting behavior? What do you do? I've also been thinking about implementing some sort of reward system for rewarding good behavior, positive

behavior, rather than punishing bad behavior. So, thinking about maybe some sort of reward system, I don't know if any of you have that in your classroom, or what classroom management skills you've been using with your students? But then I was also thinking, on that same page, can you enact a new system like that halfway through the year? We're halfway through the year now, they have a certain schedule. Is it too late now halfway through the year to start something brand new like that, or not? I don't know. So those are my types of questions. If anyone wants to give advice, weigh in, tell me what they do, I'm all ears.

Creating Action Plans

Other teachers similarly raised topics that had been touched on in the fall, but they reframed them in such a way that showed that they were looking to reclaim their agency in the situation. For example, Regina revisited the dilemma she had been having of not knowing how to respond when students were not meeting minimal expectations. She turned to the group for advice on possible ways she could respond when students refused to participate in class activities, even games that were supposed to be fun for them:

They began not doing it, like 'Why would I play the Kahoot?' And I try to say, well, it's not for fun. This is for your learning. So, I guess I just wanted to get advice on how to react, because even when I give them that explanation, it doesn't matter. I feel like I'm really stuck, because I'll give them the zero if there is a grade attached because that's what they earned. But I don't want that, that's not the solution that I want. I want them to do the practice, because then it shows when we do a quiz, or I ask them to speak and they can't do it. There's a correlation between not doing the in-class activities and how you perform.

So I want your guys' advice, because I don't know what to do—how to react in those situations.

This led to the group providing suggestions of specific actions she could take in response to the the students' defiant behavior. The important thing was that Regina left the meeting with a list of possible actions she could try in order to feel like she was in control of the situation again. At the end of her portion of the meeting, she said “thank you, everyone, for the advice. I'm ready to rip the band-aid.” Having an action plan in place made her feel empowered to take back control of a situation in which she had been feeling a lack of control previously.

Intervening to Empower

Although I generally tried not to shape the discussions so as to allow them to be directed organically by the teachers themselves, there was one moment in the March meeting where I stepped in to facilitate to help one of the teachers frame her topic in this new way, so that it was not a venting exercise, but rather an opportunity to explore reclaiming agency in a situation where they were feeling like they were not in control. When it was Kenzie's turn to raise her topic, she began speaking in a way that was more aligned with conversations from our fall meetings:

Every student is the victim of stress. And we're treating them like little children, we're not holding them to high expectations. They want to call mommy and daddy and get out of anything. There's no consequences. There's no real-world experiences that we are giving them. Because, like I said, we're treating them like victims of every single thing you can think of. And I'm tired of people blaming it on COVID. COVID's long gone. I'm tired of them saying oh, I'm stressed out. I gotta go to the guidance counselor today. But you know what, welcome to the real world. I'm stressed out every day. But I don't run and

hide. And I think that when we allow them to just up and hide, and up and leave, and remove themselves from a stressful situation, which is called life, we're not setting them up for success. In reality, we're failing them when we don't give them consequences. We're failing them. So I am sick and tired of it. I used to be a nanny for toddlers. Okay, they can get a pass for leaving and crying in a stressful situation. But I'm tired of doing it for these young adults who are driving cars, who can soon be enlisted into war. I'm really getting sick of it. So, I'm not trying to sound harsh, but I'm tired of treating them like little kids. They are young adults who need to wake up and realize this is a real world.

Welcome to being stressed out. That's called life.

At that point, I felt like I needed to intervene in order to reframe the discussion so that it was not a venting session, but rather an opportunity to reflect on how they could exercise a degree of control. I might have done so more elegantly if I had had time to think about it a bit more, but in the moment, my response was this:

So, what can we do, maybe, to help? Because the thing is, as teachers, we kind of have to teach them. You wouldn't think that you have to teach them some of these things, but you do. So what can we do to help them along with this sort of accountability? And I'm trying to think of the skills that are needed here...what do you think the skills are here, Kenzie, that you're looking for that are missing? Accountability? Is that one of them?

I was proud of the discussion that resulted from this. The teachers thoughtfully considered skills that the students were lacking, and how they as teachers might be able to take action to help fill gaps. Kenzie identified accountability, responsibility, maturity, and problem-solving as being areas to address. I proposed that as language teachers, some of the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (*ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning*

Languages, n.d.) provided opportunities to “covertly interweave” these kinds of skills into our instruction, which led to a robust conversation about how this might be done in practice. So, as with Bridget and the classroom behavior, or Regina and the uncooperative students, Kenzie left this meeting with a list of specific actions she could implement in her classroom in response to a situation that had her feeling frustrated and powerless to change.

Overall, I think the strategy of allowing the teachers to direct the conversation in the group meetings was a good decision, and it is a practice I will continue in the future. As revealed by the stories in Chapter Four, the teachers tended to be frustrated by time that was set aside for collaboration with colleagues where the agenda was micromanaged by administrators. Allowing them to control the agenda for these meetings lets them explore topics that are meaningful and relevant to them, as opposed to topics that I might impose on them. While my choices would be well-intentioned, giving them control of the meetings allows them to step into a position of agency. We took it a step further in the spring semester, framing the conversations that happened in the meetings in such a way that this agency then extended beyond the parameters of the space we had created for ourselves in our group.

Authoring the Self

Another important function of our group was to provide a space where the teachers could actively engage in authoring of the self, a process that would usually happen internally and perhaps without support of others. Holland et al. (1998) emphasize the significance of this process, which heavily influenced their theory of identity development within figured worlds. “Authoring the self” is how Bakhtin (1981) refers to the meaning we make as a result of the ongoing dialogical relationship between authoritative discourse that enters into tension with internally persuasive discourse.

There were two internally persuasive discourses that emerged during our group discussions that the teachers worked together on negotiating dialogically with the opposing authoritative discourse. One of these was an internally persuasive discourse of self-care, pushing back against a culture of stress and overwork. And the other was an internally persuasive discourse of language teaching for communicative proficiency and intercultural competence versus language teaching as an academic subject. Because I am focusing more on the functioning of the group overall as they engaged in the process of authoring the self as opposed to the specific discourses themselves in answering my research questions, I am going to focus on the first of these in this section.

Cultural Myth: The Self-Sacrificing Teacher

In Chapter Two, I explored Britzman's (1986) cultural myths of teachers and teaching, which "provide a set of ideal images, definitions, justifications and measures for thought and activity, and sustain a naturalized view of the reality it seeks to encode" (p. 447). One of these cultural myths is that of "everything depends on the teacher," which leads teachers to feel the burden of success in the classroom rests entirely on them, minimizing the role that the institution and society plays in their success or failure with any given student or situation. A side effect of this cultural myth is the image of the teacher as being selfless, as Britzman (2003) describes in a later work:

In the dominant society, so-called favorable images that characterize the teacher as selfless also mirror the stereotypes associated with women. Like the "good" woman, the "good" teacher is positioned as self-sacrificing, kind, overworked, underpaid, and holding an unlimited reservoir of patience. (p. 29)

This cultural myth provided an authoritative discourse that the teachers worked to negotiate throughout the year with their emerging internally persuasive discourse of self-preservation in the form of self-care, and not buying into the idea that in order to be a good teacher they needed to put in long hours and sacrifice their well-being.

Selena: I Don't Want to Lose My Mind

Selena was among the first to raise this issue early in the year, at the very first group meeting in October:

I feel like I'm also really working on not normalizing being super, super stressed and being always like, plan, plan, plan. I'm really trying to figure out how to not normalize this life that I've heard a lot of teachers say 'oh, your first year is gonna be horrible.' And I'm like, don't say that, no, it'll be fine. It's gonna be fine... I have heard so many things about teaching. And now I'm in it. And now I see it, I do the backstage, all of it. And one thing I refuse to do is to normalize this whole, we're working every single hour of whatever time, even when we're not clocked in. I don't want to do that. I don't want to lose hours of sleep. I don't want to lose my mind. I don't want to normalize that. And I'm slowly trying to work back at that.

Bridget: Putting Too Much Pressure On Myself To Be Perfect

Bridget then revealed that she had been having trouble with the pressure that accompanies the cultural myth of "everything depends on the teacher" as well:

I feel like I want to be at that mentality where I can not have my whole life revolving around planning all the time. But I'm definitely guilty of putting too much pressure on myself to do that all the time, and to constantly be planning and to make sure everything's

perfect. And it's too hard, you know? And I feel like that's probably my biggest thing, I feel like I spend all of my time planning, constantly, and just trying to keep up with it all. And I know that it's supposed to get better after the first year, but every day I come home and I'm just like, okay, I'm gonna lay on the couch for 15 minutes, and then I'm gonna plan. I'm gonna get ready and see what I can do. Because there's really not enough time in the day. I don't know how your schedules are, I have one prep period. But that's after teaching the same thing three periods in a row. And then I'm brain dead, and I can't do anything. So time management, and putting too much pressure on myself for things to be perfect, has been difficult for me.

Regina: Not Easy to Let Go of That Perfection Piece

Regina expanded on this, indicating that she had been noticing that sometimes lessons that were simpler actually went better than lessons that she had taken a long time to plan, but she still found herself having trouble letting go of the need to spend hours trying to come up with the perfect lesson:

Going off what you were saying about taking three hours to plan the most detailed and perfected lesson versus taking the time to think of a simpler idea that doesn't take you as long to plan, I totally take hours to plan lessons. I mean, I'm still kind of doing that. And also trying to figure out how to lessen that time, the time management piece of it. But I found that the times that I have been like, oh, I don't have much time, I just have to get something ready, and I get it ready. It's almost like I don't know if it's that I have more energy for the next day or what it is, but I almost feel like those lessons have gone better. And it's the weirdest thing because it's something I would specifically, one that I had in my two honors class, I just sort of throw it together. And then I taught and I was like, oh,

that was awesome. And it didn't take me hours to plan it...And I was like, wow, you can really do that more often than you think. Something simpler like that. But it's not easy to let go of that perfection piece.

All three teachers were expressing the desire not to be caught up in the normalization of long hours and pressure for perfection, which was their emerging internally persuasive discourse of self-care, but they were having difficulty avoiding the deeply ingrained authoritative discourse that was being continuously reproduced by those around them in their new figured world.

Pushing Back: A Discourse of Self-Care

As the year progressed, this theme continued to emerge at the group meetings. By the spring, though, the conversation had taken a turn. The drumbeat of the internally persuasive discourse of self-care and self-preservation became louder and louder, with all the teachers agreeing that they needed to explore ways in which they could be effective in their teaching without sacrificing their health and personal well-being to the culture of overwork and stress inherent to the cultural myth of “everything depends on the teacher.” Given the new parameters of the meetings in the spring, with the teachers taking control of the narrative and exercising agency over situations where they previously felt like they were not in control, this resulted in action. At several of the meetings, the topics the teachers chose to raise were related to the internally persuasive discourse of pushing back against the culture of stress and overwork. For example, at the March meeting, when it was time for Selena to introduce her topic, she said:

Sometimes I feel like my lessons that are super short and sweet and come out of nowhere are the best. So I was wondering, this might be a funny question, but how do you guys shorten your time to create a lesson? Or what are some things that you do that are just super simple and sweet? But work, whether it's to review vocab, or whether it's to just

have them talk. Where they have to do the work, and you don't even have to sit there and make a worksheet for an hour?

This led to everyone, including me, contributing ideas for activities that would be quick and easy to prepare for the students, that could be adapted for different language levels, and that could be used for many possible lesson topics. This was an enjoyable session, where the teachers left with an action plan of specific ways they could feel effective as teachers without succumbing to the pressure of working excessively.

Stronger Together

There were also times when the teachers helped each other through conflicts they faced in the process of negotiating the authoritative stress and internally persuasive self-preservation discourses. For example, Kenzie encountered a situation at work when she showed a movie in class: “So my mentor teacher, I love her. But she's so by the book. She's so strict. And I guess the kids told her, ‘oh, I miss my classes playing a movie.’ And she was all mad.” We talked this through, and determined that this was unfair of the other teacher. The movie that Kenzie chose to show was related to the curricular theme of sustainability, was in the target language and therefore an authentic source of comprehensible input, and she had created activities that were relevant and linguistically appropriate for the students to do in conjunction with viewing the video resource. Talking it through together, the teachers were able to support Kenzie in her thinking, and ultimately to come to the conclusion that the other teacher possibly was angry because she did not understand the pedagogical value in the exercise, and was taking for granted that showing a movie in class was taking the easy way out in violation of the “everything depends on the teacher” cultural myth, where teachers must not sit down in class, and must not take shortcuts in their planning and workload.

If Kenzie had not had the support of the group, she would have had to work through this dialogical conflict between the authoritative discourse that was being represented by her mentor teacher in a position of authority in her new figured world, and her internally persuasive discourse, on her own. This would have been difficult and frustrating, and it is hard to say what the result would have been. Both Britzman's (2003) and Sydnor's (2014) studies show teachers in a similar struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses without support. In Britzman's (2003) study, "Jamie Owl" leaves the teaching profession in the end due to her inability to successfully negotiate the two conflicting discourses. And Sydnor (2014) emphasizes the importance of supporting new teachers in the process of negotiating the "uncomfortable process of becoming and the various discourses circulating through it" (p. 12). In Kenzie's case, I believe that being with a supportive group of teachers with the same teacher education background, who had learned the same second language acquisition theory that was informing her internally persuasive discourse, was helpful to her. It strengthened her resolve to continue doing what she felt was right in her teaching practice, which also happens to undercut the "everything depends on the teacher" cultural myth in that the teacher does not have to be the center of what is happening in the classroom at all times.

Sociocultural Learning and Identity Development

In the previous section, I explored the process of authoring the self, which is the meaning we negotiate through a constant state of dialogism between conflicting authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. Holland et al. (1998) consider dialogism to be its own figured world, and they compare the process of authoring the self with what happens in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in that knowledge and understanding are developed and internalized using language therein, via a social process which is important in one's identity

formation. In this section I will explore the concept of the ZPD, and how this kind of sociocultural learning occurred in other ways in the group beyond the construct of dialogism over the course of the year.

The ZPD Enacted at Our Group Meetings

The ZPD is a key component of Vygotskian theory. He imagines this as an area between a child's actual current developmental level when working independently and the level of potential development when working with a more knowledgeable other, which can be either an adult or a peer. Once the child is able to internalize knowledge via the ZPD, it becomes part of his or her "independent developmental achievement" (Vygotsky, 2005, p. 40). At our monthly group meetings, there were a number of times where I could visualize the ZPD occurring in real time, where the teachers were taking turns being both the more knowledgeable peer and the child working to internalize knowledge via dialogue.

There were many moments like these during the year, but I want to highlight two that occurred at the April meeting. In the first, Regina was in a situation at her school where she was going to be observed by an administrator at an unannounced time over a period of a month, and she was seeking ideas from the group for an activity she could have at the ready for the observation. We talked through ideas, and because I am in the habit of asking questions like these to my preservice teachers prior to observations, I asked specific logistical questions about how she would execute the creative activities that the group was coming up with. This flustered her, because she travels from room to room and the activities involved setup: "Yeah, I'll have to think about that. How? Because I don't know what room I'll be in or when she's coming even." While Regina had experience traveling from room to room on a cart, she did not have nearly the experience with traveling as Selena, who was traveling between two different buildings during

the day as well as never teaching in the same room twice. Given Selena's experience, she immediately had an idea to offer:

Maybe just get kids to do it for you. When you're, when you have magnets or whatever, tape. And then, 'so hey, I need five people to help me. Can you put number one here, number two...'. Because you're talking to kids, you're making them be involved. I actually did an activity like that. The other day I was observed. And I also switched rooms. And I also don't have control about so much stuff and actually bring this stuff up to the principal. And I'm like, yeah, if you see, I have to have students help me do certain things, because I can't always set up beforehand. It doesn't work out like that. He's like, yeah, I know that that can be a conflict and I was like, yes, it can be a conflict. There are many other things as well. So do that. Just get them involved. Don't even be nervous about it like that. You're not wasting time or anything. You're not. Just have them help you.

Superficially this idea may seem like a simple and practical suggestion to solve an immediate problem, but it represents more. First, this suggestion is another way to continue helping Regina work through her struggle with the "everything depends on the teacher" cultural myth. Selena is showing her here that sometimes, like if you are traveling from room to room and need to set up an activity, and in particular in this case if it is an activity you are going to be doing when an administrator arrives unannounced, it is simply not possible to have the activity set up in advance and perfectly polished. And Selena is reassuring her that this is OK, and that it actually can be a good thing because it can bring the students into the lesson and allow them to be involved in the setup.

Efficacy Narratives and Identity Development in the ZPD

The second thing I see happening here is that Selena, in stepping into the role as the more knowledgeable other for that moment, is engaging in identity work through what I labeled in my data analysis as “efficacy narrative.” Britzman (2003) explores how teachers “construct themselves as they are being constructed by others” (p.26), which is a concept echoed by Rodgers and Scott (2008) who point out that teachers’ “identities are a matter of negotiation with others,” (p. 735), and also indicate that the narratives one tells can play an important role to help with one’s sensemaking in the identity negotiation process. As I have discussed previously, a sense of efficacy is crucial to motivation (Karabenick & Noda, 2004), leads to resilience and improved response to setbacks and student achievement outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), has been identified as an important component of a teacher’s professional identity (Canrinus et al., 2012), and has been linked to an increased likelihood of retention specifically of World Language teachers (Swanson, 2012). By taking on the role of more knowledgeable other in the ZPD at this moment in the group, Selena was able to tell the narrative about when she was observed and was able to have students help her accomplish a task she would have had trouble achieving on her own. The act of telling this story gave her the opportunity to engage in the kind of sensemaking that Rodgers and Scott (2008) describe in their work on teacher identity formation, and it allowed her to be in control of the narrative. In other words, it allowed her to construct herself instead of being constructed by others. And in the role of more knowledgeable other in this context, it allowed her to be in a position of narrating a story in which she was demonstrating efficacy in her work, thereby developing this component of her professional identity.

Taking Turns as the More Knowledgeable Other

I mentioned previously that the teachers took turns being the more knowledgeable other and the child internalizing knowledge in the ZPD. As it happened, Selena and Regina reversed roles in this same meeting. Selena was talking about a particular class that was giving her problems, saying, for example:

I just, I feel very stupid. Every time I'm up there. I'm not gonna lie. Just the way that they don't even look at me anymore. They're just on their phones. They don't care. It's so bad...I just feel like that class is against me.

She talked about how she had become stricter with them because they were taking advantage of leaving the class to use the restroom, and they were mumbling under their breath, playing videogames out in the open, and creating a vicious cycle where she did not know how to respond. This, of course, is similar to issues that were raised by Bridget and Regina earlier in this chapter, and similarly, Selena framed this in such a way that showed that she wanted to reclaim her control over the situation. The teachers would often think of suggestions in these situations, and try to come up with action plans together. In this case, though, Regina was able to step in as a more knowledgeable other to talk about a restorative circles technique she had been trained to do at her school:

It can help talking too. I've done it in two of my classes, what we've called the restorative circle. And I think in one class it was restorative, and then the other it just wasn't, they all took it as a joke. And it's...you need them to buy into it, which you can't force. But if you can get them to a point where you have a productive conversation about the class, and the environment, and what it means to be respectful, and doing it in a way without pointing the finger, that's huge. Like, 'Well, how do you feel...' in the 'I' statements. 'I feel...' I

don't know. I don't know what one of them would say... 'I feel like I can't do all my work because there's not enough students here' or something like that, because they're all in the bathroom. If they could take that seriously, and maybe even invite them to put their phones away for that conversation. And then at the end of the conversation 'Oh, I like that we had a productive conversation without our phones. From now on, let's put our phones here in the beginning.' Maybe, maybe they will, you never know, it's worth a shot. I feel like the worst thing that can happen is it stays the same which I know you don't want, but at that point, you know where you feel you're at that low, I feel like it's worth it. Because I, that's why I did it too. I felt like an idiot, sitting there in the circle, but once they got into it in that one class, it worked. And the other one it just should have never happened. Didn't go the right way. But the worst that can happen is things stay the same. And you know, you tried something new.

Through this narrative of her experience using restorative circles, Regina was able to give Selena and the other teachers a strategy they could try with their more difficult classes. Taking on this role of more knowledgeable other in the ZPD, though, also allowed her to engage in the same kind of efficacy narrative that Selena practiced when she had her turn in this position. And this allowed her, as it did Selena when she was in the driver's seat, to have control of the narrative in constructing her own professional identity as a teacher instead of allowing others to construct her identity for her.

ZPD in the Third Space: "We're All Drowning"

The situations described before were a more traditional Vygotskyan conception of the Zone of Proximal Development, with certain knowledge or skills that one person, who is more knowledgeable or capable, helps another person along with until that second person is able to

internalize this knowledge on their own. Gutiérrez (2008) refers to the ZPD in her work on Third Space, saying that Third Space is similar to this concept in that it is a space where learning occurs, but instead of a ZPD she conceives of it more as “interdependent zones of proximal development” (p. 153). This ultimately creates a “transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning” (p. 152) is possible. I want to call attention to a moment where I think this sort of interdependent transformative learning happened in our group.

This moment occurred during a discussion where the teachers were expressing frustration with administrators at their schools, and in a general sense. They were frustrated about the lack of planning time in the day and what they perceived as lack of support for student behavior issues. The discussion became quite heated, with Selena at one point saying:

What do you think we are, robots? Honestly I don't know. I know that principals and admin are supposed to have had educational experience before. But I'm pretty sure that they wouldn't be able to do that themselves. I don't think they would, I don't know. Sometimes still, even with, behavior wise, some of my coworkers have been having issues with behavior, even when they have to do duties in the lunchroom, like these kids just acting out, being disrespectful. And they go and they talk to admin about it like that, just the principal and stuff. And then it happens again, and they go again, and they don't do anything to handle it. And now they're getting super frustrated. So imagine having duty, no one really doing anything to help you. But you have to teach right after duty and you know that every time you do it, you're gonna be frustrated.

Regina immediately chimed in with her story of frustration about students getting suspended at her school, but then shifted the conversation in a significant way:

We keep having, it's weird, because all of a sudden I get an email, so and so's suspended, or it's on the attendance. And I don't know if I'm allowed to ask why, but I often have no idea why. And then it's also like, send them their work, and I do, but I'm sorry, when my brother gets suspended that's a vacation. He's not at home suffering the consequences. Or, and we do talk about this at my school, is out of school suspension a good option? And most people say no. And there is the argument that if the child is going to be a threat to somebody else, okay, they need to leave. But, it's one girl in particular, she has been suspended three times. And every time she comes back and she's frustrated, because now there's all this work. Not even that I give so much work outside of class, but just that she's not caught up. And it's a shame, because I don't know what she did. But she does tend to be focused in the class, and then she's gone. And then she comes back, and she's frustrated. And then she'll get back on track. And then she's gone again, and I'm like, what is going on? And it's not just her, but I don't know. I know that the admin knows that out of school suspension isn't the best option. But it's almost like I get the sense that they're almost drowning, too. Especially in our case, our principal has been out since the beginning of the year. Now, one of our assistant principals is out because she had knee surgery. So they're actually, definitely drowning. But I don't know, I get the sense that they're struggling too and it's like, they know that there's better ways, but then they can't do it. Because there's the day-to-day of I have to deal with this discipline, I have to run my meetings, I have to observe teachers...I don't know what the answer is, but we're all kind of drowning.

Several parts of Regina's contribution are noteworthy. First, she begins her turn speaking with something negative, in that she is frustrated by the number of out-of-school suspensions, not

knowing why the students are being suspended, the cycle of students then being behind in their work as a result, etc. As a teacher not directly involved in the disciplinary matter, she is kept in the dark about circumstances surrounding the suspensions, and this system does not make sense to her. But then as she continues talking it through, she begins to see things from the administrators' perspective. She compares the situation of the administrators to that of the teachers: "...they're struggling too...they know that there's better ways, but then they can't do it. Because there's the day-to-day...I have to deal with this discipline, I have to run my meetings, I have to observe teachers."

This is the same kind of situation that the teachers talked about in meetings—that is, being bogged down with day-to-day minutia so that they were not able to focus on the big picture. Here she was able to apply this perspective to the administrators and see that they might be experiencing those same feelings of frustration. Having the space and time to reflect on this, and talk this through with her peers, led Regina to this moment of empathy and compassion that she shared with the others, thus adding a different perspective to everyone's understanding of reality. Although Gutiérrez's (2008) description of a "transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning" (p. 152) may seem a bit grandiose for describing this exchange, this moment did open the teachers' minds to an alternative possibility. Additionally, with Third Space being a place for negotiating binaries, in this case, the teachers in this support group momentarily transcended the imaginary binary of "us" versus "them" that typically exists between teachers and administrators.

Conclusion

I intentionally left my main research question, "What happens when a group of novice world language teachers from the same teacher education program discuss their experiences as

part of a teacher support group?,” broad to avoid imposing a rigid researcher’s agenda on the project and to allow my sessions with the teachers to unfold as they would. Of course, this also means that it would be impossible to completely answer this question in a single chapter. There were moments of levity, for example, when Bridget felt the need to reassure everyone that what she was drinking was not a White Claw alcoholic seltzer, or when Regina’s cat, who made regular appearances on screen during the Zoom sessions, suddenly vomited during a meeting. There were also incredibly somber moments, like, for example, the conversation we had the day after a school shooting when the teachers revealed how heavily the reality of school violence weighs on them daily. And there were many other stories that, in the aggregate, show the development that the group’s participants experienced over the course of the project and the support they were able to provide each other during the process. However, zooming out and viewing the year as a whole, the three topics I explore in this chapter—that is, the role that the group played in: 1) development of agency and reclaiming of control; 2) authorship of the self; and 3) sociocultural learning via various possible conceptions of the Zone of Proximal Development—emerged as being significant recurring themes.

I have one remaining research question to address: “In what ways will the novice teachers’ experiences during this study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator?” I will discuss this, as well as how we all transitioned together from the liminal space we had created at the end of the study in Chapter Six. And I will end with overall reflections on this study, and implications for future practice.

Chapter 6- An Ending, and a Beginning

Revisiting the anthropological origins of the concept of liminality, the liminal space represents a threshold between two spaces, or a “middle space of ritualized rites of passage” (McCaw, 2021, p. 396). One of the effects of our group meetings was to mark a clear beginning and ending point of this in-between space for the novice teacher participants. The group meetings served as markers within a liminal space for me as well, although in a different way. As I mentioned in Chapter One, I also consider myself as being in a liminal period as my professional identity shifts from teacher to teacher educator. Completing this dissertation and earning my doctorate has been the conceptual goalpost I have set for myself to mark the end of this process of transition. Therefore, although the group meetings were not borders of the liminal period itself as they were for the novice teachers, as an important part of my study for this dissertation, the meetings marked clear points on the progression for me.

As with the teacher participants, the study also marked a period of liminality for me – an experience of “in-betweenness” as I attempted to find the right balance in the way I positioned myself within the group as between participant and researcher, facilitator and colleague, and speech and silence. Given the importance of considering my positionality, personal experiences, and engagement as part of the study (Patton, 2002; Paulus & Lester, 2022), in this chapter I will address my own experience with the group. In doing so, I will respond to my third research subquestion: In what ways will the novice teachers’ experiences during this study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator?

As the year ended, each of us in the group emerged from the liminal space having transformed in some way. In addition to my own experiences in this chapter, I will explore the experiences of the teachers as they emerged from the liminal space we had created in our group. This will include my own observations on their identity development based on an event where the teachers visited a seminar of then-current student teachers, as well as their own observations and final reflections on participating in our group as recorded during our final one-on-one exit interviews. Finally, I will provide my closing thoughts on this project, and address the study's possible implications for future practice.

Revisiting Liminality and Third Space: Shannon's Story

In Chapter Two, I explored the existence of the idea of various binaries such as theory versus practice, or university versus K-12 in teacher education, and how Third Space is seen as useful in negotiating the area in between. In this section, I will explore how my experience as a participant-researcher in our support group served as a Third Space for me to negotiate perceived binaries existing within my various roles through a process of authoring of the self. This is similar to the authoring of the self undertaken by the novice teachers which I described in Chapter Five, except that the competing discourses we wrestled with were different. In describing my experience with this process, I address my third research subquestion: In what ways will the novice teachers' experiences during this study intersect with my own experiences as a participant-researcher in a similar but separate liminal period of transition from teacher to teacher educator?

Troubling a Binary: Participant versus Researcher

When the study began in October with our first group meeting, I was uncertain as to what my role in the group should be. I did not know how much structure I should provide to the meetings, or how much I should be talking, if at all. I was torn between my roles as an active participant in the group and as a researcher. I feared that the more I participated in the group, the more I might influence what the teachers would say, and how events would unfold. I did not want to unnaturally influence the outcome of the study through my input as a participant. In hindsight, this was based on an authoritative discourse of research I brought into the process with me that was based on a positivistic assumption that there is an objective truth to be revealed by the participants (Kim, 2016), and that I as the researcher needed to sit back and observe in a scientific manner. But in retrospect, it was unrealistic to think that I might have maintained this sort of neutral, objective stance for an entire year's worth of meetings. I already had a close relationship with all four of the teachers in the group, and cared deeply for each of them. The following is an account of how my role in the group evolved over the year, and how I came to embrace the participant side of being a participant-researcher.

Fall: Focus on Spacemaking

At the group's first meeting, I decided that I would devote time at the beginning to what I referred to as "spacemaking" in my researcher reflective journal, with little structure in order to allow things to unfold organically among the group participants. In my mind, this would allow me to sit back and observe, taking detailed field notes as an objective researcher should do.

I spent a good deal of time on the spacemaking activity. In a memo I wrote in my researcher reflective journal after editing transcriptions, I commented on the time I spent on this:

Note: I spent 10 full minutes at the beginning of this meeting laying this groundwork. Huge investment in time. I'm a little shocked, looking at the timestamps here, that I yammered on for that long. But looking at what I said, I do think it was a good investment in the space-making and establishing the parameters. And thinking about the exit interviews I just did, I'm thinking about what they said about it feeling safe etc. and how they felt like it was a safe space. They might have felt like that anyway, but I feel like me taking this time to really lay all this out was not a bad thing to do. Like an anticipatory set for a lesson.

Listening to the recording, I was surprised by how direct I was about how I envisioned their position as novice teachers, and the kind of space I hoped we could create within the group. I wanted them to receive a different kind of support than they might be getting from their schools—support from peers who were in the same situation as opposed to the more hierarchical mentoring arrangement common to schools, where typically a more experienced teacher mentors a novice teacher. In effect, I gave them my rationale for creating the support group, and why I thought it might be helpful:

...you're on the other side, now... really you're a teacher. But you're brand new, you're in a new place, you're among new people, you have new, these new colleagues, you've got these students, but you have all these things that you need to figure out. But at the same time, you get thrown into a classroom, and you're having to teach every day unrelentingly. However many classes you have to teach. And it's so much and there's so much that you still need to figure out, about teaching, and about who you are as a teacher, and just trying to sort yourself out. Right? And there's so much to do, that you're so busy, that you don't really have this space, and this time to reflect and just take a minute, and

figure out okay, who am I? And what am I doing, what is happening here? And how can I sort this all out, those things? And so this is sort of what I have in mind with this group. And I feel like this is the place where you can work on this together in a supportive space. And another thing that I have in mind for this group is that, you know, most schools do have these mentor programs, right? And when I talked to you one on one, everybody has a mentor, but it's done differently in every school and different degrees of support, and different kinds of support that you get from your mentors. And the thing is that when they set you up with a mentor, it's going to be somebody that has more experience, more years in the classroom, so it does tend to be a little bit of a top-down situation in terms of the support that you're getting. And this is a situation where you guys are peers, you are in the same boat. You're at the same place right now. Right? So you can just let it rip. You can feel safe with each other, you can say whatever. And it's okay, you don't have to worry about getting fired here. You don't work with each other, you can just say whatever. And it's okay. This is the thinking behind this.

Towards the end of my spacemaking speech, I turned control of the group over to them, and specifically addressed that I was no longer in a position of authority in case anyone still thought of me in that way since they were all recent graduates:

I want you to use this group the way this can be most helpful. I do not have an agenda, these are just my little bullet points that I wanted to make sure I covered. But I do want you to just, whatever you want to do, you can let me know. We can adjust things as we go. And I'm not completely sure what my role is going into this. I don't really know what I am doing here. So you can tell me what you want. I can just sort of be here and facilitating...I can participate as much or as little as you want, but I'm not your instructor.

I am in no position of authority here. That is all in the past. That's done, right? So that, get any of that out of your mind if that's there, right? And again, as we go, you can help me with this, help me figure out what you would like, what my role is here, and what is helpful to you with this.

I generally have more of an instructional coaching relationship with my student teachers as opposed to a more traditional “professor-student” dynamic, with them using my first name from the outset and freely calling or texting me on my personal cell phone for any reason. Additionally, the teachers in the support group had graduated, so I had no position of authority in any way at the time of the study. Nonetheless, it was important to me that they did not see me as a professor, or someone who was teaching them, in the context of this group, and that the power dynamics were flattened as much as possible within the context of our group meetings.

Active Silence

After establishing these parameters, I asked them to introduce themselves to each other, then told them it was their turn to talk. My opening question was: “What have been some of your success stories in your first month and what have been some of your challenges? Let's just say what's on your mind, guys. What do you have? Feel free to jump in with anything.” From that point, I remained silent until the very end of the meeting.

Thirty-five minutes after I stopped talking, the teachers had an exchange which made me feel like the meeting had been a worthwhile experience, no matter what the outcome of the dissertation study as a whole. Regina began by saying how stressed she had been recently, and how she had felt guilty venting to her mother about this. She was relieved, then, to be able to share her concerns with peers who were in a similar situation:

Talking with you guys here—just having that support and seeing again, we're not the only ones—it is a good reminder that we're all going through it, we're all going to have our amazing days, we're all going to have more difficult days and just knowing that it's okay, and that we're not alone.

Bridget agreed, saying:

I think it will be good and I feel grateful that we have the space to be able to do this for the rest of the year... I need a support group so I don't have to vent to my family and the members of my household. We can share our experiences, share some tips, compare what's worked and what's not worked.

Selena agreed with both observations, and expanded that she appreciated the time and space to process and reflect on everything she was learning on the job:

I think that it's cool that we all, like Shannon said, we all went to the same program. We all had the professors we had, we had Shannon. We have what we learned in student teaching... And I'm learning a lot like, yes, I'm teaching, but I feel like right now I'm learning more than I'm teaching. And I feel like that's fine. I'm learning a lot. I'm learning every single day about so much. I'm sure you guys have too, about yourself, about what you need to work on. What you need to take care of for yourself, about your students, about what they need. And learning how to reflect.

Examining the participant versus researcher binary in the context of this first meeting, if participation is measured in interaction between researcher and participants, I did not participate much since my involvement was restricted to my comments at the beginning of the meeting and a few final marks at the very end to close the session. The teachers directed the rest of the session with no intervention on my part. However, I believe that my spacemaking speech in the

beginning of the meeting served an important purpose. It set the tone for our meetings and established that 1) the teachers were in charge of the agenda and how it was executed, and 2) it was a safe place for them to talk about anything and feel supported.

As the year progressed, I found myself compelled by the internally persuasive discourse of participating more vocally in the group, which wrestled with the authoritative discourse of the researcher needing to remain neutral and silent, in an unfolding process of authoring the self. For this first meeting, though, although I did not speak much, I now feel as though my spacemaking “anticipatory set” and my silence afterward was active participation, and it was the participation that was needed in order to productively move the group forward.

Spring: Facilitation to More Vocal Participation

In Chapter Five, I explored the shift that the group underwent over the course of the year. In the fall, the group provided a safe space for the teachers to vent to each other, share struggles, process new experiences, and provide mutual emotional support. In the spring, though, the teachers shifted to more of a position of agency and action. They worked together to create action plans in order to take back control of situations where they had previously felt powerless. They collaborated on teaching projects, developing their sense of teaching efficacy with like-minded teachers from the same teacher education program and temporarily blocking out the noise from their more experienced colleagues in the workplace with their different, and often dated, views on effective language teaching. In such an environment, it proved impossible for me to be a silent, neutral, “research wallflower.” In fact, the teachers would not allow it. Increasingly they began to draw me into the conversation, soliciting my perspectives, asking me to contribute activities, or requesting stories about my experiences in the classroom. And I loved it.

When participating in the group, the rule of thumb I tried to follow was always to allow the teachers to control the conversation. I would answer questions they specifically asked me, or chime in on the topic that a teacher had chosen for the session if I had something of particular relevance to contribute. And when I did comment, I generally waited until after the other teachers had spoken. But within these parameters, I allowed myself to participate freely. Once I established this rule for myself and became a more active participant in the group, I felt positive about some of the conversations that resulted. I did, however, occasionally still wrestle with the authoritative discourse of the researcher needing to remain neutral and objective, and occasionally I felt a sense of guilt, leading me to question whether I was participating too actively in the group. Overall, though, having seen the results of my participation, and given that I was able to provide teaching advice and emotional support backed up by years of experience, I think that my participation in this group had a positive effect. These reflections have led me to reexamine my conceptions about research and the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Authoring of the Self: My Role in the Group

Returning to the question of how my experiences intersected with those of the novice teacher participants during the study, my negotiation of the space between participant and researcher led to an authoring of the self as I worked to resolve conflicting discourses regarding my role in the group. There was the authoritative discourse based on years of indoctrination that research needed to be a scientific, objective endeavor, which compelled my initial attempts to proceed as an impartial researcher in the group space, observing and taking notes and analyzing data that would lead to generalizable conclusions. And then there was an internally persuasive

discourse that was emerging and becoming stronger as each monthly group meeting took place, and as I conducted the one-on-one interviews with each teacher at periodic intervals.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), in discussing the “turn” towards narrative inquiry, consider some of the same issues that I wrestled with as the study progressed. While I do not consider my project to be narrative inquiry, I do consider some of their points to be relevant to the struggle I experienced. In particular, they observe that researchers turned away from the idea of objectivity with a new understanding that context influences outcomes, and therefore results will not be generalizable. However, they also observe that researchers applied this knowledge only to the researched, and not to themselves, continuing to perceive themselves as being capable of being objective, even putting “energy into maintaining an objective stance and distancing himself or herself from the relationship with the researched; he or she uses audit strategies such as member checks, triangulation, and audit trails to assure accuracy, consistency, and trustworthiness” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 12). This is exactly what I was inclined to do in the beginning. However, as the meetings continued, and as I began interacting more actively with the participants as they solicited my advice, feedback, and stories, the Third Space provided by our group meetings allowed me the opportunity to explore the space between this authoritative discourse and a newly unfolding, internally persuasive discourse: that is, in calling myself a participant-researcher, I can be both things at once. I can embrace the participant role. I did not need to remain neutral, and in fact, I now believe that true neutrality would be neither possible nor desirable in a study such as mine.

Ultimately, I would summarize my response to my third research question as such: my experience intersected with the experiences of the novice teachers as we joined together in a Third Space that we agreed to create together, as we all supported each other and learned

together, and as we helped each other negotiate the in-betweenness of a liminal period in our lives. And just as I believe the teachers experienced development of their professional identities through transformative learning experiences and authorship of the self, so did I as well.

Emerging from the Liminal Space: Part One

Toward the end of the year, I invited the teachers in the support group to attend a seminar for my then-current group of preservice teachers to talk about their experiences in the field, answer questions, and give advice. It was a bit of a full-circle moment for me, as it had been such an event that had inspired this project in the first place. In this case, though, I was able to see how the work they had done together in the group shaped the interactions they were having both with the preservice teachers to whom they were speaking, as well as with each other. One example was Bridget stepping confidently into a mentor role:

Just be confident. You all know what you're doing by this point. You all have experience teaching. Don't get that twisted. This program, at this university, the student teaching program is no joke. You are experienced, and you're ready for a job by this point. So I would echo what Kenzie said, and walk in there with your head held high, and have confidence. And honestly, I think they will just be happy that you are there.

Kenzie warned them about the behavioral issues she had experienced and had not been prepared for, but ended on a confidence-building note by indicating that she has emerged on the other side and they would too:

But that is one thing you're gonna have to get prepared for and you're just not really going to be able to, you're just going to learn as you go. So just know that you'll probably walk

into that, but don't get discouraged. It's going to happen multiple times. Children are going to act up. The first week I was, my first year, a girl said to me F-you. I couldn't believe it. But now I would say just go to the office. I wouldn't even get offended by it anymore. So you will build that hard shell. You won't be able to prepare for it. It's just on the job training and learning as you go, so just know that that is probably what's coming but it's nothing wrong with it. You will be able to handle it.

And Selena focused on the importance of self-preservation:

Another thing is, don't be too hard on yourself. Your mental health will decline if you are hard on yourself. And if you don't set time for yourself, all of you will probably start to bring work home. And that is normal. That's what I do right now. But don't overdo it. Sometimes the simplest lessons you'll think of in 10 minutes. Don't ever spiral on things. Just go with it. If it doesn't work out, it didn't work out. The kids are not even going to notice. You're the only one that noticed. No one notices. So just go with it. But yeah, really take care of your mental health. Because if you're not okay, then you can't be the teacher. That's literally how simple it is. If you're not okay, and you're coming in sad or stressed out, it's just not going to work out. Nothing will.

All of this advice from the teachers represents lessons they had learned themselves during their first year of teaching and at this event, they were no longer the novice teachers. They had become the experts, and in speaking with the preservice teachers, they could see how far they had come in a year. Inviting them to this event, and allowing them to be positioned as experienced teachers in this way, was an important milestone in their professional identity development. Seeing themselves in this light made them more ready to emerge further from the

liminal space we had created to stand on their own. And perhaps it gave them a sense, like the in-service teachers in Finland who participated in the hybrid Peer Support Group in the study by Kiviniemi et al. (2021) I described in Chapter Two, of having done something important by reconnecting with teacher education and welcoming and nurturing the next generation of first-year teachers.

Looking Forward

In Chapter Two, I expressed a goal of creating a space specifically for novice teachers to be able to transcend the negative aspects and associations of liminality, and exercise the agency needed in order to make this period a time of reflection, growth, and transformation. I was hoping that the group would serve as a Third Space (Bhaba, 1990; Gutiérrez, 2008), where the teachers could practice negotiating tensions between figured worlds, and between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses as they adjusted to their new professional environment. I believe that these goals were met and I believe that this was a worthwhile endeavor that contributed to their professional identity development and provided them with meaningful support that they would not otherwise have had as they transitioned from the university into their new teaching careers. There are, however, some practical issues that need to be addressed in considering similar future projects. In this section, I will explore the teachers' reflections on their experiences, and consider implications for future practice.

“It’s Like a Life Jacket”—The Teachers Reflect on Their Experience

As part of their exit interviews, I asked the teachers to reflect on their experiences in the group and to provide personal insights on what she had found most beneficial. Regina, for example, commented that she appreciated the chance to stay connected to people from her university program:

I think I said at the beginning ...it was something that I didn't know I needed. And that was so true. Because yes, I have support at my school, I do. And there is a girl who's close to my age, who I get along with. But she's not Bridget, Selena and Kenzie. She didn't go to the same school as me. You know, she doesn't know the same places I do. Just the fact that we all went to the same college, and we all graduated, and we all got a job. And then we could talk about that was so unique, and very much needed. Because, I know I've had a positive experience. I've had a very positive experience. But I've also had those moments too where I feel burnt out, I feel down. And to know I'm not alone in that. And I'm also not alone in the happy moments was so nice to share with people who again, they're in the same position as me, first year teachers. And we all went to the same college, we all were taught by you... that's so unique. And I think a lot of people could benefit from that.

Regina shows here that she appreciated the sense of support and community as she shared her highs and lows as a first-year teacher. She also valued that she had a connection with the group through the members' common background and experiences, i.e. the same figured world of a shared teacher education program.

Similarly, Kenzie commented that she appreciated maintaining her connection with me after graduation, instead of the abrupt "cutting of the cord" that would usually occur following student teaching:

I learned so much this year, and it was nice to have you by our side, because you were there from the beginning. And now we're still in the beginning, but the real deal of it. And so it's nice to have the same person stick with us. And thank you for that.

She also, though, mentioned that she felt an increased sense of trust with our group since it was based outside her workplace:

It's nice to have someone to rely on to count on to talk to you. It's just a good feeling. So I think it was so nice to have that open space of people to count on to talk to you because you can't trust everyone at your workspace, but I know I can trust everyone in this group.

While workplace support is critical to novice teachers' success, it is also true that teachers may not feel as though they can speak freely if they feel like they are being evaluated. Kenzie shows here that having support away from the workplace was valuable to her as a novice teacher so that she could speak her mind and not feel judged.

Bridget also appreciated having people to speak freely with, but instead of focusing on these people being outside the workplace, she valued that the peer support group meant that she did not have to burden family and friends with her concerns:

I thought it was super helpful to have a few people that were going through something very similar to what I was going through, because I'd come home and like, have a lot of gripes and complaints, but no one really understood. And I didn't want to bring that home with me either, all of the complaints, and gripes and all of that. So, to be able to talk through some of the challenges and difficulties with the group of people that kind of understood it more was good. And I feel like we were all able to kind of support each other and lift each other up and not just focus on all the bad stuff. We all got into this for a reason. And it was good to be able to collaborate and get new ideas and give each other advice. I really feel like everyone was really good at that. Telling us what we needed to hear. It always helped getting a fresh set of eyes on a situation that I didn't know how to handle, and I would bring it to the girls, and they'd be like, this is what you should try.

Let us know how it works. And every time those meetings came around, I really needed it by then. The once-a-month thing, I'm gonna miss that, I think.

When I asked if she thought this kind of collaboration might be useful beyond the first year as well, she responded, "Sure. Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Definitely. Because the first year is definitely the toughest, but it's not all gonna be perfect after that either."

Selena also indicated that she would miss the monthly meetings comparing them to a "life jacket." And, similar to Regina and Kenzie, she valued the experience of reconnecting with peers from her same university background:

I really like being able to look forward to the meetings. It reminded me of being in school, kind of like I had my classmates back here to talk to. And I had you to talk to. I really loved working with you during student teaching. so it was great. I had that little support almost like all of you are this little life jacket... I like to hear what everyone else was saying about their experiences. You know, I was like, oh, man, I haven't gone through that. But Bridget said this, I'll try Bridget's idea. Or Regina and Kenzie said they're going through that. So am I. Let me try one of their ideas, or let me give them an idea. Um, so I really liked that, that we could do that, that we could just be honest with each other, as well... I learned something new every single day. So it was really nice to just kind of be like, they're there. They're there for me. I can quickly talk about, oh, I had a horrible day. Let me talk about it, or, hey, I had a great day. So, when you're able to share the lows and the highs, I feel like that's a really good support group.

Regardless of any outcomes regarding authoring of the self, or negotiating figured worlds, or any of the other perceived benefits I outlined in Chapters Four and Five in alignment with my theoretical framework, I think that these words of the group participants are sufficiently

convincing that this peer support group was beneficial. There are, however, issues that bear consideration going forward.

Considerations for Future Practice

In thinking about how the peer support model might fit into my future practice, one of my primary concerns arises from an internally persuasive discourse that I might ignore if it had not been for the work done by the novice teachers in our support group meetings. In this case, my concern is born from the internally persuasive discourse of self-preservation wrestling with the authoritative discourse of the self-sacrificing teacher (Britzman, 2003) as I described in Chapter Five, wherein “the ‘good’ teacher is positioned as self-sacrificing, kind, overworked, [and] underpaid” (p. 29).

In addition to providing research for this dissertation, conducting this support group was a labor of love for me. There are few things more satisfying to me as a teacher educator than seeing my students transform into competent and confident teachers in their own right, so being able to work with this group of teachers for an additional year was both a pleasure and a privilege. However, if I were to continue this practice in the future under current conditions, it would be uncompensated time. And if, for example, I were to conduct groups such as this for all of the recent graduates of my university program, I would be conducting several groups every year. For adjunct faculty, as many university supervisors are, this is not financially tenable. My hope is that university programs might see the value in programs such as this for increasing overall program quality, facilitating alumni outreach, and also maintaining a strong network of future possible mentor teachers in the K-12 community. If this were to happen, perhaps this kind of service could be recognized and compensated, whether financially, in the form of course release, or in some other way that would make sense depending on the institutional context. I think that one possible model, in the case of programs with larger numbers of participants, might

be to provide professional development credits to previous group participants to facilitate, with the university supervisor rotating among groups periodically instead of trying to facilitate all of the groups all of the time. It might also be possible to apply for grant funding to sustain this kind of program, given that the ultimate targeted outcomes are increased new teacher job satisfaction, decreased attrition, and improved teaching efficacy, all of which lead to improved educational outcomes for students. For example, I think that university teacher education programs might be able to apply for grants to support their alumni, or perhaps school districts and universities could partner to apply for grants that would fund the creation of a peer mentoring community of practice for novice teachers. And finally, I think it would be good, if possible, and if doing so would not require excessive structure to be placed on the meeting agendas, to offer professional development credits to the novice teacher group participants.

Emerging From the Liminal Space: Part Two

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, completing this dissertation has served as a conceptual goalpost for me to mark the end point of my own liminal space in the transition from teacher to teacher educator. I have now reached that point. However, as I also have realized through this process, passing the goalpost does not involve the kind of transition that I had initially supposed. I was, and I remain, both a teacher and a teacher educator. The roles are not in binary opposition to each other, just as theory and practice should not be, and just as the university and K-12 schools should not be. While I emerge from this particular liminal space, I hope to embrace the idea of liminality in its positive sense in my work going forward—in particular, in its focus on momentum, process, and possibility (Elfreich & Dennis, 2022), and its potential for reflection, growth, and transformation (Chang, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006; McCaw, 2021). Additionally, I hope to create environments for preservice and novice teachers whenever

possible in which Third Space experiences such as those I witnessed in this novice teacher support group can occur.

Time and space for teachers at any stage in their career to reflect on their practice, focus on self-care, and collaborate in ways that are meaningful to them is crucial. This time and space does not happen on its own—it must be intentionally curated. I am committed to doing my part to create these opportunities, and to remind teachers of the airplane safety advice regarding oxygen masks: “secure your mask before assisting others.” Investing time and resources in teachers’ well-being is investing time and resources in students.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocols

From Student to Teacher: A Third Space Approach to Support for World Language Teacher Education Graduates

IRB: #15938

Protocol, semi-structured interview 1 of 3

Topic domain: Experience as new teacher currently

Lead-off questions:

*So, tell me everything about your job! What will a typical day be like for you as you understand it/ what is a typical day like (*depends on if school has started yet which question*)? Don't be afraid of giving too much detail, I am interested in everything!*

How are you feeling going into this year? Why do you feel this way?

What contact have you had with other teachers or administrators you will be working with? Can you tell me more about your experiences with these colleagues so far?

[*covert categories: current state of professional identity development, emotional well-being, details of current stage of transitioning from student to teacher*]

Possible follow-up questions

1. What else are you excited/nervous/concerned about? Why do you feel this way?
2. Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Expectations for teaching this year

Lead-off questions:

What are you looking forward to doing in your classroom this year?

What are some goals you have for your teaching?

What will make you feel like this first/second/third year was a success at the end of the year?

[*covert categories: sense of self-efficacy, professional identity development trajectory, negotiating theory and practice, establishing expectations to contrast later with actual experience*]

Possible follow-up questions

Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Current professional identity

Lead-off questions:

What do you feel like are some of the most important things you learned from past experience, whether from teacher education, student teaching, or any other experience, that you are bringing with you into your practice this year?

If you were to place yourself on an imaginary scale where on one side is student and on the other side is professional teacher, where would you place yourself today? Why do you feel that way? What will move the needle for you?

Possible follow-up questions:

Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Support group hopes/expectations

Lead-off question

What would you like to get out of participation in the peer support/networking group with other graduates from your program this year?

[*covert categories: ideas for structure/topics for meetings, asynchronous component, other topics related to liminality, transition from student to teacher, professional identity development*]

Possible follow-up questions:

Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

**From Student to Teacher: A Third Space Approach to Support
for World Language Teacher Education Graduates**

IRB: #15938

Protocol, semi-structured interview¹ 2 of 3 (midpoint)

Topic domain: Experience as new teacher currently

Lead-off question: Tell me about a typical day at your job at this point in the year. What's your favorite/least favorite thing these days?

[*Covert categories: current state of professional identity development, sense of self-efficacy, emotional well-being, negotiating theory and practice day-to-day*]

Possible follow-up questions

1. Tell me about a particular success you have had recently that you feel good about.
2. You mentioned [a challenge they have encountered]. Can you tell me more about that?
3. What are you most proud of in your practice currently?
4. How would you characterize your emotional well-being at this point in the year? Can you tell me more about that?
5. Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Transition from student to teacher

Lead-off questions

Tell me about some of the biggest challenges you have faced during the first half of this school year.

What have been some things that have surprised you as you during these first months of your teaching this year?

Do you remember a moment where you felt particularly low in the beginning? Tell me about that.

Do you remember a moment where you felt great, when you overcame a challenge or had a particular success? Tell me about that.

[*Covert categories: challenges/successes experienced, issues encountered, tensions between expectations and reality (Figured Worlds of education), experiences/emotions related to liminality*]

¹ (Carspecken, 1996)

Possible follow-up questions

1. You describe feeling (X) when (Y) happened. Can you tell me more about that? (getting at emotions)
2. Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Experience with support

Lead-off question: What kind of support have you had as a beginning teacher at your school? This can be formal support, like an induction program or official mentoring program, or informal support, like a colleague who has been particularly helpful. Tell me everything!

[*Covert categories: spectrum of autonomy-support-micromanagement, isolation of teaching, “support” that is not helpful, support that would be helpful but that is not given*]

Possible follow-up questions

1. Tell me more about what that colleague did to help. What are some ways these things were helpful to you?
2. What specific things about the induction program were helpful? What made them helpful?
3. Were there things that any colleagues did that were *not* helpful in the beginning?
4. Were there elements of the induction/mentoring program that were *not* helpful? What made them not helpful?
5. What are some ways you could have been supported more in the beginning? What kind of support would have been helpful?
6. Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Support group check-in

Lead-off questions

Tell me about your experience with the group so far. How are things going?

What feels beneficial about the group?

What would you like to change? How could it be better?

What else would you like to share with me?

Possible follow-up questions

1. What are some things we could do differently that might make that would make our meeting time more beneficial/productive?
2. Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

**From Student to Teacher: A Third Space Approach to Support
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Protocol, semi-structured interview 3 of 3 (final)

Topic domain: Current status, professional identity development

Lead-off questions:

How are you feeling as the year comes to an end? Why do you feel that way?

Tell me about some of the people at your school who have had the biggest impact on you this year, for better or for worse.

What has been the biggest surprise you have encountered in the beginning of your teaching career? (or what have been the biggest surprises if not just one)

What has been your biggest challenge this year?

What has been your biggest success, or something you feel really good about?

Have any of your beliefs about teaching, education, or students changed after this year? Tell me more about that.

*What are some goals that you have for your teaching next year? What will you do differently?
What will you keep the same?*

*If you were to place yourself on an imaginary scale where on one side is student and on the other side is professional teacher, where would you place yourself today? Why do you feel that way?
What will move the needle for you?*

Possible follow-up questions:

Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Topic domain: Support group experience

Lead-off questions:

Tell me about your overall experience with the group. What was beneficial, and what was not so beneficial for you?

If you were to conduct a group like this for new teachers, what might you do differently?

What else would you like to share with me?

Possible follow-up questions:

Other follow-up questions may be asked based on answers to the above questions.

Appendix B

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH

From Student to Teacher: A Third Space Approach to Support for World Language Teacher Education Graduates

IRB: #15938

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Scientists do research to answer important questions that might help change or improve the way we do things in the future. This document will give you information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Please read this form, and ask any questions you have, before agreeing to be in the study.

All research is voluntary. You can choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to participate, you can change your mind later and leave the study at any time. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits if you decide not to participate or choose to leave the study later.

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the experiences of a small group of novice world language teachers from the same university teacher education program who meet as part of a teacher support group for recent program graduates. The experiences to be described and analyzed will include both those specifically related to participation in the support group, as well as the participants' discussions of their experiences as early-career teachers.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a recent graduate of a university teacher education program who is in the first three years of a professional teaching career. The study is being conducted by Shannon Athey, Department of Literacy, Culture and Language Education at Indiana University.

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things.

- Participate in three one-on-one interviews with the researcher, of approximately one hour each, conducted over Zoom or at a location of your choice.

- Participate in six group meetings with other novice teachers who are graduates from the same university teacher education program. These meetings will occur at one-month intervals with one month off for mid-point one-on-one interviews.
- Provide one monthly journal reflection which can be either written or in a multimodal format of your choice. You will have the choice to respond to a prompt that the researcher will provide, or to reflect freely as you wish on your experience as novice teachers or as participants in the study.
- Interact asynchronously with other participants and the researcher via a platform to be determined together. There is no set frequency required for this interaction.
- Share documents or artifacts with the researcher and/or other participants that you feel are reflective of your development as a professional teacher.

Before agreeing to participate, please consider the risks and potential benefits of taking part in this study.

While taking part in the study, the risks are minimal. When participating in the interviews, you can tell the researcher that you are uncomfortable or do not care to answer a particular question.

There is a risk someone outside the study team could get access to your research information from this study. More information about how we will protect your information to reduce this risk is below.

You may not have any personal benefits from taking part in this study, but we hope to learn things that will help researchers in the future. It is the researcher's hope that the peer group model of support for novice teachers will be beneficial, in which case it is possible that you could derive benefits from participation.

We will protect your information and make every effort to keep your personal information confidential, but we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. No information which could identify you will be shared in publications about this study.

I will use pseudonyms throughout and all reports and transcripts will be held in confidence. I will be the only individual who has access to the recorded data. The recordings and all other details will be stored on a password protected computer that only I have access to. Recordings will be transcribed. After they have been transcribed, the recordings will be deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Transcripts of audio files and all other sources of data will be stored electronically on my password protected computer.

Your personal information may be shared outside the research study if required by law. We also may need to share your research records with other groups for quality assurance or data analysis. These groups include the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and state or federal agencies who may need to access the research records (as allowed by law).

Information collected in this study may be used for other research studies or shared with other researchers for future research. If this happens, information that could identify you, such as your name and other identifiers, will be removed before any information or specimens are shared. Since identifying information will be removed, we will not ask for your additional consent.

You will not be paid for participating in this study. There is no cost to participate in the study.

If you have questions about the study or encounter a problem with the research, contact the researcher, Shannon Athey, at 302-388-1525 or sathey@iu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information or to offer input, please contact the IU Human Research Protection Program office at 800-696-2949 or at irb@iu.edu.

If you decide to participate in this study, you can change your mind and decide to leave the study at any time in the future. If you decide to withdraw, please notify the researcher either verbally or in writing. The researcher will confirm withdrawal in writing.

Appendix C

From Student to Teacher: A Third Space Approach to Support for World Language Teacher Education Graduates

IRB: #15938

Participant Recruiting Scripts

Initial text message to set up phone call/Zoom

Hi (name)! I am setting up a research study on a peer support group for new world language teachers. As a recent graduate who is getting started in the field, I would love to talk to you about this and see if you might like to participate. Do you have a few minutes at some point this week for a call or a Zoom?

Phone/Zoom script

Hi! Thanks so much for your time today! As I mentioned in my text, I am setting up a peer support and networking group for new teachers as part of my research on experiences and support of early-career teachers in the field. My hope is that the group will be a place where beginning teachers can talk about their experiences as new teachers, vent to each other about challenges they face, share ideas and effective, and work on developing their identities as professional teachers in a safe and supportive space.

If you decide to participate, you will participate in a support and networking group with other recent graduates from your same program who are in their first couple of years of teaching. We will meet six times during the school year over Zoom. You'll also do a one-on-one interview with me three times, at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. You will do a brief monthly reflection which can be either written like a journal, or can be multimodal in any way you choose. This is all about your experience as a new teacher, and as a participant in the group, so there will never be a right or wrong answer. You will also have the chance to interact with other participants between group meetings in a format we will decide together, but there will not be a required frequency for this. And you will also have the opportunity to share documents or artifacts that you feel are reflective of your development as a teacher.

I have a study information sheet that I will share with you that you can read over with all of the details. Can I email that to you and check with you in a couple of days to see if you have any questions? You can think about it and let me know then if you are interested in participating. Do you have any questions I can answer now?

CURRICULUM VITAE

SHANNON FINCH ATHEY

EDUCATION

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Ed.D., Literacy, Culture, Language Education (May 2024)

Dissertation Topic: Support for World Language Teacher Education Graduates

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

M.A., Spanish (May 2002)

M.S.Ed., Secondary Education: Foreign Language (May 2002)

University of Delaware, Newark, DE

Honors Bachelor of Arts, Magna Cum Laude (May 1995)

- Major: English; Minor: Spanish
- Honors Thesis, “Oral History: Mexican Migrant Workers”

Honors:

- Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society
- Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society
- Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society
- Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society

EDUCATIONAL LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION

- Level II PA Teacher Certification, Spanish PK-12

TEACHING EXPERIENCE, COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

West Chester University, West Chester, PA

Supervisor of Teacher Education, Department of Languages and Cultures (January 2020 – present)

Western Governors University, Salt Lake City, UT (online position)

Clinical Supervisor, Teacher Education (August 2018 – December 2022)

West Chester University, West Chester, PA
Instructor, Spanish (January 2008 – December 2014)

Delaware State University, Wilmington, DE
Instructor, Spanish (September 2007 – May 2008)

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
Instructor, English Language Program (July 2002 – August 2006)
Instructor, Spanish Department (September 2001 – September 2002)
Teaching Assistant (September 2000 – September 2001)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE, K-12

Laurel Springs School, Ojai, CA (online position)
Instructor, Spanish (March 2014 – May 2023)
Senior Mentor, World Languages Department (August 2019 – May 2023)

Strath Haven High School, Wallingford, PA
Teacher, Spanish (January 2002 – May 2007)

Saunders Middle School, Manassas, VA
Teacher, Spanish Immersion Program (October 1999 – June 2000)

Cora Kelly Elementary School, Alexandria, VA
Teacher, Spanish (FLES) (September 1998 – June 1999)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE, ADULT EDUCATION

Fairfax County Public Schools Adult Education Program, Fairfax County, VA
Teacher, Adult English as a Second Language (January 1997 – June 1998)

Technological University of Panama, Panama City, Panama
English Language Program Organizer (June – November 1995)

La Comunidad Hispana, Kennett Square, PA
ESL Teacher (September 1994 – May 1995)

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

- Proposal Reviewer for 2024 ACTFL Convention (2024)
- Selection Committee, Anthony Papalia Award for Excellence in Teacher Education (2023)
- Proposal Reviewer for 2023 ACTFL Convention (2023)

- Selection Committee, Nelson Brooks Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Culture (2022)
- Selection Committee, Award for Excellence in WL Instruction Using Technology-K-12 (2021)
- Member, Teacher Development Special Interest Group (2020 – present)

West Chester University, West Chester, PA

- Council for Professional Education

Member (January 2020 – present)

Member, Ad Hoc Speaking Emphasis Committee (Fall 2021)

The Hockessin Montessori School, Hockessin, DE

Member, Board of Trustees (September 2015 – present)

Chair (September 2018 – September 2022)

Vice Chair (September 2016 – August 2018)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2024 “It’s Like a Life Jacket”: Creating a Space for Novice Language Teacher Peer Support”
International Language Teacher Education Conference, University of Minnesota
- 2024 “Accompanying Each Other Across Borders: A Transformative Approach to Support for Novice World Language Teachers.”
World Conference on Transformative Education, University of Puerto Rico- Río Piedras.
- 2023 “Supporting Students, Student Teachers, and Professors By Identifying Strengths.”
Northeast Modern Language Association Convention, University at Buffalo.
- 2011 “Activities to Get Your Students Speaking.”
Conference on TESOL, Applied Linguistics and Foreign Languages, West Chester University.
- 2009 “Language Learning Activities and Games.”
Conference on TESOL, Applied Linguistics and Foreign Languages, West Chester University.
- 2008 “Learning Language Through Film.”
Conference on TESOL, Applied Linguistics and Foreign Languages, West Chester University.