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Discovering the Self That Teaches: Multimedia Reflective Journaling and the Education Stories of Beginning Preservice Teachers

Meredith Paula Allard
meredithallard@aol.com

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DISCOVERING THE SELF THAT TEACHES: MULTIMEDIA REFLECTIVE JOURNALING AND THE EDUCATION STORIES OF BEGINNING PRESERVICE TEACHERS

By

Meredith Allard

Bachelor of Arts — English
California State University, Northridge
1991

Master of Arts — English
California State University, Northridge
1994

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College of Education
The Graduate College

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Meredith Allard

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Doctor of Philosophy — Teacher Education
Department of Teaching and Learning

Jane McCarthy, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Chair

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.
Graduate College Interim Dean

Steven Bickmore, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Shaoan Zhang, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

LeAnn Putney, Ph.D.
Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Who is the self that teaches (Palmer, 1998)? One way of uncovering a teacher’s self may be to allow beginning preservice teachers the opportunity to share their education stories, which may then allow them to explore their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. This study used narrative inquiry and the arts-based activities of a multimedia reflective journal and a memoir reflective assignment as tools to help beginning preservice teachers discover and learn from their education stories. The frameworks of arts-based education research, transformative learning, and transformative teaching provided a unique lens through which to explore the education stories of the beginning preservice teacher participants. This study’s exploration of the education stories of beginning preservice teachers has implications for the future of preservice teacher training.

*Keywords: arts-based education research, multimedia reflective journal, multi-case study, narrative inquiry, preservice teachers, teacher reflection, transformative learning, transformative teaching*
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... iii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... iv
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................. viii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................. ix

Chapter One: Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1
  Background of the Problem ......................................................................................................... 2
  Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................................ 4
  Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 5
  Significance of the Study ............................................................................................................. 7
  Research Questions ..................................................................................................................... 7
  Definition of Terms ..................................................................................................................... 8
  Summary .................................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter Two: Literature Review ................................................................................................... 14
  Conceptual Framework ................................................................................................................ 15
  Theoretical Frameworks ............................................................................................................. 19
  Construction of the Literature Review ....................................................................................... 31
  Literature Review ....................................................................................................................... 32
  Summary .................................................................................................................................... 52

Chapter Three: Methodology ...................................................................................................... 53
  Methods ...................................................................................................................................... 53
  Multi-Case Study ......................................................................................................................... 54
  Research Questions ..................................................................................................................... 56
Participants and Context of the Study .......................................................... 56
Researcher’s Role ....................................................................................... 57
Data Sources ............................................................................................. 59
Data Collection .......................................................................................... 63
Data Analysis ............................................................................................. 65
Timeline ..................................................................................................... 67
Limitations of Methodology ....................................................................... 67
Summary ..................................................................................................... 68
Chapter Four: Findings ............................................................................ 69
Research Questions .................................................................................. 69
Data Collection and Analysis .................................................................. 69
Findings ...................................................................................................... 74
Research Question 1 ................................................................................ 75
Discussion of Case Findings ..................................................................... 109
Research Question 2 ................................................................................ 114
Summary ................................................................................................... 123
Chapter Five: Conclusion ......................................................................... 125
Theme 1 ..................................................................................................... 126
Theme 2 ..................................................................................................... 129
Theme 3 ..................................................................................................... 130
Role of Creativity ..................................................................................... 133
Discovery of the Self That Teaches ......................................................... 135
Implications ............................................................................................... 136
Limitations………………………………………………………………………………138
Recommendations for Future Research………………………………………………139
Conclusion………………………………………………………………………………140

Appendices

Appendix A: Directions for the Multimedia Reflective Journal……………………..143
Appendix B: Interview Protocol…………………………………………………………145
Appendix C: Memoir Reflective Assignment………………………………………….146
Appendix D: Student Information on Transformative Learning……………………..148
Appendix E: What is a Story? ……………………………………………………………149
Appendix F: How to Write Field Notes For School Observations…………………..150
Appendix G: Participant Consent Form……………………………………………….151
Appendix H: James’ Memoir Education Story………………………………………..153
Appendix I: Ella’s Memoir Education Story…………………………………………..157
Appendix J: Martine’s Memoir Education Story………………………………………162
Appendix K: James’ Multimedia Images………………………………………………166
Appendix L: Ella’s Multimedia Images…………………………………………………167
Appendix M: Martine’s Multimedia Images…………………………………………..168

References………………………………………………………………………………169

Curriculum Vitae……………………………………………………………………….193
List of Tables

Table 1 Theoretical Frameworks and Links to Study .................................................. 28
Table 2 Connections Between Theoretical Frameworks and Research Questions .......... 29
Table 3 Putney Data Table ......................................................................................... 64
Table 4 Timeline of Study ......................................................................................... 67
Table 5 Developmental Changes During Introduction to Elementary Education .......... 75
List of Figures

Figure 1 Teacher Self to Teacher Identity Scale ......................................................... 36
Figure 2 James’ Image 1 ............................................................................................. 77
Figure 3 James’ Image 2 ............................................................................................. 78
Figure 4 James’ Image 3 ............................................................................................. 79
Figure 5 James’ Image 4 ............................................................................................. 80
Figure 6 James’ Image 5 ............................................................................................. 83
Figure 7 Ella’s Image 1 ................................................................................................ 87
Figure 8 Ella’s Image 2 ................................................................................................ 89
Figure 9 Ella’s Image 3 ................................................................................................ 92
Figure 10 Ella’s Image 4 .............................................................................................. 94
Figure 11 Martine’s Image 1 ....................................................................................... 99
Figure 12 Martine’s Image 2 ....................................................................................... 100
Figure 13 Martine’s Image 3 ....................................................................................... 102
Figure 14 Martine’s Image 4 ....................................................................................... 106
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Let me tell you a story.

I decided in the fourth grade that I wanted to become a teacher. In 1994, I began my teaching career, and between 1994 and 2014, I taught most grades in K-12. I began as a kindergarten teacher, and then I taught 2nd and 5th grade in elementary school, then grades 6 and 7 in middle school, then grades 9, 10, and 11 in high school. During those years I also taught creative writing workshops for adults.

Throughout my 20 years in K-12 classrooms, some aspects of education I instinctively understood were at odds with what I was told by other teachers and administrators. At that time, I did not have the language to explain why I knew that we should allow students to tell their stories. I understood that there was something to storytelling, something that allowed students to break through the humdrum of recalling and retelling and allowed them to rise to the higher-level thinking of conceiving and creating. Despite restrictions set upon teachers by the culture of standardized testing that has overtaken education since the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001—a culture that insists that academic success can only be determined by standardized test scores—I persisted in encouraging my students to tell their stories. I saw with my own eyes how storytelling served a practical purpose: when my students were telling stories, they were thinking deeply. I could see that, through their stories, my students were stretching their understandings about whatever topic we were studying.

Other teachers did not see it that way. Once during a grade-level teacher meeting I shared how I had seen my students’ writing improve, including their essay writing, after I taught them storytelling skills. Storytelling cracks their brains open and allows them to trust their own
voices and express their own truths, I said. Essay writing has the same needs—a unique voice and the ability to express thoughts that only could have come from that writer. A fellow teacher said, “Not everyone is going to be a novelist.” I had no quick-witted rejoinder, no argument to explain my thinking, so I said nothing. I knew what I knew about storytelling because I knew it, but others were not going to take my word for it. Now, through the study and research required for my PhD in Teacher Education, I have discovered the language scholars use when discussing the importance of storytelling for K-12 students, preservice teachers, and inservice teachers. I discovered new answers to my questions about how and why allowing students to flex their storytelling muscles helps them grow and learn.

If only teaching were as simple as allowing students to tell their stories. Teaching has become more difficult since I began in 1994. Teaching has become more micromanaged, more fault-finding, and far more stressful. How might storytelling through the use of arts-based activities—a multimedia reflective journal and a memoir reflective assignment—help beginning preservice teachers better understand their roles as future teachers? This question formed the underlying basis for this study.

**Background of the Problem**

Schools in the United States are struggling to, first, find future teachers and, then, retain those teachers in the workforce. Not many university students plan on becoming teachers in the first place. A 2016 survey of incoming university freshmen noted that the number of students planning on majoring in education reached its lowest point in 45 years. Only 4.2% of the students surveyed planned on majoring in education, down from 11% in 2000 (Flannery, 2016). The problem becomes more worrisome since the university students who do choose to major in education and become licensed teachers often end up leaving the profession after a few years.
Half a million K-12 teachers leave the profession every year (Haynes, 2014). Fifty-five percent of U.S. teachers report that their morale is low and declining, and 40% to 50% of new teachers leave within their first year (Ingersoll, 2012; National Union of Teachers, 2013).

Education reform efforts consistently fall short of improving teaching and learning in the majority of K-12 schools (Parmenter, 2013). Teachers suffer high burnout rates, which leads to high attrition rates, which leads to teacher shortages throughout the United States. Freudenberger (1974) defined burnout as physical and emotional depletion resulting from work conditions. Although burnout is most often associated with inservice teachers, preservice teachers can also suffer from physical and emotional depletions. Fimian and Blanton (1987) investigated preservice, first year, and experienced teachers’ burnout and found that preservice teachers exhibited burnout in ways nearly identical to the burnout experienced by inservice teachers.

After surviving the pressures of their preservice teacher training, early career teachers experience particularly high levels of stress and burnout (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Teaching holds many challenges, even for preservice teachers who are not yet officially in the profession, and once they have their own classrooms they may not know how to handle those challenges (Kutcy & Shulz, 2006). Teachers often feel voiceless and powerless to create change in the larger educational system, in the general public, in their schools, and even in their own classrooms (Kutcy & Shulz, 2006).

Preservice teachers choose to pursue a career in education for various reasons. Whenever I asked preservice teachers why they chose teaching as their profession, their reasons often ranged from feeling called to the classroom to thinking teaching is important work to feeling a passion for making a difference in students’ lives. Unfortunately, somewhere in the day-to-day reality of teaching, these formerly passionate preservice teachers lose their idealism and become
overwhelmed by the challenges. This disconnect may be the result of the discrepancy between what they thought teaching would be and what teaching actually is (Chapman, 2005). As Palmer (1998) stated, it can be painful for teachers to become disconnected from their own truths and from the passions that took them into teaching in the first place.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since a testing-based culture has become the standard for academic success, teacher preparation programs have moved away from a holistic model of education and become aligned with a business model as a way of raising standardized test scores (Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, & Ness, 2005). Standards that are external and perhaps meaningless to students now drive curriculum and professional development (Klein, 2010b). This presents problems for teacher educators who want to offer their preservice teachers theories and methods that align more closely with the preservice teachers’ unique personalities and beliefs (Klein, 2010b). Preservice teacher education has largely ignored the development of the inner life of teachers’ self-awareness and self-understanding (Klein, 2010b). The processes attributed to one’s inner life associated with intuition, contemplation, visualization, and imagination have been ignored in teacher education programs (Klein, 2008). If preservice teachers are going to develop self-awareness and self-understanding, it might be helpful for them to draw on their strengths and beliefs in a way that allows them to remember why they chose to become teachers in the first place (Pearce & Morrison, 2011).

Preservice teachers who have experienced challenges to their fixed assumptions may become more flexible, more open to change, and more resilient in how they handle the physical and emotional depletions common to teachers. Engaging in the soul work, or inner work, of critical reflection may help preservice teachers become better equipped to handle the demands
placed on them by their students, their schools, and their society (Dirkx, 1997). Focusing on intuition, imagination, and contemplation in innovative teacher preparation programs can pull together the pieces that have been lost in traditional teacher preparation programs (Klein, 2008).

The role of teacher preparation programs is to create competent, quality teachers. Competent, quality teachers are one of the most influential factors in improving student learning outcomes (Giest, 2008; Hightower et al., 2011). According to The Center for High-Impact Philanthropy, “Quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice” (2010, p. 7). What can be done during beginning-level teacher preparation coursework to help preservice teachers grow into lifelong learners and reflective practitioners? Just as teacher preparation programs have been accused of ignoring the inner lives of teachers, teacher preparation programs have also been charged with being irrelevant, overly theoretical, and out of touch with the realities of teaching (Klein, 2010b; Van den Berg, Jansen, & Blijleven, 2004). The common training of preservice teachers in best practices and techniques of classroom management has proven to be inadequate preparation for classroom teaching (Shigo, 2016). If preservice teachers have the opportunity to explore their inner lives through the reflection that comes with storytelling, and if they are able to experience some level of transformative learning, they may then become reflective, resilient teachers with lengthy, rewarding careers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how arts-based activities, a multimedia reflective journal and a memoir reflective assignment, might help preservice teachers reflect on their education stories. As a result of reflecting on their education stories—stories specific to their educational lives—beginning preservice teachers may begin to develop an initial self-
concept of their role as future teachers. Perhaps they may even begin to develop an inkling of a teacher identity that could carry them through a fulfilling career in education.

For the purposes of this study, a multimedia reflective journal was defined as journaling that used both images and words with the intention of reflecting on one’s education stories. The inspiration for the use of a multimedia reflective journal for this study came from a self-study I completed while teaching preservice teachers during the Fall 2016 semester. While teaching a general methods course for preservice secondary teachers, I kept a multimedia reflective journal in order to understand my own teacher identity as it evolved from that of K-12 teacher to that of teacher educator. Through keeping the journal, I was able to monitor my own transformation as I watched myself grow from a teacher-centered instructor to a student-centered instructor.

According to Scott Shields (2016), when researchers engage in arts-based inquiry they should participate in the creation of artwork as a way to develop meaning and knowledge, which is what I did through keeping my own multimedia reflective journal. After my experience with the multimedia reflective journal, I wondered if such a journal would be a useful tool to help preservice teachers discover their education stories, which might then shed insight into who they are becoming as future teachers. Narrative inquiry was used in this study as the basis from which beginning preservice teachers were able to craft their education stories.

Storytelling is the oldest form of education (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005), and this study used storytelling as a way to allow beginning preservice teachers an opportunity for self-examination and self-awareness. This study provided beginning preservice teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their education stories, and by extension, they had the opportunity to see how, or if, their self-concepts of their roles as future teachers evolved.
Significance of the Study

The Arts-Based Research Institute was offered for the first time at Stanford University to members of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in 1993 (Eisner, 2006). Since then, arts-based studies have become an accepted form of education research (Knowles & Promislow, 2008).

Arts-based frameworks can be used as a pathway between scientific and artistic ways of comprehending the human experience (Rolling, 2010). Education researchers can use arts-based frameworks as a means to combine pedagogical, artistic, and research purposes (Harris & Barney, 2015). Peer-reviewed literature exists that used arts-based education research to explore teachers and teaching (Falk-Ross, 2012; Klein, 2010; Lewis, 2011; Mason & Klein, 2013; Thorne, 2012; White & Lemieux, 2015; Woods, Barksdale, Triplett, & Potts, 2014). Few, if any, studies focus on using arts-based education research with preservice teachers at the beginning of their teacher preparation program. This gap in the literature indicates that we still have much to learn about how beginning preservice teachers might explore their education stories through arts-based activities. Storytelling through the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment allowed the beginning preservice teacher participants an opportunity to share their unique voices and lived experiences. The findings of this study offered something new to the body of research in Teacher Education by using narrative inquiry and arts-based education—storytelling through the multimedia reflective assignments—as a means to explore how beginning preservice teachers develop into professional educators.

Research Questions

The research questions provided a springboard for inquiry into the use of arts-based activities as a way for preservice teachers to explore their education stories. The prompts posed
in the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment were crafted to discover data relevant to the research questions, and the gathering, coding, and analysis of the data were also guided by the research questions.

The research questions guiding this study were:

**RQ1:** In what ways might beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course?

**RQ2:** How might storytelling through a multimedia reflective journal be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators?

The data collected in response to Research Question 1 were related to the frameworks of transformative learning theory and transformative teaching in its interest in how preservice teachers might begin to change their existing educational beliefs. The data collected in response to Research Question 2 were related to the framework of arts-based education research in its interest in the stories of the preservice teacher participants as shared through the multimedia reflective assignments. By exploring the education stories of the beginning preservice teacher participants we have gained some insight into their prior knowledge and beliefs about teaching, as well as how their knowledge and beliefs may change during their teacher preparation coursework. The qualitative method of multi-case study was used since multi-case studies enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases while examining findings across cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The three beginning preservice teacher participants in this study were viewed as unique cases since they shared their individual education stories and still had common traits amongst each other.

**Definition of Terms**

*Arts-Based Education Research*
Arts-based education research in this study met two criteria: (1) it is associated with artistic activity in order to enhance perspectives on educational activities; and (2) it has aesthetic qualities or elements that infused the inquiry process and the research text (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

**Beginning Preservice Teachers**

The term preservice teachers is accepted by education researchers when referring to university students studying education with the intention of becoming future teachers (Kennedy, 1999). The term beginning preservice teachers was used here as a way to differentiate between preservice teachers at the start of their teacher preparation coursework, which was the focus of this study, and preservice teachers at the end of their coursework who are student teaching.

**Education Stories**

The term education stories was used here to denote stories from the preservice teacher participants that are specific to their educational lives, stories that helped shape their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers.

**Identity**

The definition from Dictionary.com (http://www.dictionary.com/browse/identity) worked well for this study: identity is the condition as to who a person or what a thing is; the qualities, beliefs, etc., that distinguish or identify a person or thing.

**Multimedia Reflective Journal**

For the purposes of this study, a multimedia reflective journal was defined as journaling that used multimedia art images and/or digital images along with the written word with the specific intention of reflecting on the preservice teachers’ education stories.
**Narrative and Story**

The term narrative, sometimes called story, has different meanings in different contexts. The website Literary Devices (https://literarydevices.net/narrative/) defined narrative and story as a sequence of connected events, whether real or fictional. The beginning preservice teacher participants shared their education-related personal understandings and lived experiences through verbal, written, and visual communication. For the purposes of the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment, the term story referred to writing that included a sense of time, place, emotions, and possible lessons learned.

**Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry was defined as a way of studying human experience through story. Stories were used as data to understand the educational experiences of the beginning preservice teachers as lived and told (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007).

**Reflection**

Reflection in this study was defined according to Hoshmand (1994)—the engagement in questioning thought that promotes self-knowledge. The terms reflection and critical reflection were used interchangeably.

**Teacher Identity**

Teacher identity is embedded in one’s personal biography (Bukor, 2011). Teacher identity is defined as an ongoing, dynamic process in which individuals negotiate external and internal expectations as they work to make sense of their work as educators (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).
Teacher Development

Patel et al. (2017) noted that in order for teachers to develop into efficient, effective professionals, they must acquire both personal and professional qualities such as a sound value system, empathy, dedication, loyalty, and honesty. Such qualities may have already existed or may develop in the preservice teachers while they are taking their teacher preparation coursework.

Teacher Self

Since this study focused on beginning preservice teachers, it was difficult to argue that the participants developed a clear sense of teacher identity during their introductory elementary education course. The term teacher self was inspired by the question from Palmer (1998): “Who is the self that teaches?” (p. 8). The term teacher self is meant more generally than the term teacher identity, which has been specifically defined (see Teacher Identity above). While the beginning preservice teachers in this study did not end the semester with a clear sense of their teacher identities, they did, as a result of their exploration of their education stories, end the semester with some preliminary sense of the self that will teach. The concept of the teacher self stems from the idea that beginning teachers may come to understand their professional identities in stages. If a more complete sense of identity is to be found at the end of the teacher development spectrum, then what is at the beginning of that spectrum? I have chosen to call that beginning the teacher self. Prior to having a full sense of a teacher identity, a beginning teacher may evolve an initial sense of who they are becoming as teachers, which, with additional coursework, field experiences, and reflection, may blossom into a more complete sense of identity.
Teacher Reflection

LaBoskey (1993) suggested that learners’ initial reflective abilities and orientations had an impact on how they participate in reflective activities and what they take away from those activities. LaBoskey believed that there is an underlying reason for reflection, which may be a difficulty, an internal motivation to reflect, a need to regain control of a situation, or a desire to better comprehend an issue. For this study, teacher reflection was defined as the engagement in questioning thought that promotes self-knowledge for preservice or inservice teachers.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning in this study was defined as the time when, or if, preservice teachers experienced the transformation of their frames of reference and then understood their roles as future teachers more deeply due to challenges to their previous ways of thinking. After this perspective transformation, the preservice teachers may be able to make better choices and act upon those new understandings.

Transformative Teaching

Transformative teaching (teaching to make a difference) was referred to in this study as teaching meant to encourage growth in preservice teachers through intentional instructional strategies, creative action, and purposeful engagement (Shigo, 2016).

Summary

If the current strategies of training preservice teachers have proven to be inadequate preparation for a career in education (Shigo, 2016), then new forms of teacher training must be discovered in order to prepare today’s teachers for the challenges they will face. Being able to think on one’s feet, being able to respond to students in various situations, and being adaptable are all the result of creative, flexible thinking. Creative, flexible thinking is encouraged by arts-
based practices (Oreck, 2004). There has been growing interest in arts-based education activities as a way for preservice teachers to learn to think for themselves and trust their own judgment (Smithbell, 2010). Meintjes and Grosser (2010) believed that teachers should be creative thinkers in order to nurture creative thinking among learners.

The intention of this study was to gather rich data that may help teacher educators learn new ways to prepare future teachers from the beginning of their training instead of waiting until the end of the preparation program, by which time the preservice teachers’ beliefs may have developed past the point of transformation. Storytelling is one way teacher educators can help preservice teachers develop self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-evaluation skills.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

How are the education stories of beginning preservice teachers connected to arts-based education research, transformative learning, and transformative teaching? How might storytelling through multimedia reflective assignments be used to examine beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers? This chapter reviews literature pertinent to teacher identity, teacher self, teacher reflection, narrative inquiry, and creativity in teacher education.

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of this study’s conceptual framework, arts-based education research, and two theoretical frameworks, transformative learning theory and transformative teaching. Table 1 at the end of this section links the theories with the corresponding components of this study. Table 2, also at the end of this section, links each theory with the study’s research questions. The literature review will then summarize significant research on the themes of teacher identity, teacher self, teacher reflection, narrative inquiry, and creativity in teacher education. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks and the literature review are presented as a way to connect the dots between the elements of arts-based education research, transformative learning, and transformative teaching and how beginning preservice teachers may start to discover their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers through storytelling in multimedia reflective assignments.
Conceptual Framework

Arts-Based Education Research

Many studies about the use of reflective journaling in teacher education have focused on written-only journals. The beginning preservice teacher participants in this study created multimedia reflective assignments as the means through which they engaged in reflection on their education stories. Arts-based education research provided a rationale for the use of multimedia reflective assignments with the beginning preservice teacher participants.

The goal of education is to increase student invention and discovery (Arends, 2014). Dewey (2007) believed that teachers need to create lessons that will create experiences that will create lifelong learners. Not all aspects of experience can be understood through language since some emotional, sensory, and embodied dimensions of experience lie below consciousness and are difficult to articulate in words (Leitch, 2006). Non-verbal data should be incorporated into research to help make sense of non-verbalized meaning within the stories of lived experience (Leitch, 2006). According to White and Lemieux (2015), arts-based assignments can be used as teaching tools and integrated into teacher education research. Barone and Eisner (1997) believed that for research to be arts-based, it should be connected with artistic activity and contain design elements in both the research and the text. Painting as a way of learning about learning? Drawing? Photography? These artistic activities have been used by scholars to study the role of arts-based activities in the context of education research. Barone and Eisner (1997) articulated seven features of arts-based education research: (1) creation of a virtual reality; (2) presence of ambiguity; (3) use of expressive language; (4) use of contextualized and vernacular language; (5) promotion of empathy; (6) personal signature of the researcher/writer; and (7) presence of aesthetic form. Arts-based education research highlights subjective ways of knowing as opposed
to discovering generalizable findings (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Some researchers do not understand arts-based education research and view it as being too flimsy or not objective enough, though the intention of arts-based education research is the same as that of other education research—to improve learning (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

The idea that we might know something through art-making that is not knowable through other means is not part of our current thinking about education (Leitch, 2006). Increasing the ways we understand teaching and learning can allow us to tap into the strengths of both teachers and students. The development of arts-based education research draws from Eisner (1998), who argued that there are multiple ways of knowing. Finley (2005) helped to ground arts-based education studies in qualitative research while advocating arts-based education as a means of social investigation and political activism (Greenwood, 2012).

The link between arts-based education research and understanding the self can be found in the work of Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1986), the understanding of the self can be supported through semiotic means in signs and symbols and embodied in cultural artifacts. Digital storytelling and identity boxes are two examples of creative products that serve as cultural artifacts (Halter & Levin, 2014; White & Lemieux, 2015). If digital storytelling and identity boxes serve as cultural artifacts, then multimedia reflective assignments might serve the same purpose. Narrative expressed in artistic artifacts allows the past, present, and future to intersect and overlap in nonlinear ways that are open to imaginative possibilities (Bach, 2007). Verbal, written, or visual texts can convey the surprise, fascination, interest, or curiosity felt by its creator in the moment of its creation (Elliott, 2011). Lektorsky (1999) believed that people are essentially creative beings and they determine themselves through the objects they create.
Arts-based education is one way of knowing ourselves as teachers and researchers, as well as a unique way to come to know the research participants (Shipe, 2016). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning has a functional purpose for children since it enables them to achieve goals that are personally meaningful and socially valued. Learning serves the same functional purpose for adults. Systems of representation such as drawing, drama, and model-making have an important role in learning (Galbraith et al., 1999).

An arts-based curriculum breaks traditional boundaries, allowing students to challenge established ideas and worldviews, serving as a springboard for transformative learning. However, incorporating such an arts-based curriculum may be a challenge for K-12 teachers and teacher educators since allowing for imagination is the opposite of what our western society considers an effective use of time (Baer, 2013). Emotions and imagination have been considered dangerous and subversive, so the neglect of emotions and imagination in teacher preparation programs is understandable (Egan, 1992). Our current education system encourages a negative view of emotions, focusing too much on acquisitional learning and not enough on developmental learning (Holzman, 2008). Teacher preparation programs emphasize knowledge independent of instructional settings, though this type of knowledge does not necessarily come to a teacher’s mind during the times when teachers need solutions to immediate problems (Hewitt et al., 2003).

Interest has been growing in the use of creative activities for the purposes of education research (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Hewitt et al., 2003; Klein, 2010a; Klein, 2010b). Physical education is one field that has used visual methods to help teachers document how they understand their worlds (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2012). Visual methods allow another path to access participants’ voices, allowing them to speak of their experiences in their own ways (Parker, Patton, & Sinclair, 2016). Through taking photographs for Parker et al.’s study, teachers
became engaged in the research process and constructed their own learning. Garcia (2008) asked teachers to use photography to tell their stories as they documented their reasons for remaining at hard-to-staff schools despite the challenges. Different means through which to express themselves may be helpful for beginning preservice teachers who are wrestling with different states of mind (Keyes, 2011).

Most existing arts-based education research has employed art forms that are primarily literary in character, such as short stories, educational criticism, literary essays, theater, and poetry (Barone & Eisner, 2012). This study used two multimedia reflective assignments, a multimedia reflective journal and a memoir reflective assignment. The multimedia reflective journal allowed the beginning preservice teachers an opportunity to create written and visual responses to the journal prompts. The memoir reflective assignment consisted of both a written and visual memoir where the beginning preservice teacher participants focused on one education story in depth. By sharing both written and visual responses to the prompts, the beginning preservice teacher participants had different ways to dig in and reflect on who they were becoming as future teachers.

Education researchers writing about the use of reflective journals as a pedagogical tool have primarily used the journals with inservice teachers or preservice teachers nearing the end of their education coursework. This study explored the education stories of beginning preservice teachers at the start of their teacher preparation coursework. The use of arts-based education research provided a different lens through which to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers.
Theoretical Frameworks

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning is one of the most written about theories in andragogy, the study of adult education. The importance of transformative learning theory to education research can be gauged by the number of students who have used it as a basis for their dissertations (Christie et al., 2015). Transformation, when used in connection with transformative learning theory, does not simply refer to change but to an at-the-core alteration of some deeply held belief or knowledge. Many have experienced profound change, whether it was in their religious beliefs, their political beliefs, and, possibly for teachers, their educational beliefs. Transformative learning theory is about interpreting new knowledge and reinterpreting old events through a new set of expectations that occur as the result of a change in frames of reference.

Four strands of thought about transformative learning theory stem from the works of Paulo Freire, Larry Daloz, Robert Boyd, and Jack Mezirow (Dirkx, 1998). For Freire, adult education instills critical consciousness among both individuals and groups with the premise of creating freedom from oppression. Freire (1972) believed that education is a means through which to liberate people from unjust social structures since once people are educated they can transform their social environments. According to Daloz, adults have an innate need to create meaning from their lives so they might move from one phase of their development to the next when their current phase is no longer working for them. Boyd, writing from the point of view of a Jungian psychologist, focused on the emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning and how those dimensions work within adults’ daily lives. As a result of becoming aware of aspects of themselves that before were previously unknown, adults acquire a deeper sense of self-knowledge (Dirkx, 1998).
The work of Jack Mezirow (1991, 1995, 1996) has had substantial impact on the study of transformative learning. Mezirow’s study of transformative learning grew from work by Mezirow and Marsick (1978) where they studied women returning to college or the workforce after a prolonged absence. Mezirow and Marsick sought to identify factors that might have impeded or facilitated the women’s progress in the re-entry programs (Kitchenham, 2008). It was believed that a return to study could lead to consciousness raising in the women. The process tended to occur in 10 steps: (1) a disorienting dilemma; (2) self-examination; (3) sense of alienation; (4) relating discontent to others; (5) explaining options of new behaviors; (6) building confidence in new ways; (7) planning a course of action; (8) knowledge to implement plans; (9) experimenting with new roles; and (10) reintegration (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger, 2015). Over the years, Mezirow continued revising transformative learning theory, bringing more attention to the discussion about how adults learn (Kitchenham, 2008).

What prompts profound changes in understanding? Scholars of transformative learning theory have suggested that as people grow from childhood to adulthood, they develop assumptions, beliefs, and expectations that become part of their frames of reference, also known as meaning perspectives, through which they understand the world (Dirkx, 1998; Howie & Bagnall, 2013). Mezirow believed that transformative learning was an application of critical thinking that transforms a frame of reference—a mindset or worldview of orienting assumptions and expectations involving values, beliefs, and concepts (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006).

Mezirow (1997) believed that our frames of reference are composed of habits of mind—ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions formed from a person’s cultural, political, educational, and economic realities. Frames of reference are defined as the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions through which new experiences are understood.
We develop these frames of reference during childhood as a result of our personal natures as well as socio-cultural influences such as experiences with teachers, parents, and peers. We do not question these frames of reference but take them for granted, and our frames of reference remain the way in which we understand the world unless those frames of reference are challenged. Mezirow (2000) suggested that adults learn by elaborating on existing frames of reference, learning new frames of reference, and transforming points of view.

When an adult’s point of view is transformed, it results in a perspective transformation, also known as a paradigm shift. The perspective transformation occurs as the result of five conditions: (1) an activating event that exposes the limitations of a learner’s current knowledge; (2) opportunities for the learner to identify the underlying assumptions in his or her current knowledge; (3) self-reflection as the learner considers how these assumptions may have limited understanding; 4) discourse with other learners and the instructor where alternative ideas are examined; and (5) opportunities to apply new perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). Cranton (2002) suggested that when these five conditions occur, adults are more likely to revise their underlying assumptions, adopt a paradigm shift, and apply this perspective transformation to new situations. The ability to experience transformative learning is dependent on the ability to be affected (Massumi, 2002).

Disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, and rational discourse are experiences that may instigate this perspective transformation (Howie & Bagnall, 2013). After the perspective transformation, adults understand the world more deeply due to the challenges to their previous way of thinking. Mezirow (1991) believed that after a perspective transformation the adult is able to make better choices and act upon the new understanding. Learning can only be called transformative if it involves questioning or reordering of how one thinks or acts (Brookfield,
Imagination and creativity play a key role in transformative learning since both imagination and creativity are necessary to understanding the unknown (Mezirow, 1995).

Transformative learning can occur in a linear manner or it may be disjointed and fluid (Taylor, 2007). Transformative learning can also occur in an epochal transformation, when one’s frame of reference shifts very quickly, or in an incremental transformation when frames of reference change over time (Howie & Bagnall, 2013). According to Donne (2017), the only way to help people remove their confusion is to help them step back, see that confusion, and find a better solution to their problems. How do we handle the discomfort inherent in transformative learning? Mezirow noted the need to develop communicative skills so that internal and external conflicts can be resolved through discourse instead of force (Christie et al., 2015).

Mezirow (1991) stated that a person may have uncomfortable or disorienting feelings when making meaning within their current frame of reference is not possible or when beliefs are challenged. For example, I experienced my own disorienting feelings as the result of beginning the PhD program in Teacher Education after 20 years as a K-12 teacher. For two decades I had a strong sense of who I was, and I was certain I understood my teacher identity. After beginning the PhD program, I found myself taking and teaching classes and conducting research that forced me to reconsider everything I thought I knew about teachers and teaching. The feeling of discomfort that came with having my frames of reference challenged was similar to that of a child who has outgrown her shoes and is now stumbling over her own toes. I had to adjust my beliefs about my teacher identity because my old beliefs did not fit any longer. Now, as a teacher educator, I have new shoes. This is transformative learning. Preservice teachers enrolled in their teacher preparation coursework may feel a similar type of discomfort and disorientation. Though
the teacher preparation coursework can be demanding, such coursework may contain important opportunities for transformation (Willinck & Jacobs, 2012).

One key component of transformative learning theory is critical reflection. Dewey (1933) referred to reflection as an active and careful consideration of any belief or knowledge. Reflection helps learners become aware of their frames of reference while assessing the validity of those frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1998) noted that critical reflection, or critical reflection of assumptions, is important in understanding how adults learn to act for themselves rather than depending on the concepts, values, and feelings of others.

The role of adult education is to help learners realize the ability to be reflective and develop the skills and dispositions necessary for such reflection (Mezirow, 2003). Through reflection, a person’s thoughts can wander over ideas and experiences, imagining alternatives that might not have occurred if the time was not taken to reflect. Human beings strive to create sense from their experiences, and reflection is one tool we can use to create that sense. Dirkx (1997) referred to such introspection as soul work or inner work. In this study beginning preservice teacher participants engaged in reflection through storytelling that may have become soul work or inner work as they explored their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers.

Reflecting on our teacher beliefs allows us to situate our stories so that we can grow as educators (Bailey, 1997). According to Russell (2005), reflective practice should be taught explicitly and thoughtfully. Reflection on teaching should begin with identifying the beliefs we take for granted while engaging in learning that leads to a validation or rejection of those beliefs (Kreber, 2004). Preservice teachers, even those at the beginning of their education coursework, do not enter their teacher preparation program as empty vessels. They begin that coursework
with assumptions, beliefs, prior knowledge, and lived experiences, and teacher educators cannot simply fill preservice teachers’ brains with theories and best practices and expect effective, resilient teachers to emerge. Teacher educators have the difficult job of helping preservice teachers unlearn common but unjustified beliefs about education (McGonigal, 2005). Through their coursework, preservice teachers may become aware of how they take their frames of reference for granted as well as how they might expand those frames of reference. Quirke and Zagallo (2010) noted that change is as much about confirming beliefs as it is about adapting those beliefs to new knowledge.

One criticism of transformative learning theory is that it focuses too much on the rational and cognitive processes of reflection and not enough on the emotional and social aspects (Mälkki, 2010). Such critics have noted that transformative learning theory does not adequately account for the emotional and spiritual dimensions that may be a necessary component of transformative learning experiences (Dierkx, 1998; Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) posed the possibility that previous research might have been too generous in assuming the presence of critical reflection among participants when attempting to make meaning of a transformative learning experience. Some participants may say what they think the researcher wants to hear instead of sharing the truth of their perspectives. Clark and Wilson (1991) argued that another flaw in transformative learning theory is that it does not account for the need for context even though context is the link between experience and meaning.

According to Pugh (2002), people undergo transformative experiences when they use a concept, find that the concept allows them to see new aspects of the world, and then come to value this new way of understanding. If preservice teachers are allowed the opportunity to reflect and evolve in their assumptions and actions, they may then become capable of acting for the best
in a changing world (Christie et al., 2015). Preservice teachers may develop more self-awareness by becoming conscious of the thoughts, beliefs, and prejudices behind their actions so that they have control over their actions rather than allowing their actions to have control over them.

**Transformative Teaching**

Transformative teaching is connected to transformative learning since it addresses teaching practices that may lead to transformative learning. Mezirow (1997) stated that the educator’s role is that of a facilitator rather than an authority:

The facilitator encourages learners to create norms that accept order, justice, and civility in the classroom and respect and responsibility for helping each other learn; to welcome diversity; to foster peer collaboration; and to provide equal opportunity for participation (p. 11).

Dirkx (2006) noted that for some educators, their interests revolve around learning that brings students’ experiences of the outer world to connect with that of their inner world. Transformative teaching could be used as a way to increase students’ mastery of key concepts while changing how they understand their attitudes, beliefs, and skills (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

In taking a constructivist view, it could be argued that preservice teachers need space to participate in the construction of their own learning. Transformative teaching seeks to provide that space. In order for transformative teaching to occur, there should be an activating event that prompts preservice teachers to examine the limitations of their understanding, an identifying of current assumptions, an encouraging of critical reflection from the instructor, and an encouraging of critical discourse with other preservice teachers, as well as the opportunity to test new ideas.
Transformative teaching motivates students to learn from their mistakes and discover how their current knowledge is insufficient to solve a problem (McGonigal, 2005).

One important component of transformative teaching is that it acknowledges both teachers and students as emotional beings. As Jansen (2009) stated, “The idea that the student is the target of change is commonplace in the educational change literature. But what about those who teach?” (p. 331). Since beginning preservice teachers are in the process of becoming those who teach, it may be important to recognize them as emotional beings. In fact, emotions are often the starting point for reflection, and understanding one’s feelings is an important aspect of learning (Boler, 1999).

Willink and Jacobs (2012) believed that educators might help their students become more aware of their feelings by focusing on emotional words and sentiments expressed during class discussions and in writing. Teachers and students should acknowledge feelings connected to their beliefs and recognize how those feelings affect their ability to open themselves to differing beliefs (Willink & Jacobs, 2012). The way that a teacher educator questions students can direct class discussions toward a deeper level of inquiry (Galbraith, Van Tassell, & Wells, 1999).

Stark (1991) believed that teacher educators should encourage preservice teachers to experience teaching as being instead of doing. Some instructors strive to teach with the intention of inspiring love in their students for a particular subject (Neumann, 2006). Some teacher educators wish to inspire a love of learning in their preservice teachers, who may one day go on to inspire a love of learning in their future students.

Hope is also an important quality in transformative teaching. According to Nieto (2003), hope is one quality all good teachers share: “In spite of anger and impatience or the level of frustration and exhaustion that they experienced, most remained in teaching...because of hope”
(p. 52). Hope is the reason I have remained a teacher after 24 years, and it is hope I hold onto as I do my best to assist preservice teachers toward a rewarding teaching career of their own.

In order to teach to make a difference in students’ lives, Dewey claimed, the teacher must be given the intellectual freedom to make curricular judgments that give purpose to teaching practices (Shigo, 2016). Transformative teaching gives purpose to my teaching practices. I realize when I am teaching that my intentions are not necessarily what is being received by my preservice teachers; still, I teach with the hope that I am providing preservice teachers opportunities to examine their beliefs so that they are able to make meaning from their classroom experiences past, present, and future. As a result, these preservice teachers may become more open, flexible, and understanding of themselves and their future students, and they may become transformative teachers themselves.

Arts-based education research, transformative learning theory, and transformative teaching provided the frameworks through which to explore the education stories of the beginning preservice teacher participants. Arts-based education research speaks to the ways in which beginning preservice teachers may learn to creatively reflect on their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. Transformative learning theory and transformative teaching speak to the ways in which preservice teachers may have their prior beliefs challenged so that they might make better choices in their future classrooms. While we cannot say for certain whether or not beginning preservice teachers will experience transformative learning as a result of their teacher preparation coursework, as teacher educators we can teach with the intention of transformative learning, creating a space where preservice teachers can examine disorienting dilemmas and perspective transformations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Theory</th>
<th>Components of theory</th>
<th>Links to study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts-based education research</td>
<td>• Creation of a virtual reality and presence of ambiguity</td>
<td>• Participants created a multimedia reflective journal and a memoir reflective assignment that used both images and written responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of expressive language and promotion of empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presence of aesthetic form (Barone and Eisner, 1997)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative learning theory</td>
<td>• One of the most written about theories in adult education</td>
<td>• Participants were adult preservice teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflection (or critical reflection) is an important aspect of transformative learning theory</td>
<td>• Reflection played a primary role in the multimedia reflective assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adult learners may experience a disorienting dilemma</td>
<td>• The preservice teachers experienced disorienting dilemmas as part of their school observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When an adult’s point of view is transformed, it results in a perspective transformation</td>
<td>• This study explored how the preservice teachers experienced a perspective transformation as a result of their coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative teaching</td>
<td>• Active teaching on the part of the teacher educator with the intention of inspiring transformative learning</td>
<td>• The instructor intended to inspire an open, positive environment where beginning preservice teachers were encouraged to allow their beliefs to be challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The teacher educator provided activities and opportunities that may have allowed for perspective transformation</td>
<td>• The preservice teachers were provided with activities such as the multimedia reflective assignments and classroom observations, which allowed them to reflect on disorienting dilemmas</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Both research questions guiding this study were addressed by arts-based education research, transformative learning theory, and transformative teaching since these frameworks work together to explain how beginning preservice teachers’ assumptions and beliefs may evolve through reflection. Transformative learning theory and transformative teaching addressed Research Questions 1 and 2 since they served as a framework through which to examine the ways in which preservice teachers might explore their prior beliefs and disorienting dilemmas. Arts-based education research addressed Research Question 2 since it served as a connection between the study and the arts-based activities, the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment.

Table 2

*Connections Between Theoretical Frameworks and Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Research Question(s) Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts-based education research</td>
<td><strong>RQ2:</strong> How might storytelling through a multimedia reflective journal be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative learning theory</td>
<td><strong>RQ1:</strong> In what ways might beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative teaching</td>
<td><strong>RQ1:</strong> In what ways might beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course? <strong>RQ2:</strong> How might storytelling through a multimedia reflective journal be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The literature for this study was chosen due to its connection to teacher identity, teacher self, teacher reflection, narrative inquiry, and creativity in teacher education. An examination into the themes of teacher identity and teacher self was useful as a way to gauge how preservice teachers view their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers at the beginning of their education programs.

Palmer (1998) wrote about teacher identity, which plays an important role for preservice and inservice teachers; however, beginning preservice teachers may not have had enough educational experiences to develop a sense of their teacher identity. The literature reviewed here will look into teacher identity, and then it will examine the broader concept of the teacher self and how it might apply to beginning preservice teachers. Critical reflection is an accepted form of self-analysis for preservice and inservice teachers, and some teacher educators make a concerted effort to help their preservice teachers grow into reflective practitioners.

Narrative inquiry forms the basis of the journal prompts provided to the students taking Introduction to Elementary Education. The prompts were intended to guide the beginning preservice teachers’ storytelling for their multimedia reflective assignments. In addition to the written aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments, the beginning preservice teacher participants in this study were asked to produce images as part of their multimedia reflective assignments. Understanding the role of creativity in teacher education is another important piece of this puzzle. This literature review explored these five themes in order to provide background, scholarly grounding, and justification for this study. The examination of this literature also noted gaps in the research that this study hoped to address.
Construction of the Literature Review

The research for this literature review was conducted through searches of scholarly journals, books, and databases. Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, and the university database were used to discover literature that would shed light on the subjects studied here. The research began in broad terms since I had only a vague sense of what I wanted to study in arts-based education research; in fact, I discovered the existence of arts-based education research as a result of this study. I became interested in art journaling as a hobby, and then I created my own multimedia reflective journal as a way to explore my changing teacher identity while teaching a basic methods course for future secondary teachers during the Fall 2016 semester. I began the research for this study with the premise of exploring whether or not multimedia journaling would be a useful tool for reflection for preservice teachers. I began by using the university library database, ERIC, and Google Scholar to search for “art journaling in education.”

After I discovered the existence of arts-based education research, I searched for peer-reviewed articles that explained how arts-based education research was used in educational scholarship. Searches of keywords such as arts in education, preservice teachers and arts in education, and creativity in teaching showed precedence in using arts-based activities as a means to study the development of preservice teachers. After my discovery of narrative inquiry, I knew that I wanted to include the preservice teachers’ stories as part of the multimedia reflective assignments. I then began using search terms such as narrative inquiry, storytelling in education, teacher identity, and teacher reflection. Finally, I was able to narrow my focus to the subjects outlined in this study. While I examined books and articles of eminent scholars who are considered the gurus of their research areas, scholars such as Dewey, Vygotsky, Mezirow, and Clandinin, I made certain to include the most recent research as well. The key words I used to
narrow my focus to the current parameters of this study were: *arts-based education research, creativity in education, narrative inquiry, preservice teacher identity, and teacher reflection*.

After I understood the parameters of this study I discovered the body of peer-reviewed research covering both arts-based education and narrative inquiry. When I began my research, I was not aware that such scholarship existed since I had not been introduced to it through my PhD coursework. Through further reading on teacher identity, teacher reflection, and transformative teaching and learning, I devised a study that is unique in that I have found no other studies addressing storytelling through an arts-based activity such as a multimedia reflective journal. Also, while the identity development of preservice teachers who are student teaching or inservice teachers new to the profession has been frequently studied, few, if any, studies have explored the development of beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. With those gaps in the literature, it became clear that this study might become one way to explore new possibilities for teacher preparation programs. Self-knowledge and self-awareness may help to carry these preservice teachers through the rest of their teacher preparation programs and into fulfilling careers.

**Literature Review**

*Teacher Identity*

Perhaps one of the most basic existential questions is “Who am I?” In our western culture, people have a sense of an individual self, an inherent “I” that is separate and distinct from others. Our identities are grounded in our specific idiosyncrasies—our experiences, orientations, inner natures, and the socio-cultural world in which we live. The identity of a human being does not happen in a vacuum, but rather is the result of our individual frames of reference as well as influencing factors from our cultural and historical backgrounds.
Discovering our identities is a developmental process that changes according to our context and social conditions (Solis, 2008). Identity has been viewed as a composite of traits inherent to the individual, and identity functions as a framework through which knowledge, thought, and actions are formed (Solis, 2008). Baer (2013) believed that discovering one’s identity is about seeking out what we believe to be important and who we want to be. According to Palmer (1998), identity “is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human” (p. 13).

A teacher’s identity may be affected by both internal forces, which help to create the private self such as emotions and beliefs, as well as external forces, which help to create the public self such as school context, family, and other aspects of society (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Why is it important for teachers to understand their identities? Understanding identity helps teachers adapt their personal beliefs to the demands of the schools they work for (Carter & Doyle, 1996). Understanding identity fosters resilience as teachers learn how to deal with the various difficulties and confusions involved in teaching (Pearce & Morrison, 2011). Teachers’ professional identities include a psychological and a sociological perspective since people develop their identity in interaction with other people but express that identity in their perceptions of who they are and who they want to become (Beijaard, 2006).

It matters who the teacher is:

The teacher as a person is held by many within the profession and outside it to be at the centre of not only the classroom but also the educational process. By implication, therefore, it matters to teachers themselves, as well as to their pupils, who and what they are (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 262).
The way preservice teachers learn to teach, the connections preservice teachers make between their experiences, and their choices in the classroom are individual matters connected to their life story (Carter and Doyle, 1996). As Palmer (1998) said, “We teach who we are” (p. 2). Discovering the self that teaches, in all its many layers, is an important task for teachers. Preservice teachers have an opportunity through their teacher preparation coursework and field experiences to engage in a struggle with the self and turn it into a transformative experience.

Teachers’ beliefs shape their teaching practices (Elbaz, 1983). For anyone who has been a student, how to teach may seem obvious; however, preservice teachers may refine their teaching practices as a result of how they understand their previous classroom experiences (Kennedy, 1999). Teaching is a complex practice that is dependent on teachers’ knowledge and skills, and the process of becoming a teacher may shape one’s teacher identity (Joseph & Heading, 2010). According to Feiman-Nemser (2003), new teachers piece together the past and the present in the formation of their teaching identity. School experiences and interactions with teachers can have an effect on new teachers’ inner worlds and their vision of what it means to be a good teacher (Cook, 2009).

On a more practical note, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium’s (InTASC, 2011) Model Core Teaching Standards, Standard 9 in the Professional Learning and Ethical Practice category, noted the need for teachers to understand their identities. Under Essential Knowledge, in Standard 9(i), it states that “The teacher understands how personal identity, worldview, and prior experience affect perceptions and expectations, and recognizes how they may bias behaviors and interactions with others” (p. 18). This provides another reason why teachers should come to understand their identities.
Understanding who we are as teachers and understanding that our students are individuals with unique identities of their own allows space for transformative teaching, which is teaching to make a difference. As educators, and as human beings, we are many things, and those things come together when we teach (Baer, 2013). It may be helpful for teachers to become aware of their beliefs about teaching since one of the important factors to successful teaching is teachers’ awareness of their own teaching and learning (Freeman, 1989). Good educators should be willing to imagine possibilities (Baer, 2013).

*Teacher Self*

Teacher self refers to the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concept of their roles as future teachers. The idea is that preservice teachers develop on a continuum, beginning with an initial self-concept of their roles as future teachers and then developing into a more fully evolved teacher identity. Developing from a teacher self to a teacher identity is a process that occurs over time. It may be crucial to the success of new teachers that their teacher preparation coursework provides them with ways to make sense of their developing teacher selves (Cook, 2009).

A teacher’s sense of self is a developmental process that continues to change according to context and social conditions (Solis, 2008). How we view ourselves is fluid and changing in every moment, and teachers are always revising their self-concepts based on their expectations and personal beliefs as well as the demands placed on them by their environments (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). In order to discover who they are, preservice teachers need to peel back the layers of themselves as people, as students, and as future educators in order to critically reflect on the teachers they are becoming.
As noted in the Definition of Terms in Chapter 1, the term teacher self is meant more generally than the term teacher identity. The concept of the teacher self stems from the idea that beginning preservice teachers may come to understand their professional identities in stages. Prior to having a full sense of a teacher identity, a beginning teacher may develop an initial sense of who they are becoming as teachers, which, with additional coursework, field experiences, and reflection, may blossom into a more complete sense of identity. All aspects of a teacher’s self come together over time to form the teacher’s professional identity. Our personal natures, both internal and external, permeate everything we do, both as everyday people and as teachers. It is important for preservice teachers to take the time to participate in the work of exploring their inner selves because the main site of struggle for beginning teachers is the self (Featherstone, 1993).

![Teacher Self to Teacher Identity Scale](image)

*Figure 1. Teacher Self to Teacher Identity Scale*

One influential factor in the development of this study was the book *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* by Parker J. Palmer (1998). Palmer’s wisdom about teacher identity and transformative teaching was helpful to me as I began the inner
work of understanding my own changing teacher identity from that of K-12 teacher to that of teacher educator. As noted previously, Palmer posed the question: “Who is the self that teaches?” (p. 8). For the purposes of this study, I added a second part to that question: How can we discover that self? Even more to the point, how can beginning preservice teachers discover their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers—their first glimpse of their teacher selves—in a way that may positively impact them later in the classroom? This study explored both of these questions through the data received from the participants’ storytelling in their multimedia reflective assignments.

Teacher Reflection

One goal of teacher preparation is to develop educators who understand their backgrounds and experiences and reflect on those backgrounds and experiences as a way to understand their roles as future teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Dewey (1933) believed that we learn more from reflecting on our experiences than we do from the experiences themselves. For Dewey, reflective thinking is a process of making meaning. For Tremmel (1993), reflection can be achieved in the process of becoming mindful and paying attention to the world around us. For Hmelo and Ferrari (1997), reflection can help learners understand their own thinking in a way that assists the development of knowledge and higher-order thinking skills. However, reflection is understood, it does not mean assuming that we know all the answers; it means that we step away from certainty to allow things to present themselves in new ways (Wegerif, 2008).

One problem with understanding teacher reflection stems from the fact that there is not one commonly used definition of reflection in the literature (Boyd, Gorham, Justice, & Anderson, 2013). Dewey used the terms reflection and thinking synonymously, which may be why reflecting and thinking are considered the same action (Rolfe, 2014). Varying degrees of
reflection occur, with some reflection considered deeper and more critical and other reflection considered superficial and merely descriptive (Boyd et al., 2013). Schön (1983) identified two main types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Situations do not present themselves as givens; instead, they are constructed from events that are puzzling and uncertain (Schön, 1983). Reflection-in-action occurs in the moment during surprising incidents since in a new situation people may not know how to act in a way that is appropriate for the surprising situation (Schön, 1983). Instead of using preconceived ideas about what should be done in a particular situation, the teacher decides what works best at that time for that surprising incident. Reflection-on-action occurs after the moment has passed when the teacher reflects on how that situation might have been different.

Schön (1983) believed that when we reflect on action we think back over what we did in order to discover how our knowing-in-action contributed to an unexpected outcome. Since teaching happens in-action, Schön (1987) recommended that teacher preparation programs redesign their curriculum to help new teachers reflect more deeply on their reactions to various teaching situations. While on some occasions it may be possible to reflect briefly in the midst of acting, most teacher behavior during a lesson appears to be driven by the instructor’s immediate personal perceptions (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Decisions are often made automatically in reaction to the situation at hand (Hewitt, Pedretti, Bencze, Vaillancourt, & Yoon, 2003). Valli (1997) expanded on the concept of reflection and concluded that there were five types of reflection: (1) technical reflection; (2) reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action; (3) deliberate reflection; (4) personal reflection; and (5) critical reflection.

Reflectivity leads to fostering agency, professional growth, and understanding of identity, and some researchers argue that obtaining expertise and professional change is not possible
without reflection (Allen & Casbergue, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Halter & Levin, 2014; Quirke & Zagallo, 2010). Reflection is an essential quality that should be instilled in preservice teachers so that they can experience success in the classroom (Good & Whang, 2002). The intuitive knowledge gained through reflection can be applied to teaching practices (Rubin, 1989). According to Quirke and Zagallo (2010), change is about confirming beliefs as well as about adapting those beliefs to new knowledge; in order to do either, teachers must have a structure they can use to examine their beliefs.

By becoming aware of the interior and exterior forces that populate our psyches, and by participating with those forces in a more conscious manner, we are less likely to be bothered by their presence in our lives (Dirkx, 1998). Reflective teachers may change their teaching behaviors and contexts to achieve desirable goals, whereas unreflective teachers may be more limited in such abilities (Valli, 1997). Reflection is the way we make meaning of ourselves, as in understanding our personal identities, as well as the way we make meaning of our surroundings, as in understanding our worldview. Without reflecting, without digging, wondering, and inquiring, I cannot comprehend my unique identity either as a person or as a teacher. Without the insight that comes from reflecting, I am unable to tell where others’ selves end and my own self begins. As MacKinnon (1978) said, “The moment of insight may be sudden and brief, but it comes usually only after prolonged searching” (p. 189). Reflection is one means through which beginning preservice teachers can start to engage in that prolonged searching. When brought into academic contexts, reflection offers preservice teachers a new relationship with themselves, others, and the world based on “knowledge, wisdom, and insight about the interconnectedness of all things” (Haynes, 2005). Hart (2004) noted that an epistemology of reflection includes the
human capacity for knowing through looking inward, pondering deeply, and exploring our own consciousness.

Being a student plays an important role in becoming a teacher (Lortie, 1975). Preservice teachers have a lifetime of being students at the K-12 and university levels, and they need some understanding over their previous experiences as students or else those experiences will unconsciously influence their teaching. Feiman-Nemser (1983) argued that from infancy through adulthood, preservice teachers are learning different things from different people. Lortie (1975) coined the term “apprenticeship of observation” to describe the influence of preservice teachers’ experiences as K-12 students on their teaching practices. Preservice teachers have experienced an apprenticeship of observation by watching their teachers over many years, and this apprenticeship is responsible for the misconceptions about what it means to teach that many preservice teachers bring into their profession (Lortie, 1975). According to Tomlinson (1999), teachers will revert to what they experienced themselves as students as though these practices are default options to fall back on. When teachers do not analyze their behaviors or beliefs, those behaviors and beliefs remain intuitive and imitative (Lortie, 1975). Preservice teachers need help in understanding that they have a limited perspective of the possibilities of classroom life (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1983).

Even if preservice teachers recognize their limitations as educators, they may feel unable to change due to their lack of knowledge about alternatives (Borg, 2004). The point of reflection then is to prompt preservice teachers to analyze their experiences and their past knowledge, as well as the knowledge they are gaining as a result of their education courses. Through understanding their frames of references and examining possible changes in those frames of reference, preservice teachers may begin to have a wider view of the teaching profession and
what they might achieve within it. Reflection is a way for learners to transform their knowledge (Rodgers, 2002).

Again, InTASC provides a practical reason why preservice teachers should be encouraged to become reflective practitioners. In the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium’s (2011) Model Core Teaching Standards, Standard #9 under the Professional Learning and Ethical Practice category, under Essential Knowledge in standard 9(g), it states that “The teacher understands and knows how to use a variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies to analyze and reflect on his/her practice and to plan for adaptations/adjustments” (p. 18).

The ability to adapt, adjust, and analyze are important skills for teachers. Engaging in reflection is one way to develop those skills. According to Graham and Phelps (2003), in regards to preservice teachers, “many of whom appear to be novice learners when it comes to tackling new and challenging tasks can now begin to use reflection as the link between knowledge and control of the learning process” (p. 11).

How might we inspire beginning preservice teachers to become reflective practitioners? One way to encourage reflection is to ask preservice teachers to reflect on their educational experiences so they focus on their autobiography in a way they had not previously: “As teachers begin this thoughtful work on their own backgrounds and transition from the role of student to teacher, they take on different perspectives and imagine new spaces of interaction” (Boyd et al., 2013, p. 6). Teacher educators should prompt their preservice teachers to question and reflect (Good & Whang, 2002). Students are not just “receptacles to be filled by the teacher” (Freire, 1972, p. 45), but they come to class with their own experiences, beliefs, and frames of reference. Reflective journaling is one way to motivate beginning preservice teachers to examine their
experiences, beliefs, and frames of reference while providing space for transformative learning. According to Shoffner (2008), teacher educators have experimented with many different forms of reflection over the years. The multimedia reflective assignments completed as part of this study served as a different way beginning preservice teachers might reflect on who they are becoming as future educators.

Journals are a powerful tool often used in teacher education as a strategy to promote reflection, and examining preservice teachers’ journal writing is one way to study how teachers learn to teach (Clarke, 2004; Tsang, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Journaling helps to facilitate deeper analysis of the experience because it allows the writer to stand outside the experience and see it more objectively (Pavlovich, 2007). Teacher reflection involves thinking about many different teaching concerns, including students, curriculum, strategies, and the rules and organization of the classroom (Minott, 2008). When we write about what we have seen or done in the classroom, it is easier to see what works and what doesn't (Solgot, 2005). Positive effects of reflective journaling have been discovered in previous studies, including the possibility that reflective journaling helps preservice teachers link theory and practice (LaBelle & Belknap, 2016; Maarof, 2007).

How do preservice teachers understand their assumptions, beliefs, and decisions? Reflective journaling is one way to help preservice teachers connect to their inner selves in order to promote self-understanding. Reflective journals, with their emphasis on thinking back or ahead, can provide practice in reflection-on-action (Applebaum, 2014). Reflection can have a transformative effect on the learning process because it prompts preservice teachers to think deeply about various aspects of education. Reflective journaling can engage preservice teachers in the construction of their self-understanding (Dreyer, 2015). Although Charles (2010) was
referring to nursing, her thoughts apply equally well to educators: “Through journaling, self-awareness and self-understanding are enhanced and become a means of caring for oneself as well as creating a heightened sense of responsibility in caring for others” (p. 181). Through reflective journaling, teachers may discover their concerns as well as who they have the potential to become (Minott, 2008; Salas, 2010). If the reflective journals have been implemented effectively, preservice teachers may be able to trace their evolving thoughts and perspectives throughout their university coursework (Good & Whang, 2002).

Education researchers have used the term reflective journaling too broadly (Clara, 2015). The term reflection has suffered a loss of meaning since it is unclear how reflection is different from other types of thought (Rodgers, 2002). Without a clear sense of what we mean by reflection, it could be difficult to determine the effectiveness of reflective journaling on teachers’ practices (Rodgers, 2002). Epp’s (2008) review of the literature on journaling in undergraduate nursing education found little evidence supporting reflection for the purpose of learning. In addition, reflective writing may be too tentative, exploratory, and indecisive to be of use as a learning tool (Zuckermann & Rajuan, 2008).

Reflective journaling may also be more challenging than is generally recognized. In a study by Zuckermann and Rajuan (2008), teacher trainers at Achva were dissatisfied with the level of reflection they saw in their students’ writing. Some students developed a pattern of focusing on what they thought they were supposed to say in order to please lecturers (Zuckermann & Rajuan, 2008). Other students do not respond well to reflective writing and find keeping a journal time consuming and a burden (Dreyer, 2015), in which case they are not likely to experience transformative learning or any learning at all.
Narrative Inquiry

The education stories of the beginning preservice teacher participants were the focus of attention for this study. Why the focus on story, and what can we hope to learn from the stories of beginning preservice teachers? Language is an expression of self, and teachers should allow their students to bring themselves into their coursework by using their own language (Elbaz, 1983). Storytelling is one means through which students can bring themselves into their coursework by using their own language.

We tell stories. Humans have told stories for thousands of years, from the earliest of times when people told tales around nighttime fires, to the days of the wandering poets in Ancient Greece, to the early days of television and film, through the technological revolution of today. Teachers tell stories too. They read stories to their students. They teach their students how to write stories. They take part in self-disclosure where they share their own stories in an effort to bond with their students. Stories are how humans connect, the way in which we learn traditions, religion, and socio-cultural customs. Every human culture has developed stories such as myths, folk tales, and legends as a means of understanding their societal norms. Stories are the way we create understanding, and the way we make sense of the world and our place within it (Barkhuizen, 2016).

Human minds are evolutionarily wired to think in story terms, so much so that our internal neural story maps are unconscious; without thinking about it, our internal neural story maps are automatically applied to incoming information so that everything we learn becomes a story (Haven, 2007). Human beings live and tell stories about their living, and these lived and told stories, as well as the discourse surrounding those stories, are how we create meaning from our lives (Clandinin, 2006). Through story we can understand our frames of reference as well as
how changes to those frames might occur as a result of transformative learning. Personal stories bring attention to the histories and experiences of the individual, as well as give voice to those who may otherwise be silenced (Wink, 2005).

What, then, is narrative inquiry? Narrative inquiry is a way of exploring our human experiences through story. Narrative inquiry uses stories as data in order to understand human experiences as lived and told (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). Narrative inquiry is the study of people in relationship with people, places, and things as noted by researchers who are also in a relationship with people, places, and things (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative and storytelling have been recognized as pedagogical tools (Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007). Narrative inquiry is an open-ended form of research that involves extensive questioning about personal and collective human experiences, and researchers use narrative inquiry to collect stories, shape those stories, and retell those stories in order to better understand people and events (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Conle, 2000; Craig, 2004). In narrative inquiry, the storytellers impose order on the flow of their lived experiences and their emotional experiences in order to make sense of actions and events (Elliott, 2011). Vygotsky adapted the Russian term *perezhivanie* to account for the important role of affect in framing and interpreting human experience (Smagorinski, 2011), and it is through our *perezhivanies* that we attempt to share through stories.

According to Clandinin and Huber (2003), three elements are central to narrative inquiry: (1) time—past, present, and future; (2) socio-cultural—the social and cultural conditions under which people’s experiences unfold; and (3) place—the physical and topological boundaries where the events happen. An experience happens over time within the context of a relationship with oneself or with others, and narrative inquiry is one way to understand those experiences.
(Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Since participants bring their own meaning perspectives to the events in their lives, it is difficult to say that only one literal recounting exists of those events. There are as many interpretations of events as there are researchers and participants (Coulter et al., 2007). Narratives are always under construction, and they are reflective of the changing contexts in which they are created. Narratives are shaped by reflection, and stories can change as a result of identity work (Zembylas, 2003). Narrative inquiry is based on the idea that one examines a particular event or experience in order to determine its characteristic features and arrive at some new knowledge (Spencer, 2010). By examining an experience and developing new knowledge, we become more understanding of that experience (Spencer, 2010).

Narrative inquiry has been increasingly used in studies of educational experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Beginning preservice teachers have developed their own thoughts and beliefs—their own frames of reference—about education and teaching as a result of their lived experiences. They have stories that they have been told and stories they are telling themselves about the role of teacher. Stories for beginning preservice teachers serve the same function they serve for others—they help beginning preservice teachers make sense of the world and their place in that world, in this case, the world of education.

Narratives are an appropriate means through which to understand educational experiences, providing a rationale for using narrative inquiry in education research (Leitch, 2006). Narrative is one form of knowing, and the use of narrative ways of knowing is not a new phenomenon in teacher education (Bruner, 2002; Coulter et al., 2007; Freeman, 1996). Narrative analysis is interested in the broader interpretive frameworks used by researchers and participants to make sense of particular occurrences in the participants’ lives. In addition, narrative analysis focuses on stories with beginnings, middles, and ends as told by participants (Grbich, 2015).
Education researchers might use narrative inquiry to capture the stories of teachers’ past and present lives, as well as their values, perceptions, and intentions (Leitch, 2006). Teachers, like everyone else, are surrounded by stories on TV, in movies, in books, in newspapers, on the Internet, in the narratives others tell them, and in the narratives they tell themselves. It may be more natural for us to organize content into stories than it is to fit it into the objectives, methods, and evaluations of lesson planning (Chodakowski, Egan, Judson, & Stewart, 2011). Egan (1988) argued that teaching should be conceptualized as storytelling, meaning that a story is not simply entertainment but “a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experience” (p. 2). We create narrative identities for ourselves by telling stories about important moments in our lives (Kaasila, 2007). According to Eberhard, Krebs, and Noll (2005), storytelling is using language, vocalization, or physical movements to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific audience. Storytelling is taking the written word and giving it life (Eberhard, Krebs, & Noll, 2005).

Freeman (1996) believed that referring to what teachers know as stories does not trivialize that knowledge. Through narrative inquiry, teachers can share their concerns, their issues, and how they experience their lives in education (Joseph & Heading, 2010). Teachers have traditionally been considered voiceless since we tend to hear about education from everyone but the teachers. Since teachers have experienced themselves as voiceless, they may find it difficult to tell their stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Narrative inquiry is one way to allow teachers, including preservice teachers, with a means to share their stories. By providing a forum for the narratives of preservice teachers, teacher educators can help to create conditions that allow their students to understand the individual, social, cultural, and institutional stories.
they work within, how those stories shape them, and how they might instead shape those stories (Clandinin, 2006).

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) noted that researchers using narrative inquiry should be sensitive to the fact that narrative inquiry is the process of collaboration that is both storytelling, on the part of the teacher/participant, and restorying, on the part of the researcher. The researcher should make certain that both voices are heard (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Narrative researchers both collect and tell stories, and researchers who are interested in understanding human experience are privileged to share the stories that make up the experiences of others (Bruce, 2008).

Life story research is conducted for the purpose of understanding lives in context. Studying life story offers a way to step inside the world of the storyteller (Atkinson, 2007). Narrative inquiry is an appropriate approach to exploring teacher development since analyzing one’s personal narrative can be seen as a version of people’s studies of their own development (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This is true for preservice teachers as well as inservice teachers. Stories are an effective way to teach and motivate, and through telling their stories, teachers may be taking a step toward discovering the potential of their teaching and learning (Haven, 2007; Maarof, 2008). Narrative inquiry has the potential to shape the way we understand ourselves (Thorne, 2012).

The intention behind the multimedia reflective assignments was to provide a structure for beginning preservice teachers to look inward to ponder, imagine, discern, and see deeply (Cohen, 2005). Under such circumstances, storytelling becomes contemplative inquiry based on knowledge, wisdom, and insight as well as feelings, intentions, memories, and hopes (Haynes, 2005; Klein, 2010b). Students have opportunities to arrive at greater self-awareness and self-
understanding as a result of storytelling. Narrative inquiry was used to structure the storytelling of the three beginning preservice teacher participants in this study. Without the foundation of narrative inquiry, the stories would have been only words on a page—interesting, perhaps even entertaining, but the stories would not have any more significance than that. Narrative inquiry allows us to develop individual stories into important messages (Creswell, 2012).

Creativity in Teacher Education

Children have creativity in abundance, but as we grow older our willingness to play, to try new things, and to think differently is taken from us like a giant parental finger shaking “No!” in our faces. As adults, we become too scared that we’re “not good at it” (whatever it happens to be) and we lose the confidence to think, do, or try creative activities. How might teacher educators reignite creativity in their preservice teachers? The multimedia reflective assignments in this study were the means through which the beginning preservice teacher participants were given the opportunity to reconnect to their creativity.

Bruner noted the need for active student involvement in the learning process because true learning is the result of personal discovery (Arends, 2014). When people create they are doing more than completing an activity such as a painting or a sculpture. Creativity allows us a space to reflect upon ourselves and our stories on a deeper level, and with that reflection may also come the ability to understand and act on a deeper level. Vygotsky moved toward examining creativity and imagination toward the end of his life because he realized that creativity and imagination are an integral part of the learning process (S. McCafferty, personal communication, March 16, 2017). On a more practical level, new education paradigms that promote creative risk-taking are needed as employers seek innovative individuals to stimulate economic growth (Grossman et al.,
Teachers who inspire their students’ creativity may well be inspiring the skills those students need for a successful future.

Being creative is an opportunity to learn, and creativity and teaching go hand in hand (Guilford, 1950). There is an underlying belief that everyone can learn to be creative (Lin, 2011). Some education researchers believe that people can be taught creative skills through certain strategies: “Training in creative problem solving can enable people to be skilled in finding the best solution quickly” (Fryer, 1996, p. 5). The relationship between creativity and education is about encouraging personal development and self-actualization as well as equipping students with creative skills that may serve them the rest of their lives (Lin, 2011). According to Chodakowski et al. (2011), creative activities engage preservice teachers’ imagination in learning, and these creative components should be given a higher profile in teacher education programs. Engaging the imagination has had too small a profile in typical teacher education programs (Chodakowski et al., 2011). Torrance (1981) believed that the purpose of creativity in teaching is to create teacher and student enthusiasm along with an appreciation of individual differences. However, not all teachers value creativity. Westby and Dawson (1995) noted that some of the teachers in their study had negative views of the characteristics associated with creativity such as nonconformity and autonomy. If many teachers hold negative views about the traits associated with creativity, teachers’ attitudes may then promote the extinction of such creative traits (Westby & Dawson, 1995).

The cultivation of creativity can inform teachers’ future pedagogical practices (Keller-Mathers, 2011). Henriksen and Mishra (2015) studied creativity in the beliefs and practices of effective teachers as well as the connection between personal and professional creativity. The teachers in Henriksen and Mishra’s study were nominated for or recipients of the National
Teacher of the Year award, which demonstrated the effectiveness of their teaching practices. Six of the eight teachers interviewed for Henriksen and Mishra’s study stated that they had an artistic interest outside of their teaching lives and that these artistic interests played an important role in shaping their teaching practices. A creative streak may be helpful for teachers since creative people are more willing to challenge themselves and take risks, and they show a larger belief in themselves than those who do not demonstrate such creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1991).

Gulla (2014) suggested that if we as teachers want to help students pursue self-motivated inquiry and become lifelong learners, and if we want them to have access to multiple modalities of expression, then we as teachers should develop such skills ourselves. Developing creativity through artistic endeavors is one way to express ourselves through multiple modalities. The feeling of having fresh, imaginative ideas may be similar to the feeling of having an epiphany (Afolabi, Dionne, & Lewis, 2009), and part of becoming a teacher is learning to recognize and act upon those epiphanies. Allowing for a creative mindset is one way for preservice teachers to learn to trust those epiphanies. It is important to note that creative skills or creative thinking are not the same as artistic talent (Meintjes & Grosser, 2010). One does not need to be “good at it” to gain benefits from creative thoughts and activities.

For the purposes of this study, creativity was defined as a cognitive function that allows one to generate new ideas and concepts as well as the ability to think differently and productively in an educational context (Meintjes & Grosser, 2010). The purpose of the multimedia reflective assignments was not for the beginning preservice teachers to produce works of art that will hang on museum walls or write literature that will be published in The New Yorker. The point of the multimedia reflective assignments was to allow the beginning preservice teachers creative ways to reflect on their education stories. As Pringle (2006) said, “Teachers tend to teach the way they
were taught, and breaking this cycle requires different emphasis on pedagogy in teacher education” (p. 292). My goal as a teacher educator was to create a space for that different pedagogy, one that allowed the beginning preservice teachers space to think their thoughts, examine their beliefs, and flex their creativity.

Summary

This literature review examined the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of arts-based education research, transformative learning theory, and transformative teaching. The literature review then examined research covering the themes of teacher identity, teacher self, teacher reflection, narrative inquiry, and creativity in teacher education. Although peer-reviewed literature exists about each of these themes, including historical background and current research which served as the rationale for this study, the review showed noticeable gaps where few studies are using narrative inquiry with arts-based activities as a way of understanding the education stories of beginning preservice teachers.

The literature revealed that enhanced perspectives that come as a result of creative, arts-based activities within the teacher preparation coursework could be a powerful learning tool for preservice teachers. One of our most important tasks as teacher educators is to prepare our preservice teachers for the demands of life as a twenty-first century educator. In order to fulfill this task, it may be helpful to understand how beginning preservice teachers develop into selves that will teach.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of multi-case study. The research questions guiding this study will be restated, and the study’s participants will be described, including the sample population and the selection process. The data collection plan shows how the data—the multimedia reflective journals, the memoir reflective assignment, and the interviews—were gathered. An examination of the data analysis will provide a description of how the multi-case study was used to explore the education stories of the three beginning preservice teacher participants. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the research methods.

According to Sofaer (1999), “…the contributions of qualitative research will not be maximized unless the methods are applied with rigor as well as creativity” (p. 1116). Chapter 3 examines how the qualitative methods were used rigorously and creatively.

Methods

This study used a qualitative methods approach. Qualitative research can be conducted in myriad ways; in fact, the way in which qualitative scholars carry out their research depends on a range of factors, including their beliefs about the nature of the social world and what can be known about it (Snape & Spencer, 2013). Creswell (2007) believed that qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain worldview or a basic set of beliefs. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), qualitative research locates the observer in the world and consists of interpretive and material practices that make the world visible: “…qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Campbell (1975) argued that qualitative methods could
be used to collect data necessary for experimental studies as well as emphasize the importance of the intersection between research and practice.

According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research uses inductive data analysis to learn about the meanings participants hold about a problem or issue by identifying patterns or themes. Qualitative research is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting, focusing on the why instead of the what of social phenomena (Corbin, Strauss, & Strauss, 2014). Constas (1993) promoted a spirit of openness in sharing our decision-making rationales in the presentation of qualitative research methods.

**Multi-Case Study**

The multi-case study design worked well for this research since it allowed for the exploration of the education stories of the beginning preservice teachers with the intention of understanding how or if their education stories overlap in themes or other connections (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2008). What, then, is a case study? According to Perry (2000), case study is an empirical research method best suited to problems that should be studied in context where the phenomena under study cannot be separated from context. The researcher has little control over variables such as field sites and student responses, and the effects studied may take time (days, weeks, months, or years) to develop.

Researchers should conduct a case study when they wish to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or when their objective is to investigate (Perry, 2000). In multi-case studies the conclusions from one case could be compared and contrasted with the results from the other cases (Bengtsson, 1999). According to Yin (2013), multi-case study can be used when the researcher is looking for similar results across the multiple cases or if the researcher thinks there may be contrasting results for predictable reasons.
Yin noted that a multi-case study is one in which each individual case is used to organize the study, and these become the focal point for the organization of the researcher’s study. Multi-case studies provide a tool for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Creswell and Poth (2017) stated that the multiple-case study is a collective case study in which one issue is examined by the selection of the cases that best illustrate the issue under study. Yin (2003) stated that a case study design should be considered when: (1) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (2) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (3) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (4) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. The ability to answer “how” and “why” questions within real-world contexts is an important strength of case studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Researchers engage in interviews with selected cases with the goal of obtaining detailed textual data describing those cases (Campbell & Ahrens, 1998).

One criticism of case study is the tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In addition, previous case studies have been criticized for allowing investigator bias to permeate the research and not employing rigor in describing procedures as well as failing to address reliability and validity (Campbell & Ahrens, 1998). In order to create an environment of methodological rigor and trustworthiness within my study, I have been transparent about my research methodologies and procedures. The use of three data sources (the interview, the memoir reflective assignment, and the multimedia reflective journal) is compatible with multi-case study since many qualitative researchers believe that multiple sources of data add more credibility and reliability to the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this multi-case study each case was bounded by and defined as a beginning preservice teacher
enrolled in Introduction to Elementary Education. This study used three beginning preservice teacher participants and therefore had three cases.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** In what ways might the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concept of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course?

**RQ2:** How might storytelling through a multimedia reflective journal be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators?

**Participants and Context of the Study**

The three participants in this study were beginning preservice teachers who were recruited and consented from Introduction to Elementary Education, the education course I taught during the Fall 2017 semester. Only the interview was required of the participants outside of their regular coursework for Introduction to Elementary Education. The multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective activities were assigned to all students enrolled in the course. A convenience sample helped to discover participants who were willing to take part in this study. Convenience sampling is useful since it allows the researchers to uncover participants who are willing to be studied (Creswell, 2012).

The names of the three participants were changed to protect their identities. They were known in this study as James, Ella, and Martine. At the time of this study all three beginning preservice teachers were university sophomores between the ages of 19 and 24. James was a white male, Ella was a white female, and Martine was a black female. Of the 14 students who signed consent forms, James, Ella, and Martine were chosen as the participants for this study due to the depth of their reflections in their multimedia reflective assignments and their interviews.
Creswell (2007) noted the importance of finding participants who are willing to openly and honestly share information, and James, Ella, and Martine were willing to openly and honestly share their education stories through their multimedia reflective assignments, their interviews, and other in-class assignments. James, Ella, and Martine were also enrolled in *Introduction to Teacher Education* intending to become future teachers, unlike some of their classmates who were not sure if they wanted to pursue teaching as a profession and took the course for general education units.

The context of this study was the teacher preparation course *Introduction to Elementary Education* that took place at an urban university in the Southwestern United States. The course provided a general overview of elementary school teaching as a profession. During the Fall 2017 semester, when this study took place, there were 42 students enrolled in *Introduction to Elementary Education*. The course is open to university students who are preservice teachers beginning their teacher preparation coursework, but it is also available as a general education course to the larger university population. One of the requirements of *Introduction to Elementary Education* is for students to complete eight hours of classroom observations during the semester. In order to successfully complete *Introduction to Elementary Education* students had to visit an elementary school campus for two hours over four visits. Students may have observed the same teacher for eight hours or they may have visited several classrooms depending on where they were placed by the schools they visited.

**Researcher’s Role**

For this study I was both the researcher and the instructor of *Introduction to Elementary Education*, the course used to recruit and consent participants. In order to relieve students enrolled in *Introduction to Elementary Education* from feeling pressured to participate in the
study, a professor from the College of Education visited the class to complete the consenting process with the students (see Appendix G). Of the 42 students enrolled in the course, 14 signed consent forms. James, Ella, and Martine were among those who signed consent forms.

This study did have its challenges, as all studies do. I have always used transformative teaching as the model I follow as an instructor, but I did not wish to influence my participants’ responses to any part of this study. My intention was to hide my own bias from the beginning preservice teachers. I say “from the preservice teachers” since I was aware that it can be difficult to compartmentalize my beliefs and biases. My beliefs and biases are, in fact, part of my identity as an instructor, as well as part of my identity as a researcher, as well as part of my identity as a human being.

Researchers often equate subjectivity with bias, which is viewed as a problem to be managed as well as a threat to the credibility of a study (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). I was aware of my positive bias toward the multimedia reflective assignments since I completed my own multimedia reflective journal as part of a self-study and found the process a meaningful one in understanding my changing teacher identity. I taught Introduction to Elementary Education, the course from which the preservice teachers were recruited, and I would like to think my classes are transformative experiences from which preservice teachers emerge as more reflective and resilient human beings. However, I have been teaching long enough to know that such assumptions about what my students should get from my classes do not result in good teaching practices. What I intend is not necessarily what is received by my students. The “Goldilocks effect” can be found in most classes: some students will love what I do, some students will hate what I do, and some students will think my practices are just all right.

The intention of the multimedia reflective assignments was to allow beginning preservice
teachers to reflect on their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. Still, I had no way of knowing how the participants would respond to such creative assignments since the creative assignment is not a panacea for the challenges of fostering and assessing transformation in the classroom (Willink & Jacobs, 2012).

Data Sources

James, Ella, and Martine, along with the other students taking Introduction to Elementary Education, were given the multimedia reflective assignments at the beginning of the Fall 2017 semester. The participants were given six prompts that they responded to in their multimedia reflective journals. Specific directions were provided for the multimedia reflective assignments since, as Joseph and Heading (2010) stated, the more creative the activity, the greater the need for structure (see Appendix A). I provided the students with examples of multimedia reflective assignments and a rubric and I answered questions students had about the assignment in class.

For the multimedia reflective journal, students created both a written passage and an image in response to the prompts. The participants could have created either the images or the written passages first according to their personal preferences. Students could have created the images using any multimedia supplies they chose: paint, pencils, stencils, collage, photography, computer-generated images, scrapbooking supplies, or anything else that occurred to them. The only limit was the limit of their imaginations.

To go along with the image, the students wrote responses of at least 250 words. As an instructor, I have struggled with whether or not to include a specific word count as a requirement for an assignment, but 24 years of teaching experience has taught me that to not include a word count means that I often receive a few sentences of response instead of a few paragraphs. The 250-word requirement was enough to prompt deeper thinking; in fact, most students, including
James, Ella, and Martine, exceeded 250 words in their responses. The six prompts the beginning preservice teachers responded to were: (1) Tell a story about a memorable experience you had with a past teacher; (2-5) This semester you will be participating in four classroom observations for two hours each. For each of the four classroom observations, choose one event that you found interesting, important, eye-opening, puzzling, disturbing, or humorous (Klein, 2010a, p. 42); and (6) What do you know now about your role as a future teacher that you didn’t know at the beginning of this semester (see Appendix A)?

The multimedia reflective assignments were intended as a chance for students to experiment, practice, and play as they explored their education stories. The purpose of this activity was self-expression that goes beyond words and allowed the participants to think deeper thoughts (Klein, 2010a). Allowing preservice teachers to explore their innermost thoughts about their education stories in various and creative ways may go a long way in developing creative, reflective, resilient teachers.

I provided specific directions about what is meant by the term story for the students since the term story is used differently in different contexts (see Appendix E). For the purposes of the multimedia reflective assignments, the term story referred to writing that included a sense of time, place, emotions, and possible lessons learned. Students in Introduction to Elementary Education were also introduced to the type of storytelling I have called education stories since their education stories were the focus of their multimedia reflective assignments. The prompts the students responded to in their multimedia reflective assignments were intended to allow them a chance to explore the ways in which they experience their lives in education (Joseph & Heading, 2010). Journaling as contemplative inquiry allows students to express their ideas, beliefs, and hopes creatively, poetically, and metaphorically (Klein, 2010b). The multimedia
reflective journal prompts were intended to allow space for inner searching with opportunities for the beginning preservice teachers to connect deeply with their hopes and dreams (Klein, 2010b).

One interview was conducted toward the end of the semester in November 2017 as a way to allow James, Ella, and Martine a chance to reflect further on their education stories as well as answer questions about their experiences creating their multimedia reflective assignments. According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012):

When we interview, we ask people to share their stories. Honing interview skills helps us nurture people through the storytelling process. Skilled interviewers can gain insight into lived experiences, learn the perspectives of individuals participating in a study, and discover the nuances in stories (p. 1).

Turner (2010) noted that open-ended interviews allow participants to fully express their responses in as much detail as desired. An interview protocol was created to allow James, Ella, and Martine to create options for responding while voicing their unique perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Open-ended interviews allow participants an opportunity to tell their own stories in their own ways, which is why I chose this format as the structure for my interviews. I had previously conducted interviews for a literary journal as well as for scholarly purposes, so I knew that sometimes a question would lead to an unexpected response from the participant. Allowing room in the interview to follow the path paved by unexpected responses yielded some rich data. Field notes were taken during the interviews, and descriptive and reflective notes were written immediately after the interviews.

One criticism of open-ended interviews is that it can be hard for researchers to extract similar themes or codes from the interview transcripts as they would with less open-ended
responses (Turner, 2010), but that was not an issue for this study since similar codes and themes were discovered within James, Ella, and Martine’s interviews.

The final piece of data collected for this study was a memoir reflective assignment that was due at the end of the semester in December 2017. The memoir reflective assignment was a chance for students to further reflect on one education story they deemed to be particularly important in the development of their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. The students began the memoir reflective assignment by brainstorming a timeline of 10 important moments in their teacher learning, including books, teachers and students they have known, events inside or outside the classroom, classroom observations, and other life experiences that have been significant to the development of their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. They were able to create their timeline on the computer or by hand.

After their timelines were completed the students were directed to choose one important education story on which to focus—one moment they believed was most influential on the development of their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. Then the students wrote a memoir in which they explained why this education story meant so much to them, as well as how this story may have affected their sense of their role as a future teacher (Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, & Peyton, 2010). The memoir contained the same elements of story used for the multimedia reflective journal: a sense of time, place, emotions, and possible lessons learned. As with the multimedia reflective journal, the memoir reflective assignment contained both a written portion of at least five pages (approximately 1250 words) and an image. The students were allowed to use work they had previously completed for their multimedia reflective journals to help them create their memoir reflective assignments. The rubric for the memoir reflection was available to the students. James, Ella, and Martine’s complete memoir education stories can
be found in Appendices H, I, and J.

The rich data derived from the multimedia reflective journal, interviews, and memoir reflective assignment allowed for the creation of thick description. According to Schwandt (2001),

Rather to thickly describe social action is actually to begin to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, and so on that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick (p. 255).

The thick description allowed for the fleshing out of interpretation while adding interest where possible.

**Data Collection**

The multimedia reflective journal responses were collected throughout the Fall 2017 semester. The interviews were conducted in November 2017, and the memoir reflective assignment was collected in December 2017. The data were coded and analyzed for themes, discoveries, and other possible understandings. The narratives from James, Ella, and Martine were used to organize the findings into a coherent story that not only described the themes but how those themes fit together (Pratt, 2009). Qualitative researchers are after the social meaning attributed to the experiences, circumstances, and situations, as well as the meaning people embed into texts, images, and other objects (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The artifacts created by the participants through their multimedia reflective assignments were examined for any insight they might offer about the development of the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their future roles as teachers.
### Table 3

**Putney Data Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Type of Data Collected</th>
<th>Process of Analysis</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Time of Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| RQ1: In what ways might the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concept of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course? | • multimedia reflective journals  
• memoir reflective assignment                                      | • multimedia reflective journals and memoir assignment: analysis for themes | • Hesse-Biber, 2010  
• Lichtman, 2013  
• Pratt, 2009  
• Willink & Jacobs, 2012  
• Yin, 2013 | • multimedia reflective journal responses were collected six times throughout the semester  
• the memoir reflective assignment was collected at the end of the semester  
• one interview was conducted with each participant at the end of the semester |
| RQ2: How might storytelling through a multimedia reflective journal be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators? | • multimedia reflective journals  
• memoir reflective assignment  
• one interview  
• field notes were taken during interviews | • multimedia reflective journals and memoir assignment: analysis for themes  
• interviews: oral text was transcribed, field notes and data were analyzed | • Hesse-Biber, 2010  
• Lichtman, 2013  
• Pratt, 2009  
• Willink & Jacobs, 2012  
• Yin, 2013 | • multimedia reflective journal responses were collected six times throughout the semester  
• the memoir reflective assignment was collected at the end of the semester  
• interviews were conducted at the end of the semester |

The IRB consent form was presented to the students in *Introduction to Elementary Education* by a professor from the College of Education, and the students were able to decide whether or not they wished to participate. In addition, the consent form explained that the only
requirement for the study outside of the regular coursework for Introduction to Elementary Education was the interview. Participants were then asked to sign the consent form if they chose to participate in this study. The students’ learning outcomes in the course were unaffected by whether or not they chose to participate, and their decision about whether or not to participate did not affect their standing with the instructor, the course, or the university.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis consisted of examining the three data sources from the artifacts of the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment as well as the participants’ interviews. Analyzing the qualitative data occurred in six stages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Stage One included an initial reading of the students’ assignments to gain a beginning sense of their education stories; Stage Two occurred when I created codes of words or phrases discovered within the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment; Stage Three was the discovery of themes within those codes; Stage Four was the review of the data and the themes; Stage Five was the point at which I solidified the themes I discovered by combining similar themes and discarding others that were not entirely supported by the data; Stage Six is the point at which I made sense of the data and created a narrative about what might be learned from the participants’ education stories. As a result of completing the six stages of data analysis, I identified three themes: influences from life and school, learning from university experiences, and passion for helping children.

Open-coding played an important role in this study. Open-coding is a form of analyzing qualitative data where concepts are labeled and defined and categories are developed (Khandkar, 2009). While it is all right to have a set of themes in mind when beginning to analyze the data, it is important not to be tied down to those themes, especially if other themes may be constructed
from the education stories of the beginning preservice teachers. If data analysis is approached with a willingness to discover the gems within, then the data analysis becomes less a matter of forcibly extracting themes and codes and more a matter of discovering the hidden treasures in the data.

An intercoder reliability check was used to increase the level of trustworthiness in this study. Case study research suffers from the belief that qualitative findings are less reliable and rigorous than quantitative studies (Flyvbjerg, 2011). At least two different researchers should code the same content in order to assess the reliability of coding (Mouter & Noordegraaf, 2012). The reliability of the data analysis of the multimedia reflective assignments and the interviews was tested by an independent coder. The independent coder had a PhD in Teacher Education and was knowledgeable about Teacher Education research. Three interviews and 21 multimedia assignments were coded. The independent coder determined that there was a 99% accuracy rate in the coding conducted on the data. Member checking was also used to improve the reliability of my interpretation of the data. Participants’ responses to in-class assignments and follow-up questions allowed me to gauge their reactions to my interpretation of the data. Member checking may be an important quality control process in qualitative research (Harper & Cole, 2012). Through their responses to the follow-up questions and in-class assignments, James, Ella, and Martine affirmed my interpretation of the data.

Examples from the participants’ multimedia reflective assignments and interviews were shared in Chapter 4 so readers can see how the interpretations were formed. The results of these interpretations will be explained, connecting the dots between the research questions, the frameworks of arts-based education research, transformative learning, and transformative teaching, and the data collected during this study.
Timeline of the Study

This study took place during the Fall 2017 semester. Here is the timeline followed in the completion of this study:

Table 4

Timeline of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Completion of Study</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| September 2017   | • The multimedia reflective journal was assigned to students in *Introduction to Elementary Education*. This was a semester-long assignment.  
                   | • Students began their elementary classroom observations.                           |
| October 2017     | • Students in *Introduction to Elementary Education* were recruited and consented for this study.                                   |
| November 2017    | • Interviews were conducted with participants.                                       |
| December 2017    | • Memoir reflective assignments were collected.                                       |
| January/February 2018 | • Interviews, multimedia reflective journals, and memoir reflective assignments were analyzed, coded, and combed for themes and other notable discoveries. |

Limitations of Methodology

As with any study, limitations to the methodology for this study do exist. The fact that I was the instructor of *Introduction to Elementary Education* may have encouraged or discouraged students from participating in the study even though they were consented by a second party. Also, the students’ responses to the multimedia reflective journal, interview, and memoir reflective assignments may reflect what they thought they were expected to say even though it was explained to them that their honest answers were always best. The beginning preservice teacher participants may have shared their education stories in a way that showed them to be more
confident than they were because they were afraid to show weakness. Fisher (1993) referred to social desirability, meaning that participants may respond to questions in a way they consider socially acceptable rather than answering with honesty.

The Introduction to Elementary Education course occurs at the beginning of the teacher preparation program, and I thought that might have been a limitation to this study. I thought that because the students were barely out of high school themselves they might not be able to think deeply about their roles as future teachers. I was proven wrong. James, Ella, and Martine were chosen as the participants for this study because of the depth of their reflections on their education stories. The time and attention paid to writing the stories, creating the images, and answering the interview questions may or may not have been influenced by the fact that this is such an early course in the teacher preparation program.

Summary

This design of this study was based on existing research that demonstrated how we might begin to make sense of preservice teachers’ education stories through multi-case study. The participants of this study, the context of the study, the researcher’s role, the data sources, the data collection, the data analysis, and the limitations of the study were also examined. The findings of this study, to be examined in the next chapter, have offered something new to the body of research in teacher education by exploring how beginning preservice teachers reflect through arts-based activities.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The data collected from the participants’ multimedia reflective assignments and interviews were examined through the lens of the three themes: *influences from life and school*, *learning from university experiences*, and *passion for helping children*. The rationale behind this study was to allow beginning preservice teachers an opportunity to share their education stories as a way to reflect more deeply into the why and how of becoming a teacher. Education stories were defined as stories specific to the educational lives of beginning preservice teachers, stories that have helped to shape their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers. This was a multi-case study, and each case was bounded by and defined as a beginning preservice teacher enrolled in a particular course, *Introduction to Elementary Education*. Arts-based activities—a multimedia reflective journal and a multimedia memoir reflective assignment—were used as the means through which the beginning preservice teachers could discover and learn from their education stories.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

**RQ1:** In what ways might the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course?

**RQ2:** How might storytelling through a multimedia reflective journal be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators?

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected in response to Research Question 1 were related to the frameworks of transformative learning theory and transformative teaching in how teacher educators prompt
learning in their preservice teachers. In addition, the data related to how the beginning preservice teacher participants began to develop their educational beliefs. The data collected in response to Research Question 2 were connected to the arts-based activities of the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment. Narrative inquiry was used to generate reflective thinking for the participants through storytelling. I wanted the students to feel free to pursue their creativity as they wrote and created images for their education stories.

When presented with creative activities, learners often respond negatively since they are not comfortable with their creativity. Pressfield (2002) referred to the creative block as a resistance that is felt as fear. I saw this fear in K-12 students who wanted to try new things but did not because they were afraid, for various reasons. I saw this same fear in preservice teachers who wanted to try new things but did not because they were afraid, for various reasons. My intention in utilizing transformative teaching strategies comes from my wish to help preservice teachers face their fears so they will not be limited in their future classroom practices. One of the best pieces of teaching advice I received was from my assistant principal when I was a new middle school teacher: “Use your classroom as an experiment,” Mr. Callum told me. “Don’t be afraid to try new things. You’ll never know unless you try.” I gave the students guidelines for the multimedia reflective assignments, but my intention was to leave room for interpretation as they decided for themselves how they wanted to share their discoveries. My directions for the multimedia reflective journal stated:

This multimedia reflective journal is a chance for students to experiment, practice, play, and explore their creativity. The purpose is not to create a work of art that will hang in a museum. The purpose of this activity is self-expression that goes beyond words (see Appendix A).
The multimedia reflective assignments were designed with the intention of allowing the beginning preservice teachers to create their images however they wished. The students were told at the beginning of the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education* that the creation of the multimedia reflective assignments should not be an exercise in spending money, and they were encouraged to use whatever supplies they had.

The students in *Introduction to Elementary Education* took field notes while observing in elementary school classrooms. Students were given directions on how to write their field notes (see Appendix F), and they were told to use their field notes to help them create multimedia reflective journal entries about their observation experiences. Next, the students created six multimedia reflective journal entries. Their first entry was an education story about an influential teacher; next they wrote four education stories about what they were learning as a result of their classroom observations; finally, they reflected on what they learned over the course of the semester.

The directions for the memoir reflective assignment were similar to those for the multimedia reflective journal. The memoir was the culminating education story for the students (see Appendix C). For the memoir reflective assignment students were directed to create a timeline that showed 10 experiences that were instrumental to their decision to become a teacher (Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, & Peyton, 2010). The students were then instructed to choose one education story they considered the most influential, and they were to write about and create an image explaining why this story was so important. As Hansen (2005) stated, creativity “often emerges in the unexpected, the unanticipated, and the unscripted” (p. 59). By examining the unexpected and unanticipated through the creation of the unscripted multimedia reflective assignments, the beginning preservice teachers were able to reflect on their understanding of
their future selves that will teach.

I chose to discuss my theoretical frameworks of transformative learning and transformative teaching with the beginning preservice teachers in my *Introduction to Elementary Education* course. My rationale for doing so was to help my future teachers understand transformative learning from a teacher’s point of view. If I wish to encourage future teachers to become transformative teachers, then those future teachers need an understanding of what transformative learning is and how they might go about promoting it in their future students. When I taught seventh grade one of my assistant principals called this principle “Teach To,” meaning that we have to *teach to* the behaviors and learning we want to see in our students. People do not come to understand concepts or theories through magic. As teachers, whether our students are K-12 or university level, we cannot assume that our students will just “get it.” We have to do our part to expose students to whatever it is we want them to learn. As a result of my wish to *teach to* transformative learning, I shared some salient information about Transformative Learning Theory (see Appendix D). I also shared my concept of teacher self as the first step of the journey toward a fuller teacher identity. My intention in sharing this concept was to prompt my students into reflecting on how they are beginning to understand their roles as future teachers.

As the first step in data analysis, I compiled the participants’ thoughts, discoveries, and understandings as revealed through their multimedia reflective assignments and their interviews. Since it was important to hear the participants’ stories the way they told them, I did not edit their words except for minor spelling or grammar changes where necessary for understanding. I also removed or changed any identifying information such as names or places. Another adjustment I made was to add someone’s name or an activity in parentheses if it wasn’t clear who or what was being spoken about from the participants’ quotes alone. It was important to read the education
This study used thematic analysis as a means of recognizing and examining patterns, or themes, found in data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are patterns across data sets that describe a phenomenon related to specific research questions (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). Thematic analysis is conducted by analyzing the data in six stages: familiarization with data, creating initial codes, discovering themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Stage One included an initial reading of the participants’ education stories; Stage Two occurred after I had an initial sense of the stories. I did a first run through by creating codes of words or phrases discovered within the multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment. Codes were also created as a way to analyze the visual component of these assignments. I used open coding as a way to explore the relationships between the categories I discovered (Saldana, 2013). As I created codes for the participants’ stories, I was able to see similarities and differences between the three cases.

Stage Three was the discovery of themes within those codes. Initially, I discovered nine themes: passion for teaching, early teacher influences, questions about teaching, concerns about challenges they might face, what they have learned about teaching, support they have had from others, inner strength, learning from university coursework, and a desire for student success. In Stage Four I reviewed the data and the themes to see if my first impressions remained or if discoveries regarding new themes might be considered.

In Stage Five I solidified the themes by combining similar themes and discarding others that were not entirely supported by the data. The original nine themes were discovered to overlap.
For example, support the preservice teachers had from others was connected to their early influences, so these themes were combined into one theme—*influences from life and school.* Passion for teaching and a desire for student success also overlapped, so they were combined into one theme—*passion for helping children.* Inner strength also fell into the theme of passion for helping children because the participants believed in their abilities to make the world a better place for their students.

Questions about teaching and challenges they might face in the classroom were discussed in a small way by all three participants. James, Ella, and Martine expressed concerns about how they might handle challenges in their future classrooms; however, all three participants were mainly positive in the way they spoke about their future teacher selves so there was not enough data to support concerns and challenges as an independent theme. As a result of this analysis, I narrowed the number of themes to three: *influences from life and school, learning from university experiences,* and *passion for helping children.* Stage Six is where I made sense of the data in order to create a narrative about what might be learned from the education stories of the three beginning preservice teacher participants. The three themes of *influences from life and school, learning from university experiences,* and *passion for helping children* were discovered throughout the participants’ multimedia reflective assignments and interviews.

**Findings**

When I examined the participants’ responses to the first research question guiding this study it became clear that the three themes correlated to the stages in which the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers changed throughout the semester. At the beginning of the semester, James, Ella, and Martine identified more as students, and they reflected on influences from life and school as one way to begin making sense of their
choice of teaching as a career.

As the semester progressed, James, Ella, and Martine focused on the learning they experienced from their *Introduction to Elementary Education* course, primarily the learning that occurred as a result of their classroom observations. Through their classroom observations James, Ella, and Martine began to see more about the realities of teaching, and they experienced several disorienting dilemmas, which contributed to their transformative learning. By the end of the semester, James, Ella, and Martine were focused on their passion for helping children. They began to see themselves as future teachers with classrooms of their own. They began to question what they were seeing in the classrooms they observed, and they began considering how they might do things differently in their own classrooms. During the semester they began the process of growing from students into teachers. This developmental process resonated with that experienced by a preservice teacher intern described by Putney and Broughton (2010) in their research study on developing teacher efficacy.

Table 5

*Developmental Changes During* Introduction to Elementary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Stage</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Semester--The Student</td>
<td>• Theme 1--Influences From Life and School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle of Semester--The Learner</td>
<td>• Theme 2--Learning From University Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Semester--The Future Teacher</td>
<td>• Theme 3--Passion For Helping Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question One**

In what ways might the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators change during an introductory elementary education course?
James

*Theme 1—Influences From Life and School*

At the beginning of the semester, James spoke about his days as a student and he reflected on the various influences that helped to guide him toward a career in teaching. One significant influence was his parents, and in his multimedia reflective assignments he referred twice to the fact that his parents are teachers. As James pointed out in his multimedia reflective journal, “Both of my parents are teachers so teaching runs in the blood.” Though his parents have their frustrations with their job on occasion, they have remained teachers. James felt encouraged in his choice of teaching as a profession rather than discouraged by the obstacles his parents faced.

In his multimedia reflective journal, James wrote about one special teacher, Mr. DePew. According to James, “He treated me as an adult, providing high expectations, and allowing me the freedom to express myself through the medium of writing. He showed me the impact a teacher could have and made me want to follow in his footsteps, treating other students the same way he treated me.” James felt respected by Mr. DePew, which prompted James to recognize the influential impact a teacher could have on a student’s life. Although James was in Mr. DePew’s class as a high school student, as a result of being in Mr. DePew’s class James began to see himself as a future elementary school teacher who might help his future students the way Mr. DePew helped him.
The visual component for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 2) was a pencil drawing of James and Mr. DePew, along with Star Wars and Viking imagery. The drawing reflected something James might have drawn in high school. Even his lettering is drawn in a way often seen in high schoolers’ notebooks. The drawing is a visual representation of James’ reflection on himself as a student in Mr. DePew’s high school English class and recognizing the influence Mr. DePew had on James’ decision to become a teacher.

James placed himself in an even earlier version of his student self in his memoir reflective assignment. James shared his experiences in third grade when a rivalry developed between himself and a fellow student named Kevin. “Our intense competition had made nearly every day a difficult challenge,” James said. “…my third-grade year marked the first moment I began to see education as being powerful in its utility.” James recognized that this third-grade rivalry helped to develop his desire to do well in his classes, which developed into a love for learning that also served as an influence on his wish to become a teacher.
Figure 3. James’ Image 2

James’ visual for this journal entry (Figure 3) was two swords clashing, which was how he described his relationship with Kevin. His saying “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” described how his rivalry with Kevin sharpened him into a stronger person with a desire to make the world a better place.

Theme 2—Learning From University Experiences

As the semester continued, James completed the eight hours of elementary school observations required for Introduction to Elementary Education. For James, the classroom observations proved to be important as he began to form his initial self-concept of his role as a future teacher. The classroom observations were the first time he examined an elementary classroom through the lens of a teacher instead of a student. In his multimedia reflective journal, James described two different classroom observations, one where the teacher was more strict but the students were less involved in the lesson and one where the teacher was more lenient but had more behavior issues. Through his reflection on these conflicting teaching styles, James realized that a strictly managed classroom is not necessarily fun for the students and may not provide ways for the students to release their pent-up energy and silliness:

I know that this will be a very important problem for me as a future teacher.

Balancing fun and teaching self-control is hard to accomplish in a classroom. As
of right now, I cannot decide whether the first teacher’s way of running her class is better than the second teacher’s method or vice versa. Intuitively, I think that a mixture of the two would be most beneficial.

By completing the observations, and by reflecting on those observations through the multimedia reflective assignments, James had an opportunity to think critically about the teaching practices he saw and which he thought might be most effective in his own future classroom. The classroom observations allowed James an opportunity to watch students and teachers working in real time. At this stage of his learning, James recognized that he needed more thought and reflection in order to come to a clearer answer about which teaching strategy might work best in his future classroom. “I need more time and thought before I can confidently make that claim,” James said.

James’ image for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 4) was a pen drawing of a serious-looking stick figure with the words challenge accepted written beneath. The word accepted was written in red so it stood out. This was an acceptance of the challenges of being a teacher. Already at this early stage of his teacher preparation coursework, James was developing an understanding of what those challenges might be, challenges such as deciding how to create a classroom management plan that will allow for the best learning environment for all his future
James shared another example of learning from university experiences in his multimedia reflective journal. James shared an education story about a student who wouldn’t sit still during one of his classroom observations. James noted that he appreciated that particular observation experience because he “actually got to practice teaching the students, putting what I have been learning into practice.” James was not surprised to find a “lala” student in the class he observed since he knew about such students from his mother, “lala” being a term his mother used to describe students who have trouble sitting still or following directions. When James noticed that the student was struggling to stay seated and follow directions, he decided to get involved:

I immediately sat down next to the afore mentioned lala student and asked him what he was drawing. Through a series of questions relating to his drawing, I managed to keep the student involved the entire time. In fact, he even finished the assignment sooner than the surrounding students. This to me was an incredible experience! Not only am I now confident that I want to teach for the rest of my life, I am more confident that I can help the students I teach.

Figure 5. James’ Image 4

For his image for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 5), created with pencil on notebook paper, James recreated the drawing that the “lala” student produced after James
helped him. The student drew James in a tutu with a mustache. Through this image, James shared what he learned from this observation experience—that sometimes even the most disruptive students can settle down to their work if the teacher is willing to take that extra step, respond to the student in a positive manner, and lend a helping hand.

James concluded that the knowledge gained from this classroom observation was crucial to his future teacher self because “it expands and crystalizes my purposes as a teacher. I am not teaching only the subject matter as I had originally believed but I am teaching students how to live well.” In his interview, James elaborated on this experience, saying, “What I learned there was just the means through which you approach a student makes all the difference. The way she (the teacher) was approaching that student just wasn’t working but she was maintaining that approach.” James also realized that he had empathy for this student: “…this could have been me when I was in school, seriously.” Reflecting more on what he learned about his role as a future teacher from his classroom observations, James added, “I quickly learned that he (the student) just needed a little more attention and direction to succeed. Despite my original impression, he was an extremely bright student, finishing his work faster than even the well-behaved students around him.”

During his observations James also learned that he relates well to children. In his interview he said:

I learned that I relate too well with the students. Honestly like, yeah, I feel like I never left grade school. At one point I remember sitting down with them and I was trying to exemplify what a good student was, so I’d be sitting down and I was watching everything the teacher was doing and I was nodding and paying attention. A kid was trying to talk to me and I was like sssh, the teacher is talking
and this is interesting. So like trying to demonstrate. I was like wow, here I was
sitting on the floor with them and I was more comfortable doing that than sitting
up with the teacher.

During his interview, James expressed the concern that maybe he related too well to the
students because he felt more comfortable on the floor than he did behind the teacher’s desk.
However, this comfort in being at the students’ level might be seen as a strength rather than a
weakness. The ability to sit on the floor meant that James was willing to see things through the
students’ eyes and he was willing to experience the classroom from the students’ point of view.
Seeing the world from the students’ point of view is a type of empathy that may be difficult to
teach. James exuded this empathy naturally, and at an early stage of his teacher preparation
coursework, which prompted me to think that he had a natural talent for teaching young children
that may serve him well when he has his own classroom.

In his interview, James again made the point that he found the classroom observations to
be the most helpful learning experience of the semester: “The best part of the class is the
observations. Getting into the classroom and seeing what it looks like and how different teachers
do things.” Although James’ parents were teachers, the classroom observations completed for
Introduction to Elementary Education were the first time he sat in an elementary classroom
looking at his surroundings through the eyes of a teacher instead of the eyes of a student. As a
result of his observations, James realized that teachers have to make a lot of decisions, from how
to handle disruptive students to how to set up the classroom management plan. He realized that
first impressions about students may not necessarily be the right impression, a lesson he learned
as a result of helping the student who was having trouble following directions. By the middle of
the semester, James was learning more about what it means to be a teacher, including the types
of challenges he might face. James was beginning to think about how he might run his own classroom when the time comes.

**Theme 3—Passion For Helping Children**

By the end of the semester, James focused on his future teacher self by recognizing his passion for helping children. James shared how “…my desire to learn more was fanned from a spark to a flame. This flame, as time went on, would widen further into a desire to teach and so change the world through my impacts on students.” James acknowledged concerns he had about teaching, particularly questions about classroom management, but in his multimedia reflective assignments and interview he consistently returned to his passion for helping his future students become responsible learners as well as good citizens. As a result of his own experiences in the third grade, James developed a passion for helping children:

I can now relate to students who have been through tough transitions. I can comprehend the impact one year of learning can have on a lifetime, and I have gained the understanding that any student can learn if properly motivated.

In his multimedia reflective journal, James wrote, “I want every student in my class to feel loved and to love those around them, being obedient and thoughtful. Their behavior will mean more success in life than their knowledge and it my responsibility as a teacher to guide them.”
In his pencil drawing for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 6), James shared his idea that good morality is the key to success while there is difficulty and danger in poor morality. He wrote the word *knowledge* in a bubble above the head of a child, indicating the teacher’s job to plant knowledge into the minds of students. James revealed that he is more concerned about his students’ behavior than he is about whether or not they are learning their lessons. For teachers, classroom management is one of the most pressing concerns (Wong, Wong, & Seroyer, 2015). As James continues his teacher preparation coursework and learns more classroom management strategies, and as he has more opportunities to participate in classrooms through further fieldwork and student teaching, he may become more concerned about student learning outcomes.

Toward the end of the semester, James began to see himself as a teacher in his own future classroom, and he began to focus on the positive impact he hopes to have on his future students. James said, “I will use anything I can find to inspire my students to work hard.” In his interview, James credited the observations he did for *Introduction to Elementary Education* with sparking his passion to become an educator: “What solidified it (becoming a teacher) was doing the classroom observations for this class. I realized just how much I love teaching.” James added, Being a teacher means I’m going to make great people. It means changing the world, which sounds super big in comparison to the size of a classroom but small in comparison to other things. But I’ve seen through my parents and other teachers the impact you can have and it’s lifelong.

By the end of *Introduction to Elementary Education*, James had already started seeing himself as a teacher in his own future classroom. He was already forming ideas about how he wanted to teach his future students, and he had developed a beginning sense of teacher self.
James shared his vision of the type of teacher he wanted to become when he had his own classroom: “Teaching is a calling because you do influence future generations. You want to help all your students. You have to be able to adapt to every single situation so you’re able to help every single student who comes to you.” At this early stage of his teacher preparation coursework, James appeared to be committed to helping children, and, through helping children, making the world a better place.

**Summary**

Of the three beginning preservice teacher participants, James began his teacher preparation coursework with the clearest view of what it meant to be a teacher since his parents were teachers and he had listened to their education stories and visited their classrooms over the years. At the beginning of the semester in which he took *Introduction to Elementary Education*, James reflected on his student self and the influences his parents, Mr. DePew, and his third-grade classmate, Kevin, had on his decision to become a teacher. As the semester progressed, James learned more about what it means to be a teacher from his classroom observations. James helped a “lala” student he noticed during his classroom observations, and by taking the initiative and interacting with this student James gained a clearer sense of his role as a future teacher. He learned that the way a teacher interacts with a student could make all the difference in the attitude and behavior of that student. James also recognized that the teacher’s strategy of not addressing the student while he was being disruptive was not working, so James tried a positive approach with the student, an action that ended with the student completing his assignment.

By the end of the semester, James was focused on his passion for helping students. Already by this early stage of his teacher preparation coursework James believed that creating a classroom that is strong on management so that students treat each other with respect will go a
long way in helping these students learn skills that will help them become successful in their later lives. Through reflecting on his observations, James had developed the belief that young children need time to be children, and he believed that elementary-age children need time to release their energy and silliness. James said, “Being a teacher means to develop the students the best that we can, and I’ve learned that’s what being a teacher means to me.” By the end of the semester in which he took *Introduction to Elementary Education*, James showed an evolution in his sense of teacher self as he grew from seeing himself as a student to seeing himself as a future teacher with ideas about the kind of teacher he wanted to become.

Ella

*Theme 1—Influences From Life and School*

Ella also focused on her student self at the beginning of the semester. In her multimedia reflective journal, Ella remembered her seventh-grade science teacher Mrs. Winslow, who would prove to be influential in Ella’s decision to become a teacher. One day Ella lost her lunch money, and without hesitation Mrs. Winslow went to her desk and pulled out a small tin with trinkets, supplies, and a five-dollar bill. Mrs. Winslow insisted that Ella take the money because she couldn’t stand the thought that one of her students was hungry. This was a defining moment for Ella because she realized that “there are many great teachers out there that do everything in their power to ensure that their students are well cared for.” As a result of this experience with Mrs. Winslow, Ella realized that she wanted to become that kind of teacher for her future students. After reflecting on this experience, Ella realized that being a classroom teacher would not be enough for her since she wanted to be a role model and a source of support for all of the students at her school, not only the students in her classroom. Mrs. Winslow showed Ella how kindness can be an important trait for a teacher, a trait that can have a long-lasting impact on students.
Figure 7. Ella’s Image 1

Ella’s visual for this multimedia reflective journal (Figure 7) was created with markers, colored papers, and stickers. She used words such as *kindness inspires, I care, you matter to me,* and *remember forever* to describe how she felt about her teacher Mrs. Winslow as well as the type of teacher she wanted to become—a kind, encouraging teacher who her students will look up to and remember.

In her interview, Ella shared one negative influence that helped shape the kind of teacher she did not want to become. Ella’s first-grade teacher created a learning environment that Ella hated. Ella was too active for the teacher’s liking, and as punishment the teacher would sit Ella out of class activities or not choose her to answer questions since Ella had not raised her hand, though she tried her best to follow directions: “She wanted me tested for ADHD and a bunch of other things, and really I was an active kid like any other six year old.” Ella had first-hand experience with an impatient teacher with a lack of understanding for her students, and even as a sophomore in college Ella felt the sting of the teacher’s rejection. The sting was visible in the drawn expression in Ella’s face as she spoke of that first-grade teacher, whom she did not name in the interview. Although this experience was painful at the time, and painful to remember, Ella used this experience as a model of what not to do for her future students. Ella did not want her future students to feel left out or alone the way she did when she was in first grade.
Ella did have positive elementary school influences. She loved her fifth-grade teacher Mr. Harris, a cool dude who rode a motorcycle. Mainly, Ella remembered that he was very kind and treated his students with respect. She also loved her second-grade teacher, Mrs. Kennedy, who was the opposite of what she had experienced from her first-grade teacher. Mrs. Kennedy made accommodations for Ella and other students, something Ella still appreciated. Through Mrs. Kennedy’s influence, Ella realized that sometimes the smallest accommodation, something like allowing students to talk out their ideas before they shared them in class, might help students who are full of energy and have a lot to say.

**Theme 2—Learning From University Experiences**

Ella also completed the eight hours of school observations for *Introduction to Elementary Education*, and through these observations she began learning more about the realities of what it means to be a teacher. Ella credited her classroom observations for helping her lay the groundwork for her role as a future teacher. In her multimedia reflective journal, she shared one experience from her classroom observations when the kindergarten teacher she was observing gave students some apple slices. The teacher asked the students to think about the apples by looking, smelling, tasting, feeling, and listening, and then the kindergarteners shared what they learned using describing words. Of this experience, Ella said:

This activity was eye-opening to me because it brought multiple subjects together in one simple activity. It involved critical thinking both through the series of questions Mrs. Harris asked the children and during the activity of describing the apple. It used vocabulary and comprehension for the describing the five senses activity. And it merged science with reading, which was interesting and engaging. I loved the activity and the children loved it too! They were so excited to learn,
and they were able to collaborate with their peers and move around to get energy out.

Through her classroom observations, Ella was able to see student engagement in a lesson that taught several skills at once. Ella had an opportunity to see the kind of activity she would like to do with her future students. Ella said, “I want to be able to engage my students with a variety of activities that incorporate multiple topics we are currently working on.” Without this classroom observation, Ella may not have begun to think about the types of activities she wanted to use with her future students.

In another multimedia reflective journal entry, based on another classroom observation, Ella noted that she learned how important classroom management is in order to maintain order so that teachers can teach. Ella was surprised to see that bullying was already occurring in the kindergarten class she observed. This proved to be an important learning experience for Ella: “I’ve learned that I will make sure that my classroom has an emphasis on kindness and acceptance.” Through this observation, Ella learned that she cannot control the actions of her students, but she realized that she wanted to try to avoid similar situations if she could and have steps to handle it in place if it does happen.

Figure 8. Ella’s Image 2

Ella created her image for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 8) with colored
markers. She drew the centers in the kindergarten classroom where she observed, along with the word love, a red slash through the word bullying, and in the center the phrase kindergarteners need kindness. Without this observation, Ella may have missed out on an important lesson for all teachers—that behavior issues can happen in any classroom at any time. Ella became aware of some of the classroom management issues facing teachers, and she realized that she needed to have some sort of management plan in place for when such issues arise in her future classroom.

The observations also helped Ella realize that she was likely to be better suited to teaching the higher elementary grades: “I realized that I can be very patient with kids because I kind of have a short fuse. Through reflection, I’ve become better at that over the years, but I’ve realized that I don’t have the patience to teach kindergarten or first grade like I thought I might.” While this may appear to be a small realization, it may prove to be helpful to Ella when she begins seeking her first teaching position. If she has already recognized that her personality and strengths are better suited to older elementary students, then she will know which grade-level positions to apply for when she completes her teacher preparation coursework. According to Ella, “I realize that I need higher thinking in my students. I need more thought. I need more discussions, and I like the idea of doing things where they can create something that they’re proud of, not just a nice picture.” Ella’s initial self-concept of her role as a future teacher had already started to point her in the direction of where she believed she would be most effective as a teacher.

In her interview, Ella spoke about how the classroom observations were important learning experiences:

…it really gave me this opportunity see how I work with kids. Through that and with other classes, I've just really realized that my big thing is, I keep focusing on my
kindness, acceptance, respect. I really want those to have a big role in my classroom and I think that the observations really helped me figure out the kinds of things that I want to implement in my classroom.

As a result of her classroom observations, Ella learned more about her role as a future teacher. She learned about the types of activities she might use with future students as well as the importance of having a classroom management plan in place. By the middle of the semester in which she took *Introduction to Elementary Education*, Ella was beginning to think about where her talents might best be used in an elementary school setting.

*Theme 3—Passion For Helping Children*

Toward the end of the semester, after she had a clearer vision of herself as a future teacher because of her classroom observations, Ella was able to focus on the passion she felt as a driving force behind her decision to become a teacher. In her interview, Ella said that she was initially inspired to become a teacher because she wanted to be a professional mom in some way. While she toyed with the idea of other professions such as lawyer or psychologist, Ella said, “It always just came back to teaching. It was like teaching, psychology, teaching, lawyer, teaching, this thing, teaching.”

Ella shared the inspiration behind her passion to teach in her memoir reflective assignment. Ella said that there was one moment in particular when she realized how passionate she was about becoming an educator. According to Ella, “I often have bursts of passion about teaching, children, the education system, and anything else in between. But this particular instance made me stop and think to myself ‘Wow, that’s it. This is what I want.’” The moment was during an argument with her mother. Ella said that she and her mother often had arguments about politics, but during this particular discussion Ella’s mother questioned her about her
decision to bring children into the world. Ella’s response made a larger point about her role as a future teacher:

“Mom, there will always be problems in the world, some we can fix and others we can’t. But we can control how we look at the world. I believe that there are more good people than bad people. I believe that these good people want to enact change to make the world better. I can choose to hope that one day the world will be a place that I want my children to grow up in. That one day the world will be a good place for the children currently on this Earth to grow up in. That is why I’m so passionate about things like social justice, climate, human rights, women’s rights, gun control, education and so much more. I have to believe that the choices I make and the causes I believe in will make a difference for the better so that the generations after me can reap the benefits of a better world. That’s why I want to teach. I want to create a change. I want to inspire young people to be better people. I want them to make better choices than my generation and the generations before me have made. I want them to want to learn and grow. I want to give children anything and everything they need to succeed. I don’t care what it takes. I have to believe that this will make a difference, otherwise what will?”

*Figure 9. Ella’s Image 3*
For her memoir reflective assignment image (Figure 9), Ella took a quote from what she said in response to her mother’s concerns and inserted the quote over a photograph of pink and mauve roses and green leaves. Through this quote, Ella showed her understanding that there are challenges, both in the classroom and the world at large. Already at this early stage of the development of her teacher self, at the beginning of her teacher preparation coursework, she revealed a commitment to making the world a better place through her teaching.

In her memoir reflective assignment, Ella wrote, “Change happens when you let students know that they are important, necessary, loved, respected, and accepted. Change happens when students know they are in a safe space to learn, grow, and succeed.” She continued by saying that she is often questioned by others in her family about her decision to become a teacher but “what I’ve realized is I don’t care. I have found something that I am extremely passionate about, and none of these things should derail my dreams of helping people on their journeys.” Ella showed a fortitude about staying true to her vision of being a teacher despite being challenged by her mother and other family members about her career choice. This fortitude may well develop into a resilience that will carry her through a long career as an educator.

In her memoir reflective assignment, Ella noted that her decision to become a teacher wasn’t simply inspired by a need to make a career choice. She was inspired by her desire to make the world a better place:

I realized am much more passionate about teaching than I thought I was. I realized that teaching will bring me immense joy and I will have a sense of purpose. My students will all come from different backgrounds, life experiences,
and abilities. For some students, I may be the only friendly adult they encounter all day, and school may be the only place they get a warm and healthy meal.

Some of my students’ families may not be able to afford supplies. Some of my students may have IEPs or disabilities. My goal is to meet the needs of each and every student that walks in my classroom.

Ella continued the thought in one of her later multimedia reflective journal entries by writing, “I want to see the spark of excitement in my students’ eyes as they find a good describing word or figure out a new concept. I envision my classroom as a safe, colorful, inviting space where children can learn comfortably and without worry.” By the end of the semester in which she took Introduction to Elementary Education, Ella visualized herself in her own classroom, seeing herself as a teacher who made a positive difference in her students’ lives, and she considered how she might run that classroom in a way that would allow all of her future students to be successful.

Ella’s image for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 10) was created with colored markers. She used phrases such as Welcome! and I can do this! and There’s not too many things that CAN’T be fixed to represent positive thoughts for her future students. She also shared something a kindergartener told her at one of her observations: “Did you see me give you a
thumbs up? It’s because you’re doing a good job!” Ella’s image was a visual representation of the positive messages she wished to convey to her future students.

Ella saw her role as a teacher as being larger than simply teaching lessons. In another multimedia reflective journal entry, she wrote:

A large reason I decided I wanted to be an educator was because I want to spend my life helping people. I want to encourage young people to pursue knowledge and better themselves. I hope to make a difference in the lives of the children that I encounter by being a kind, positive, accepting adult in their lives, especially because some students may not have that kind of person present in their home lives. Teaching is what I’ve known I want to do since I was five years old…It means I’m going to be shaping the minds of a whole new generation. I’m going to be a person that these young people rely on, and I’m going to be there. I’m going to be there and inspire them. That’s a lot of pressure, that’s a lot of responsibility and just to make sure that they’re first of all learning what they need to do to become successful people, not only academically but also socially.

By the end of *Introduction to Elementary Education*, Ella appeared to be fully committed to her decision to become a teacher. In her multimedia reflective journal, memoir reflective assignment, and interview she repeatedly referred to her passion for helping her future students as a way to make the world at large a better place.

One way Ella planned on reaching those future students is through kindness. She referred to kindness as being an essential trait for teachers:

I think a lot of things can make a great teacher, but I think overall it's kindness. I mean, sure, you absolutely need to know what you're talking about, but if you
can't be kind and empathetic to your students and what's going on in their lives and what's going on in their learning, then I really don't think you can be a very effective teacher. You can't really inspire them to learn. That's, I think, what teaching is about. You should want to inspire them to follow their dreams, to want to be more educated, to be better people.

By the end of the semester, Ella saw herself as a future teacher with a role larger than simply teaching curriculum: “Teachers don’t just teach the curriculum. It’s absurd anyone thinks that that’s the only thing that happens.” Ella saw herself as a teacher who will embody kindness and create a safe space where all of her students could learn. Through that learning, Ella hopes that her future students will be better prepared for the world that awaits them.

Summary

At the beginning of the semester in which she took Introduction to Elementary Education, Ella reflected on her student self and the influence her seventh-grade teacher had on her when Mrs. Winslow gave Ella money for lunch so she wouldn’t go hungry. Ella also reflected on positive influences from elementary teachers, namely her second and fifth-grade teachers. Ella was reminded of her negative experience in first grade when her teacher had little patience for her. Each of these experiences helped Ella gain a beginning sense of what kind of teacher she did, and did not, want to become.

As the semester progressed, Ella learned more about what it means to be a teacher from her classroom observations. She saw how bullying could happen among children as young as five, and she realized that having a classroom management plan is important as a way to maintain control over the class. Ella learned a more practical lesson when she realized that she is likely to be better suited to teaching the higher elementary grades, grades 3-5, instead of the
lower elementary grades, K-2. She came to this conclusion while observing a kindergarten class. The classroom observations helped Ella learn more about the realities of being a teacher.

Another epiphany Ella experienced was the realization that it is okay if she does not know everything right now. In her multimedia reflective journal, Ella wrote,

At the beginning of the semester, I felt like the ground was tilting and I wasn’t sure which direction to go. I knew that I wanted to be a teacher, but I didn’t know how to be a teacher. I didn’t know what would be expected of me in the classroom, or how to even begin to figure all of that out. After this semester, I stand on solid ground. I know that I don’t know everything I need to know about teaching and running a classroom, but I do know that I am on the right path to becoming the best teacher I can be to my students.

At the end of the semester, Ella shared her passion for helping every child who will walk through her classroom door. Ella believed that part of her role as a future teacher was to help shape the hearts and minds of her students so that they will have the tools to become successful later in their lives. As Ella said, “…you’ve got to teach them how to be good people, how to have kindness and respect, and I think it’s really just kind of shaping the minds of the young people.” Ella recognized that she did have questions and concerns about running her own classroom, but one thing she learned during the semester in which she took Introduction to Elementary Education was that “these worries are nothing in comparison to how it will feel to make a difference in children’s lives. I will always have worries, but these worries shouldn’t hold me back from my passion.”

At this stage of her teacher preparation coursework, at the end of the semester in which she took Introduction to Elementary Education, Ella saw herself not only teaching her future
students but making a positive impact on their lives. A focus on her passion for helping children may act as an anchor for Ella that will keep her grounded when she begins to face the daily challenges of teaching. Ella may also begin her teaching career with an initial sense of how her talents could best be put to use in an elementary school setting, which may make her more effective in her first teaching position, a time when many beginning teachers struggle.

Martine

_Theme 1—Influences From Life and School_

In her multimedia reflective journal, Martine wrote about the fifth-grade teacher who became one of her most influential role models. Mr. Oliver was the first teacher Martine had who taught her how to value and enjoy education. Martine wrote that she struggled with school, but Mr. Oliver “…saw potential in me and called me out on it. He gave me extra homework and kept me accountable for it.” Mr. Oliver took the time to help Martine, and Martine recognized that Mr. Oliver invested a lot of time with her when previous teachers had given up on her. Martine credited Mr. Oliver for sparking her wish to help her future students in the same way he had helped her:

‘I think the part of me that came around to want to be a teacher was more of I just enjoy education because of what I wrote about in my reflections with not enjoying education early on and then I had that one teacher that completely turned me around. So, I think this made me eager to educate myself and then enjoy the learning process.

As a result of Mr. Oliver’s help, Martine started to care about her learning and for the first time she wanted to reach her academic potential. Mr. Oliver’s help led Martine to want to help other students learn to the best of their potential.'
For her image for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 11), Martine used crayons, pencil, and a pen to draw and color in butterflies that represent growth, passion, and education. Included with the butterflies were three quotes that were meaningful to Martine and reflected her feelings about education. The quote from Margaret Mead said, “Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.” The quote from Daniel Boorstin said, “Education is learning what you didn’t even know you didn’t know.” The third quote, from Unknown, said, “The expert in anything was once a beginner.” The quotes represent Martine’s feelings about her experience in 5th grade and how she grew to love learning with Mr. Oliver’s help.

In her memoir reflective assignment, Martine shared that she had been forming and creating her teacher self from as early as she could remember. Martine said, “From the very beginning of being able to comprehend what school and a teacher were, I knew that one day I would like to be one.” For Martine, the foundational event that had the earliest impact on her self-concept of her role as a future teacher was when she would play school with her sisters. According to Martine:

When my sisters and I were really young, we would always create the most random and craziest games ever, however playing school was our all time favorite; well, at least for me it was. When my sisters and I would play school, I
obviously always assumed the role of being the teacher. I would create the most exciting lessons plans and activities for us to play and would always look forward to what fun thing I would create and make fun for my pretend students. The reason that I chose this particular event and time period as my most influential is because it was the very beginning for me to start to develop a love for education and teaching.

Martine recognized the importance of this childhood game with her sisters as being influential in her decision to become a teacher. Martine said that playing teacher was more than an average game she played with her sisters. Playing teacher became an actual passion and interest: “When I played this game it made me feel a sense of happiness and peace knowing that I was doing something that was not only enjoyable to others, but also helping them expand their knowledge and have fun.” Martine had been forming a sense of her teacher self from a young age, and this desire to become a teacher remained through her sophomore year of college.

Martine’s visual for her memoir reflective assignment (Figure 12) was created with crayons and pen. The drawing was a picture of Mickey Mouse’s head with a quote from Walt Disney: “If you can dream it, you can do it.” This quote reflected Martine’s dream of becoming a teacher, a dream that had been fueled by playing teacher with her sisters. Martine believed that if
she worked hard enough during her teacher preparation coursework she would be able to fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher.

*Theme 2—Learning From University Experiences*

As the semester progressed, Martine completed the eight hours of required classroom observations for *Introduction to Elementary Education*. In her interview, Martine spoke about how the observations helped her learn more about her initial self-concept of her role as a future teacher. Through observing classes at different grade levels, Martine came to believe that she would be happy teaching any grade in elementary school where at first she was certain she only wanted to teach second grade. Martine said that her classroom observations solidified her choice to teach elementary school:

What I learned about myself as a future teacher from watching other teachers is that I really want to learn how to make every lesson and lesson plan come to life for my students. I want to not only be a fun teacher, but also a teacher who knows how to engage her students.

As a result of this realization, Martine may enter the teaching profession with a sense that she will be comfortable working with elementary students at any grade level. Martine learned to feel comfortable with elementary students of all ages as a result of her school observations, though she may develop more specific grade-level preferences as she continues her teacher preparation coursework.

As Martine observed the teachers she learned about the importance of repetition and involvement as ways to assist student learning. Martine believed that she learned strategies for managing a classroom and reinforcing things for understanding from her classroom observations. However, what Martine believed she knew about teaching at this point while taking *Introduction*
to Elementary Education may change the closer she comes to completing her teacher preparation coursework.

Martine believed that the classroom observations provided the most important learning experiences from Introduction to Elementary Education:

For my field observations I’m definitely grateful for the experience of being able to see the reality of teaching. I think it really helped me to think practically and more realistically towards what to think and expect. As of now, what I know of my role as a future teacher that I didn’t when I first entered this course is that I was completely unrealistic with my expectations. I think going in, I heavily had a “fairy tale” view of what teaching would be like especially when it came to the actual classroom environment.

Martine brought up an important point about the “fairy tale” view of teaching. There can be a disconnect for new teachers between what they thought teaching would be and what teaching actually is (Chapman, 2005), which may be one of the reasons new teachers leave the profession after only a few years. As a result of her classroom observations, Martine learned more about the realities of being a teacher. At this early stage of Martine’s teacher preparation coursework, the “fairy tale” view of teaching is already starting to fade.

![Image](image3.jpg)

*Figure 13. Martine’s Image 3*
Martine’s image for this multimedia reflective journal (Figure 13) was created with a yellow marker on purple paper. Martine drew a picture of a heart with her own quote: “Pursue confidently your dreams of being a teacher. Teach each day as you once imagined you would. Don’t let today’s obstacles keep you from yesterday’s dreams.” This phrase refers to Martine’s determination to become a teacher despite the obstacles. As a result of her classroom observations, Martine began to develop some sense of the obstacles she might face as a future teacher such as large class sizes and not enough supplies for every student.

In another multimedia reflective journal entry, Martine shared more about what she learned from one of the teachers she observed: “She prompted the kids and encouraged them, saying, ‘You can do it,’ ‘Good job,’ and ‘My turn, your turn.’ She said ‘My turn’ when she was showing them how to do something and ‘Your turn’ when she was done.” This particular observation was helpful for Martine because she was able to see an effective teacher and the strategies this teacher used to help her struggling students. As Martine said,

This (the observation) affected my role as a future teacher because I again saw glimpses into the future. I saw myself being a good teacher and using the methods that the teachers I observed used such as verbal praise for good behavior, making the class activities sound fun, and ‘My turn, your turn.’

Martine believed that everything she experienced during the semester helped her grow as a future teacher because it all “helps you grow in your ideas. You can have your originality and add a piece from everyone in this amazing project for the students, and then it grows for them and it grows you as a teacher.” During her classroom observations, Martine said that she tried to put herself in her mentor teachers’ shoes to understand their management and lesson choices so she could understand why the teachers did everything they did. Martine wanted to learn
strategies from the teachers so that she could do a better job in her own future classroom. Martine observed two teachers, both of whom served as positive role models. Martine was inspired by the kindness she saw one of the teachers exhibiting toward her students:

   It made me think back to when I myself felt cared for by a teacher and it was the most defining and memorable moment I had as a student. The whole time I was inside her classroom I was in awe with everything because there was such gentleness and love with everything she did and taught. It made me feel super proud as a future teacher because I know I will be capable of having the same impact on someone else one day with my students.

   Martine concluded the thought by writing, “Her relationship with her students is something I want to embody myself as a future teacher and demonstrate to everyone who comes into my classroom.”

   The classroom observations prompted Martine to reflect on classroom activities she might use with her future students as well as how she might relate to those future students.

   Creativity was one trait Martine kept returning to in her multimedia reflective assignments because she believed in its importance for both students and teachers. “…it was the creative and imaginative side of the job that I became most fascinated with from the beginning,” she said. As a result of her classroom observations, Martine saw how the spark of learning was ignited in the students through creative assignments:

   Giving children the opportunity to be free in their creativity allows for them to explore their own minds. Allowing them to understand how they learn best on their own instead of being taught a specific way and feeling like they are never capable of reaching that standard. That freedom gives them the chance to open
new doors in their academics and bring forth something new that others may be able to find useful. I’ve learned that students learn their best this way.

As a result of the classroom observations, Martine has come to recognize the value of creativity in education. According to Arends (2014), there is a need for student involvement in the learning process since true learning happens as a result of personal discovery. Creative activities provide students with one way toward personal discovery.

During her classroom observations, Martine focused on the strategies she saw the teachers using, revealing that at this stage of her teacher development she was interested in what types of activities the teachers were using with the students.

**Theme 3—Passion For Helping Children**

By the end of the semester in which she took *Introduction to Elementary Education*, Martine began to focus on the type of teacher she wished to become. Martine shared that her passion for helping children was inspired by her desire to have a positive impact on her future students. In one of her multimedia reflective journal entries, she noted, “I really just get excited about teaching, the more that I’m with the kids. Kids make me happy, they look at me like I’m someone special. They are always kind to me everywhere I go. And I think teaching them would make me happy.” In another multimedia reflective journal entry, one where she shared her experience with the fifth-grade teacher who helped her to love learning, she related how this experience prompted her passion for helping children: “It is this very experience that encouraged me to continue on learning and to continue on enjoying the education I was able to receive. I want to do the same for my students.” Martine’s passion for teaching was ignited both by how she believes her future students will make her feel as well as how she hopes to have a positive impact on her future students’ learning.
Martine’s image for this multimedia reflective journal entry (Figure 14) was created with a purple pen on pink paper. She used her own quote for this image: “Be the teacher who makes kids excited to come to school every day.” She drew hearts in a bubble above the teacher’s head as well as the three students’ heads. Her image corresponded with her wish to become that teacher—the one who makes school a fun place for her students.

Martine connected her passion for helping children to her own fifth-grade year when her teacher Mr. Oliver helped her. Martine credited Mr. Oliver for sparking her passion to help her future students:

I think the part of me that came around to want to be a teacher was more of I just enjoy education because of not enjoying education early on and then I had that one teacher that completely turned me around. So I think this made me eager to educate myself and then enjoy the learning process. I want to be able to push other people to do the same thing…It made me realize I have a passion for helping others the way that teacher helped me. I know I want to make a difference in children’s lives. It just seems, like, a worthwhile thing to do with my life.
In another multimedia reflective journal entry, Martine asked, “Are not teachers those who love to watch others explore their knowledge? They should be comforting, supporting, and overall those who a child is comfortable in unraveling and expanding their minds with.” She continued by saying:

When one teaches, being able to convey the academic message to every student in the classroom is very important. When you’re able to create that type of spark with your students and allow them to explore their own minds in their own way with flexibility, I believe it instills trust and perseverance into the student for many academic years to come. I do believe without a certain amount of flexibility within learning it is impossible to academically mature.

Martine believed that she was drawn to be an elementary school teacher: “I feel like elementary school is my passion. I’m learning with you guys and teaching you guys because I enjoy it, not just because I have to teach a subject.” Later in the interview she said, “I know at the end of the day that I want to be that caring teacher for my students, to know that I’m compassionate about what I do and that I care about them.”

By the end of the semester in which she took Introduction to Elementary Education, Martine was beginning to see herself as a future classroom teacher. She focused on the type of classroom she wanted to create for her future students—a positive learning environment where her students will be allowed creative ways to express their learning. She also focused on the type of teacher she wanted to become—someone who is comforting, supporting, and flexible. During the semester in which she took Introduction to Elementary Education Martine learned to fall back in love with Education as her degree major, further cementing her passion for becoming an elementary school teacher:
I've learned to love the reason why I began as an Education major. Just like, ‘Okay. I can continue doing this for another two years. I can continue exploring my options as a teacher. This is the career I want to do moving forward.’ So it helped me understand that this is the career I want. I'm not going to change my major. I'm sticking with this one.

At this point of her teacher preparation coursework, Martine appeared to be committed to becoming a future teacher. Her classroom observations were positive experiences as she watched successful teachers teaching creative lessons to their students. It would be interesting to see if Martine’s commitment remained strong when more of the challenging aspects of teaching, such as classroom management or behavioral issues, become more pressing.

Summary

At the beginning of the semester, Martine reflected on her fifth-grade teacher twice in her multimedia reflective journal. This fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Oliver, took the time to help Martine, and Martine recognized that Mr. Oliver invested a lot of time with her when previous teachers had given up on her. Prior to taking Introduction to Elementary Education and learning more about teaching from the observation hours, Martine was specific about only wanting to teach second grade. Martine said, “But doing observations helped me gain a feel of okay, I can teach all these grades. They all have their benefits and their pros and cons. So right now I enjoy every single grade. I’d be happy wherever they put me.” The observation hours required as part of Introductory to Elementary Education helped Martine to open her mind to the possibility of enjoying any grade she might teach in elementary school, thereby broadening how she envisioned herself as a future elementary school teacher. Martine observed teachers working effectively with their students, which gave her ideas about how she might run her future
classroom. Two important strategies Martine saw modeled were repetition and student involvement. This was an important lesson for a future teacher since students, no matter their age, rarely learn something new the first time they see it. Coming into the teaching profession with an understanding that repetition and involvement are necessary components of student learning may help Martine with her lesson planning when she is a new teacher and has her own classroom.

Discussion of Case Findings

When looking for an answer to Research Question 1 and the ways in which beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators might change during an introductory education course, it became apparent that James, Ella, and Martine each moved closer to a sense of teacher identity on the Teacher Self to Teacher Identity scale (see Figure 1). The classroom observations were the catalyst to the disorienting dilemmas that prompted the participants’ shifts in perception. By the end of the semester in which they took Introduction to Elementary Education, James, Ella, and Martine began to see themselves as future teachers with classrooms of their own. The participants developed a sense of the types of classrooms they wanted to have and the types of teachers they wanted to become.

In his interview, James suggested that future students taking Introduction to Elementary Education should complete even more than the eight required hours of observations. Ella noted that the kindness she saw in the teachers she observed

…inspired me to make more of an effort to display more acts and words of kindness and appreciation in the classroom. Kids learn from your words and behaviors, and by displaying kindness, empathy, and appreciation, you teach them to adopt these behaviors as habit and therefore become better human beings.

Martine began looking closely at how the teachers she observed were handling their
students: “Oh, what is she doing? Or what is he doing? That helps me get a clearer picture of who I want to be as a teacher.” James, Ella, and Martine began the semester thinking of themselves as students by reflecting on their own student days and how those days influenced their decision to become a teacher. Their focus changed over the course of the semester into that of learner as they completed their observation hours. By the end of the semester, they began to see themselves as future teachers with classrooms of their own. They began to visualize the types of learning environments they wanted to create for their future students as well as the types of traits they wanted to embody as future teachers.

James, Ella, and Martine each noted disorienting dilemmas as a result of their influences from life and school and their learning from university experiences. According to Mezirow (1991), a person may have disorienting feelings when making meaning within their current frame of reference is not possible or when their beliefs are challenged. Disorienting dilemmas and critical reflection are experiences that may instigate a perspective transformation (Howie & Bagnall, 2013), and after a perspective transformation adults understand the world more deeply due to the challenges to their previous way of thinking. James recognized the disorienting dilemma he experienced as a result of his rivalry with Kevin during his third-grade year. Through reflecting on this education story in his memoir reflective assignment, James recognized the shift in his perception about the value of education as a result of this rivalry:

When I watched how my hard work translated into the material that I knew and the knowledge I could share with others, my desire to learn more was fanned from a spark to a flame. This flame, as time went on, would widen further into a desire to teach and so change the world through my impacts on students…Due to my experiences in the third grade, I can now relate to students who have been through
tough school transitions, I can comprehend the impact one year of learning can have on a lifetime, and I have gained the understanding that any student can learn if properly motivated. For me, that motivation was competition and being rewarded for my efforts. I plan on using these two motivations on students who are similar to me in my classroom, but I will use anything I can find to inspire my students to work hard.

As a result of recognizing this shift in his perception about the value of hard work, James was inspired to become a teacher who will motivate his future students to do their best.

Ella experienced a disorienting dilemma during a conversation she had with her mother about her desire to have children. In her memoir reflective assignment, Ella wrote,

Completely seriously, she asked me, ‘Are you sure that with the way everything is going that you want to have kids? Are you sure you want to bring people into the world when it only seems to be getting worse?’

This discussion prompted a shift in Ella’s perception of her role as a future teacher:

This conversation helped me realize that I am much more passionate about teaching than I thought I was. I realized that teaching will bring me immense joy and I will have a sense of purpose. My students will all come from different backgrounds, life experiences, and abilities. For some students, I may be the only friendly adult they encounter all day, and school may be the only place they get a warm and healthy meal. Some of my students’ families may not be able to afford supplies. Some of my students may have IEPs or disabilities. My goal is to meet the needs of each and every student that walks in my classroom. Of course, there may be these huge life changing “aha” moments that take place in classrooms.
where everything falls into place for a student, but more often the things that
cchange lives are teachers encouraging students and being there for them.

As a result of this conversation with her mother, Ella’s frame of reference about her role
as a future teacher shifted. By this point, teaching was no longer simply a choice of profession—
it became a calling. Ella realized that teaching will bring her immense joy and a sense of purpose,
both of which could serve her well when she has her own classroom and is facing the daily
challenges of teaching.

Martine experienced a disorienting dilemma as a result of the help she received from her
fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Oliver. Prior to her fifth-grade year, Martine struggled with school and
she felt that her previous teachers did not reach out to her. According to Martine,

He (Mr. Oliver) constantly assisted me with my work because he understood that
I was the type of student to hesitate to ask and he always encouraged me
throughout the process. I can very clearly remember how much care and time he
invested in me during the time despite the lack of care I had for myself. This time
formed the foundation of me believing that education can be fun and learning can
be hard but valuable. This was the reason why I started to love education…This
experience shaped my future self in the sense of igniting my passion for learning
and pulling out the potential to grow academically despite my lack of interest at
first.

Martine experienced a shift in her perception about the value of an education because one
teacher, Mr. Oliver, provided the assistance she needed to succeed. Martine’s new love for
education provided the basis for her desire to become a teacher. She wanted to help her future
students the way Mr. Oliver had helped her.
One shift in perception experienced by all three participants was a new understanding of the realities of teaching. This new understanding was the result of their classroom observations. What Martine referred to as a “fairy tale” understanding of teaching appeared to be evolving into a more realistic view of the teaching profession. During his observation, James experienced first hand what it was like helping a “lala” student follow directions. Ella saw bullying in a kindergarten classroom. Martine saw classrooms with too many students and not enough supplies. Even though all three participants witnessed some challenges during their elementary school observations, they may still have had unrealistic expectations of the teaching profession and they showed what might be a naïve view of the realities of teaching. Throughout their multimedia reflective assignments and their interviews, James, Ella, and Martine focused on the positive aspects of teaching—the joy of helping and inspiring students. By the end of the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education*, James, Ella, and Martine were seeing themselves as positive, encouraging teachers who would provide supportive learning environments for their future students. James, Ella, and Martine focused on the passion they had for helping children.

As a 24-year veteran educator, I know that passion can be a sustaining factor in a long teaching career. Still, passion can wear thin at times. The positive aspects of working with children may be the driving force behind James, Ella, and Martine’s wish to become teachers, but this positive-centered focus may lead to crushing frustrations when they have to deal with challenges on a daily basis. This positive-centered focus may be an underlying factor in why so many new teachers leave the profession in the first years. Perhaps for some new teachers the reality of teaching clashes so much with the fantasy of teaching that it’s too painful to remain in the profession. This is why resilience born from a strong teacher identity may be helpful for
future teachers. If they are able to hold onto their vision of why they became teachers in the first place they may be able to weather the storms they are certain to experience.

James, Ella, and Martine may need to develop other skills and traits that could carry them through the more difficult aspects of teaching, traits such as a sound value system, empathy, dedication, loyalty, and honesty (Patel et al., 2017). Hopefully, these three beginning preservice teachers were committed enough to their initial self-concept of their roles as future teachers that they remained resilient even when the day-to-day realities of teaching began to hit home. Each of the three participants shared their passion for helping their future students even if they were still learning about the classroom practices they might use to help those students.

Transformative teaching may be one way for James, Ella, and Martine to reach their future students, but it is impossible to predict how a student will respond to any teaching strategy. Also, there may be factors affecting their future students that are outside their control, factors such as family situations or poverty. Since James, Ella, and Martine were at such an early stage of their teacher preparation programs at the time of this study, it is difficult to say how they will respond to the challenges they are likely to face in their classrooms. Seeing how James, Ella, and Martine’s eyes lit up when they talked about their hopes for their future students made me think that perhaps these beginning preservice teachers had the determination to develop the skills necessary to beat the odds and have long, fulfilling teaching careers.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question guiding this study—“How might storytelling through multimedia reflective assignments be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators?”—will now be examined through comparing and contrasting James, Ella, and Martine’s experiences creating the multimedia reflective
In order to gauge their reactions to the multimedia reflective assignments, James, Ella, and Martine were asked the following four questions as part of their interviews (see Appendix B):

1. How might storytelling have helped you understand who you are becoming as a teacher?
2. Did you complete the visual or the written portion of the multimedia reflective assignments first? Why?
3. Which did you find most helpful—the written or the visual portion of the journal? Why?
4. What changes might you like to see in the multimedia reflective journal?

When asked “How might storytelling have helped you understand who you are becoming as a teacher?” James responded in praise of storytelling through the multimedia reflective assignments: “It helped me realize that I’m having various experiences that are important to becoming a teacher. Writing down experiences was good because it forced me to think about these experiences maybe more deeply than I might have otherwise.” James continued:

I found the pictures especially helpful more than the words because the language wasn’t always there for me. This is just an example; it was an experience of going through one of the chapters and thinking about what I learned and I ended up drawing this underwater minefield because that reflected what I think teachers go through when it comes to following laws and we have to be very careful. It also expressed my frustration at the copyright laws. There’s nothing we can do about that but the drawing helped me express my frustration where the language to express that didn’t come as easily. So I thought it was a great help. It also helped me to solidify why I wanted to teach.
When asked if he completed the written portion or the visual portion of the journal first, James completed the written portion first. He used the example “…when I eat food, I eat what I like least first just to get it out of the way so I can enjoy the rest of it. So I do the same thing with work. I’d get the writing done, and then I’d have time to enjoy the actual drawing.” James said that he used the written portion to help him figure out how he was going to create the image: “I saw the written portion as my way of doing brainstorming for my visual portion.”

James preferred the visual portion of the multimedia reflective assignments: “The assignment would not have been as enjoyable without the image because the image was like the light at the end of the tunnel where the tunnel was just a bunch of words. It definitely helped me make sense of what I was thinking. I think I just understood what I was thinking more clearly.” James liked the multimedia reflective assignments the way they were, saying, “I wouldn’t change a thing. I could see how I could adapt this for younger students in elementary school to let different kids show their learning in different ways. If some students didn’t like to write then they might get more out of the drawing part. If they’re not artistic, they might get more out of writing.”

For James, the visual aspect of the multimedia reflective assignment was the most useful because it helped him express himself in a different way. Where he felt limited by expressing himself in language, he felt more freedom to express himself visually. This was an interesting statement from James because he was an articulate young man, yet he perceived himself as having trouble expressing himself through writing. The image portion of the multimedia assignments allowed him to break out of what he perceived to be a tunnel of words into a deeper expression of his thoughts.

Ella struggled more with the visual aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments.
When asked “How might storytelling have helped you understand who you are becoming as a teacher?” she responded:

I think it’s really helped me get back in touch with my creative side. I kind of lost that for a while and I think that schooling can kind of put that out of you. It really helped me get back in touch with telling a story in a way that’s not just going to get me an A, or that meets a specific word count. Like, oh, I guess I’ll use this fancy word and that fancy word. I think it also really helped me get into more of a teacher mode. I’ve really been thinking about my thinking, I’ve really been thinking about, well, what are the stories that I have?

Ella added that storytelling through the multimedia reflective assignments helped her think about teaching more positively. Through the experience of creating the multimedia reflective assignments, she learned that she’s more creative than she thought she was. Ella completed the written portion of the multimedia reflective assignments first because it helped her decide what she wanted to create for her image. She found ideas for her visual journal entries from different things she saw in her mentor teachers’ classrooms. Ella said in her interview that she had scrapbooking materials at home, some of which she used in the creation of her multimedia reflective images.

Ella believed that the written portion was more helpful for her, at least initially. As she became more comfortable creating the images then the ideas for the images came more easily and she was able to discern more value from the images. The multimedia reflections prompted her to think about her education stories and how these various stories affected her initial self-concept of her role as a future teacher:

Okay, yeah, I do need to really think about, how did this affect me? How did this
change my way of thinking? And the creative aspect of it (the multimedia reflective assignments) did help because I was able to put that into a different medium. But I think with the prompts that were given and just the experiences themselves, I was able to probably tell what stories were most meaningful. Oh. This happened and I was thrown for a loop. So, here's what I would have done differently and here's what I hope to be able to do differently in the future.

Ella said that completing the multimedia reflective assignments helped her to look at creating from a child’s perspective because elementary school teachers focus a lot more on art. Ella felt that the journal helped her think more about what activities her future students would be doing.

When asked, “What changes, if any, might you like to see in the multimedia reflective assignments?” Ella responded that she would have liked to have seen more directions for the multimedia reflective journal prompts that went along with their classroom observations, prompts two through five (see Appendix A). Ella felt there were more guidelines to help her with prompts number one and six. After her first school observation, she struggled with what aspect of her observation to focus on when writing and creating her multimedia reflective journal entry. Since not many guidelines were offered for the classroom observation journal entries, she decided what to write and draw by focusing on what stuck with her the most from each observation. Although initially Ella found the written portion of the multimedia reflective journal more helpful, she did come to appreciate the visual portion because it helped her to connect with her future elementary school students since she was participating in an assignment similar to the types of assignments she envisioned herself creating when she is a teacher.

According to Gulla (2014), if we want to help students pursue self-motivated inquiry and
become lifelong learners, and if we want them to have access to multiple modalities of expression, then we as teachers should develop such skills ourselves. Participating in arts-based activities such as the multimedia reflective assignments is one way to allow beginning preservice teachers to tap into the creativity taken out of them by their schooling so that they might become creative teachers who influence creative students. As Ella created more images she felt better about the artistic aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments, suggesting that creativity is something that students can learn to feel comfortable with after repeated exposure.

Of the three participants, Martine received the most benefit from the written portion of the multimedia reflective assignments. Martine said that the storytelling required for the multimedia reflective assignments helped her see how limited she was in her viewpoint when it came to students or even grades she wanted to teach:

I do not like group work, but then doing the observations, writing my stories and hearing other people’s viewpoints kind of helped me be more open to think, “Okay. How can I improve? What can I do differently?” Now, I’m reflecting and thinking, “Why did I switch to elementary? What do I like about this? What do I want to gain from it overall?” That all helps me have a clearer vision about why I made the choices I did so they make more sense to me. So, I think those stories helped pull out the deeper-rooted passion for teaching and education. I think that passion was always there, but I think writing out the stories helped me understand them better.

Martine found the written part of the multimedia to be the most helpful for her because she was already in the habit of keeping a written journal of her own:

Journaling is something I’ve been doing myself for years. So, for me to journal
out what I think about teaching helped me think about how I was feeling and what I was learning, and then every time I did a journal, my creativity part reflected what I wrote. It was hand-in-hand. So it helped me pull out those deeper-rooted desires and things that I liked and that helped me word it better. I think sometimes I will just draw something because I like it, but then when I write it out, I’m just like, okay, this is what I’m thinking. This is what I feel. It helped.

Like James and Ella, Martine completed the written portion of her journal first and then created the visual portion. She created the visuals right after she completed the written journal entries. As she was creating the visual element of her journals she thought to herself, “Oh, I can draw this. I’ve talked about liking this in my observation, or this is what I want to do. Everything went together. I’m not sure I would have known what to draw for the visual part if I hadn’t written it first.” For Martine, the words triggered the images, especially since she used a lot of quotes in her drawings. Martine said she created the drawings after she found or wrote the quotations. Then she added the words around her picture to tie the image together.

Martine wasn’t sure the image aspect of the multimedia reflective journals helped her understand her education stories as much as the written aspect. In her interview she said she liked doing the drawings after she figured out what she wanted to create, but “I got a lot out of the words.” When asked what changes she might make to the multimedia reflective journals, Martine had the idea of having the students share one of their multimedia reflective journal entries so everyone could see what their classmates were doing. This would help students get ideas from each other:

I think a lot of times those education stories can inspire others. Hearing other people’s stories on why they became a teacher always inspire me. Like, yeah, I
could try this differently. Or I never thought about it that way. It’s just inspirational to see what goes on in other people’s minds. To see their stories would give me new ideas.

While the visual portion may not have been as helpful for Martine, she was able to use the written portion of the multimedia reflective journal to help her gain a clearer understanding of her initial self-concept of her role as a future teacher.

The orientation of the individual is key to how any task is carried out (Coughlan & Duff, 1994). James, Ella, and Martine had different orientations toward the multimedia reflective assignments. James said the multimedia reflective assignments helped him to make sense of what he was thinking. He found the visual aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments to be a light at the end of the tunnel where the tunnel itself was just words. Ella felt some frustration with the visual component at first because she wasn’t sure how to create the images: “I struggled way more than I thought I would. So I hadn’t drawn anything in years, at least on that level…I was really struggling…” Later in her interview she added, “I think for the first one I did pretty well, but it took me a couple of hours to really do, while the other ones took me far less time because I was able to visualize what it was I wanted to draw a lot easier.” Martine did not get much out of the image portion of the multimedia reflective journal. She found writing the words more helpful since she was already in the habit of keeping a written journal.

Interestingly, James, Ella, and Martine all used words in their images to help them express their thoughts. James, who said he found the images most helpful, used fewer words and relied on the drawing to help him make his point. Ella and Martine both relied heavily on words in their images, with Martine using quotes from others or phrases she had written herself to explain what she was discovering about her role as a future teacher.
Did it matter that the participants completed their reflections in a multimedia reflective journal instead of a written only journal? James, Ella, and Martine experienced the multimedia reflective assignment in different ways, so each of the participants had their own unique reactions to the multimedia reflective assignments. James found the image aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments to be the most helpful part of the assignment. For James, the arts-based aspect of the assignments helped him understand his thoughts in a different, deeper way than if he had simply written responses to the prompts. Ella struggled with the arts-based aspect of the assignments at first, but as she grew more comfortable with creating the images she grew to appreciate the multimedia aspect of the assignments. Martine, who was already in the habit of keeping a written journal, did not perceive as much value in the arts-based aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments. A written only journal may have served the same purpose for Martine as she reflected on her learning experiences while taking *Introduction to Elementary Education*.

Does this mean that multimedia reflective assignments have no purpose as a tool for reflection for beginning preservice teachers? Exposing preservice teachers to different ways of sharing their knowledge and reflections can only be a good thing. While Martine did not perceive as much value in the image aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments, she may well teach students like James who will get a lot out of creating the images. As James said, “If some students didn’t like to write then they might get more out of the drawing part. If they’re not artistic, they might get more out of writing.” As teachers, it may be helpful to remember that our students do not necessarily learn the way we do. My intention in using the multimedia reflective assignments with my *Introduction to Elementary Education* students was to create a space for beginning preservice teachers to think their thoughts and examine their beliefs. While James,
Ella, and Martine each experienced the multimedia reflective assignments in different ways, they were exposed to different methods for allowing their future students to think their thoughts and examine their beliefs. Hopefully, this exposure will give James, Ella, and Martine ideas about different strategies to use to reach the various types of learners they will encounter in their classrooms.

**Summary**

Chapter 4 consisted of an exploration of the education stories of James, Ella, and Martine. Thematic analysis was conducted by coding the data collected from the three participants’ multimedia reflective assignments and interviews in six stages: familiarization with data, creating initial codes, discovering themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data from their multimedia reflective journal, memoir reflective assignment, and interviews were used to illuminate the three themes of *influences from life and school, learning from university experiences, and passion for helping children*.

While James, Ella, and Martine did not experience the three themes in exactly the same way, all three participants said that kindness and understanding were important traits for teachers, traits they hoped to have themselves as future teachers. In addition, all three participants experienced some disorienting dilemmas which prompted a shift in their perceptions about teaching and learning which may have resulted in transformative learning. James, Ella, and Martine cited the elementary school observations as the most helpful learning experiences in *Introduction to Elementary Education*, and they perceived value in the time spent in classrooms watching teachers and students at work.

During the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education* James,
Ella, and Martine experienced changes in their sense of teacher self by moving through the stages of being a student to being a learner to being a future teacher with a beginning understanding of the type of teacher they wanted to become. This finding resonated with studies completed by Putney and Broughton (2010) and Sangueza (2010) in which they examined preservice teacher efficacy. Similar to their findings, the development of a sense of teacher self as found in this study can be thought of as a precursor to teacher efficacy. At this early stage of their teacher preparation coursework, James, Ella, and Martine were focused on what they believed to be the joys of teaching—helping students become better learners as well as better people.

James, Ella, and Martine experienced the multimedia reflective assignments in different ways. James found the image aspect of the assignment most helpful. Ella struggled with the creative aspect of the assignments at first but then during the semester she became more comfortable creating the images. Martine did not find the image aspect as helpful since she felt she expressed herself best through her words. Although not all three participants perceived value in creating the images, the multimedia reflective assignments did provide these beginning preservice teachers an opportunity to share their learning in different ways. This exposure to arts-based activities may prompt them to use such arts-based activities with their future students. According to Guilford (1950), being creative is an opportunity to learn, and creativity and teaching go hand in hand. Participating in the arts-based activities of the multimedia reflective assignments allowed James, Ella, and Martine to experience learning and creating for themselves.
Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings from the data analysis in Chapter 4. The implications and limitations of this study are examined and suggestions for future research are shared. This study used the frameworks of arts-based education research, transformative learning, and transformative teaching to explore the development of the beginning preservice teacher participants as they moved along the journey from student to teacher.

Exploring the education stories of James, Ella, and Martine allowed us a rare glimpse into the hearts and minds of three beginning preservice teachers, voices not often heard in teacher education research. Narrative inquiry allowed James, Ella, and Martine a means through which to share their education stories in a structured, cohesive manner. In the use of narrative inquiry, the researcher is not seeking a literal recounting of events as they happened, but rather a representation of the participants’ lives as the participants see them (Coulter et al., 2007).

Storytelling through the creation of the multimedia reflective assignments provided James, Ella, and Martine a unique format to reflect on issues relevant to teaching (Klein, 2010a). According to Klein (2010b), connection to the inner life matters for educators whose work involves the development of human potential. By reflecting on their education stories, James, Ella, and Martine were able to share their concerns and their hopes as well as how they experience their lives in education. The qualitative data discovered through analyzing James, Ella, and Martine’s education stories shed light on how beginning preservice teachers begin to understand their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers.
Discussion of Analysis

The three themes—*influences from life and school, learning from university experiences,* and *passion for helping children*—overlapped throughout the participants’ multimedia reflective assignments and their interviews. James, Ella, and Martine continually referred back to key education stories that included influential teachers, learning from their classroom observations, and their passion for helping children. They revisited these particular recollections as though they wished to continue reflecting on how these moments have influenced their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers.

At the beginning of the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education,* James, Ella, and Martine identified more as students. As the semester progressed, James, Ella, and Martine focused on the learning they experienced as a result of their classroom observations. Through their classroom observations James, Ella, and Martine began to see more about the realities of teaching, and they experienced disorienting dilemmas that contributed to their transformative learning. By the end of the semester, James, Ella, and Martine were focused on their passion for helping children. They began to see themselves as future teachers with classrooms of their own. This trajectory of development mirrors that found in previous research with preservice teachers (Putney & Broughton, 2010; Sangueza, 2010).

**Theme 1—Influences From Life and School**

At the beginning of the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education,* James, Ella, and Martine were focused on their roles as students. James was inspired to become an educator because his parents were educators. His experience in third grade with his competitor Kevin came up in his multimedia reflective journal, his memoir reflective assignment, and his interview, indicating that this was one education story he found particularly important.
James also recognized the importance of his high school teacher, Mr. DePew, as an influential factor in helping him understand the type of teacher he wanted to become, one that inspires his students to do better: “He showed me the impact a teacher could have and made me want to follow in his footsteps, treating other students the same way he treated me.” These early experiences shaped James’ initial concept of his role as a future teacher because they helped him realize how he wanted to treat his future students, with respect, which is how Mr. DePew treated him.

Ella had both positive and negative influences from her own elementary school teachers. Ella’s teacher Mrs. Winslow was an important influence on Ella’s initial self-concept of her role as a future teacher because Mrs. Winslow helped Ella to realize that kindness was an essential trait in teachers. The kindness Ella experienced when Mrs. Winslow gave her five dollars for lunch is one trait that Ella hoped to share with her own future students: “I want to be that kind of teacher. I want to be a role model and a source of support for all my students at my school, not just the ones who are in my classroom.”

Ella also shared a negative experience that shaped her ideas of who she does not want to be as a teacher. Ella shared the story of the first-grade teacher who thought Ella was too active. Reflecting on this negative experience prompted Ella to ask, “As elementary school teachers, shouldn’t we encourage our students to be active and incorporate teaching styles that work for the way our students learn?” This is an important question for preservice teachers to ponder since it is at the heart of how they will approach their future teaching practices. Ella did not yet have an answer to this question since she was still at an early stage of her teacher preparation coursework. She had two more years of education coursework and field experiences ahead of her,
during which time she may formulate a clearer idea of the types of teaching styles she might use to help her future students learn.

Martine returned to her experience with her fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Oliver, twice in her multimedia reflective assignments. Even though Martine struggled in school, Mr. Oliver would not give up on her. He challenged her to work harder, and as a result, she discovered a passion for learning that she hoped to share with her future students. Of this experience with Mr. Oliver, Martine said, “With care and support from him, it led me to believe, both then and now, that teaching and learning is passion built on patience.”

Martine also noted that her desire to become a teacher was inspired by playing school with her sisters. Even as a child, Martine enjoyed creating lessons for her sisters, and she referred to her wish to create fun lessons for her future students in her multimedia reflective journal and her memoir reflective assignment. Martine loved imagining herself in the role of teacher. This time of being the teacher for her sisters “always brings me back to the ‘why’ of why I chose this career path, which was because I saw it as the most impactful and creative.”

Through completing the multimedia reflective assignments, James, Ella, and Martine had an opportunity to reflect on their early educational experiences and how those experiences shaped their initial sense of teacher self. Mainly, the experiences were triggered by teachers who were positive influences, though Ella remembered that negative experience with her first-grade teacher and Martine remembered that her K-4 teachers had given up on her. Though James, Ella, and Martine were elementary school age when they had these influential teachers, the memories appeared to be fresh in their minds as they recounted them in their multimedia reflective assignments and their interviews.
Theme 2—Learning From University Experiences

The elementary school observations required for *Introduction to Elementary Education* course were cited by James, Ella, and Martine as being extremely valuable because the observations revealed more about the realities of becoming a teacher. Throughout the semester, James, Ella, and Martine reflected on what they were learning about their role as future teachers as a result of their school observations.

James believed that he received so much knowledge from the classroom observations that he wanted future students enrolled in *Introduction to Elementary Education* to complete more observations than the required eight hours. While reflecting on his observations, James wondered if his mentor teachers’ styles were well suited to their students’ learning styles. He also questioned whether or not a strictly managed classroom is necessarily fun for the students if it did not provide ways for the students to release their pent-up energy and silliness. He admitted that he needed more time and thought about what constitutes a well-run classroom.

In her multimedia reflective journal, Ella wrote about one of the lessons she observed where the teacher had her kindergarten students use their senses to describe an apple. Ella also recognized that young children need to get their energy out, and she started thinking about activities she might use with her future students. Reflecting on the apple assignment, Ella said, “This is the kind of activity I would like to do in my future classroom.” Age-appropriate activities are an important consideration for all teachers but especially for elementary school teachers. Reflecting on what they saw during their school observations allowed James and Ella to recognize that young children are not able to sit still for long periods.

Martine exhibited the most change in her vision of what it means to be a teacher from the beginning of the semester to the end. In her multimedia reflective journal, she said,
As of now, what I know as my role as a future teacher that I didn’t when I first entered this course is that I was completely unrealistic with my expectations. I think going in, I heavily had a ‘fairy tale’ view of what teaching would be like especially when it came to the actual classroom environment.

Martine credited the school observations with showing her the reality of teaching. Another important lesson Martine learned from her observations was the importance of repetition during lessons, especially for young students. Already at this early stage of their teacher preparation programs, James, Ella, and Martine were reflecting on the best ways to help their future students learn.

**Theme 3—Passion For Helping Children**

By the end of the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education*, James, Ella, and Martine were focused on their passion for helping their future students. All three participants shared their wish to create positive learning environments for their future students.

James returned to his passion for helping students in his multimedia reflective assignments and his interview. He said,

I want every student in my class to feel loved and to love those around them, being obedient and thoughtful. Their behavior will mean more success in life than their knowledge and it is my responsibility as a teacher to guide them.

It would be interesting to see if that belief remained throughout the rest of James’ teacher preparation coursework and into his teaching career. Passing knowledge onto students is generally considered the most important aspect of teaching, but for James it was the students’ behavior that would be the best predictor of future success. James was at the beginning of his
teacher preparation coursework at the time of this study, so his view about the value of knowledge and the importance of behavior may change in time.

Ella also referred to her passion for helping students. She spoke of influencing the minds of future generations, which is a big goal yet an achievable one for the most dedicated teachers. Ella saw her role as a future teacher beyond the scope of teaching various subjects: “Teachers don’t just teach the curriculum. It’s absurd anyone thinks that that’s the only thing that happens.”

Kindness is a theme seen throughout Ella’s education stories. While kindness can be an important trait for teachers, kindness alone may not be enough to maintain classroom management so that students understand teacher expectations and school rules. This is one aspect of her initial self-concept of her role as a future teacher that may change for Ella with more teacher preparation coursework and field experiences.

Martine’s passion for helping her future students came from her love for children: “I really just get excited about teaching, the more that I’m with the kids. Kids make me happy, they look at me like I’m someone special. They are always kind to me everywhere I go. And I think teaching them would make me happy.” Martine focused on creating a caring learning environment where her students would feel welcome and inspired to learn. One quote she created for her multimedia reflective journal said, “Be the teacher who makes kids excited to come to school every day.” Martine wanted to be that teacher for her future students. Although Martine had some negative experiences as an elementary school student, she did not let that cloud her wish to be the best teacher she might become. Instead, her experiences in elementary school fueled her desire to help her future students the way her fifth-grade teacher helped her.

If anything might have turned these beginning preservice teachers away from pursuing a career in education during the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education*
it would have been the classroom observations. The realities of teaching in a working classroom leave you nowhere to hide. Whenever James, Ella, and Martine shared the challenges they witnessed during their classroom observations, they always returned to their passion for helping their future students. The participants did acknowledge questions or concerns they had about their roles as future teachers in their reflections. Ella noted concerns about teaching in her multimedia reflective journal, but she shared her intention to stick with teaching despite the difficulties she might face. James also shared his concerns about teaching: “…I don’t have any experiences actually teaching. I’m definitely worried about classroom management. That’s really a big concern of mine.” Martine struggled herself as a student, but she used her own challenges as a springboard into a passion for learning that she wanted to share with her future students. Throughout their multimedia reflection and interviews, James, Ella, and Martine showed that such concerns were not deterrents that would keep them from the teaching profession but rather obstacles that could and would be overcome.

As I considered the important role of the classroom observations for these three beginning preservice teachers, I came to believe that teacher preparation programs should allow beginning preservice teachers the chance to observe and participate more in classrooms prior to student teaching. The only thing that can truly prepare someone to teach is teaching. While the facts and theories our beginning preservice teachers learn from their teacher preparation coursework are important as a way to lay a framework for future teaching practices, when faced with a dilemma or other unknown situation teachers tend to fall back on personal perceptions unless they make a deliberate decision to do something different (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999).

Allowing preservice teachers the chance to have as many authentic classroom experiences as possible, coupled with theoretically based discussions related to the observations,
might help them learn how to handle such dilemmas and decision making so that they are not caught off guard by challenging situations when they have their own classrooms. It may also be helpful to allow beginning preservice teachers time to practice teaching lessons, whether it is through their university coursework or with their mentor teachers, without the burden of being evaluated before they have had the chance to explore and experiment with helpful guidance.

The Role of Creativity

The second research question guiding this study asked how storytelling through multimedia reflective assignments might be used to explore beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators. A definitive answer to this question is hard to come by since every beginning preservice teacher who completes the multimedia reflective assignments will have a unique orientation to the assignments. Different people respond differently to the same experience due to socio-cultural influences and personality traits (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015).

James, Ella, and Martine stated that the multimedia reflective assignments were helpful as a way to reflect on and learn from their education stories. As James said in his interview, “If some students didn’t like to write, then they might get more out of the drawing part. If they’re not artistic, they might get more out of writing.” In her interview Ella shared how the multimedia reflective assignments helped her get back in touch with her creative side: “I kind of lost that for a while and I think that schooling can kind of put that out of you…I think it also really helped me get into more of a teacher mode. I’ve really been thinking about my thinking, I’ve really been thinking about well, what are the stories that I have?” Martine did not get much from the image aspect of the multimedia reflective assignments, but she did get a lot out of the words because she was in the habit of journaling on her own: “So, for me to journal out what I think about
teaching helped me think about how I was feeling and what I was learning, and then every time I did a journal, my creativity part was reflected in what I wrote.”

Reflection on education stories does not have to occur through multimedia reflective assignments as they did in this study, but reflection of some kind may be helpful to beginning preservice teachers as a way to understand the why and how of their roles as future teachers. The reflections completed by James, Ella, and Martine appeared to impact their developing sense of teacher self as they began the journey from student to future teacher. Through the multimedia reflections, the participants were prompted to think about their education beliefs, how those beliefs were formed, and how they understand their roles as future teachers. These initial self-concepts may change throughout their teacher preparation coursework and field experiences. Even so, by the end of the semester in which they took Introduction to Elementary Education, James, Ella, and Martine appeared to have formed a beginning sense of the self that will teach.

Arts-based activities are one way to allow beginning preservice teachers to share their unique voices. Arts-based activities encourage the expression of multiple truths to make new meanings and give voice to those who otherwise would be silenced (Leitch, 2006). Barone and Eisner (2012) believed that engagement in arts-based education may help teachers understand the world through more than one point of view—a necessary skill in a multi-cultural, multi-media, multi-opinionated world. It used to be considered radical and subversive to allow students opportunities to share their voices (Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011). The same can be said for adult learners who have also been limited in how they have been permitted to express their learning.

James, Ella, and Martine’s multimedia reflective assignments revealed three beginning preservice teachers who were comfortable expressing themselves in words and they used one or two basic supplies to create their images. When I created images for my multimedia reflective
journal I used various supplies such as acrylic paint, stencils, stickers, colored markers, pens, and scrapbooking paper. James, Ella, and Martine, however, used minimal supplies, mainly a pencil, a marker, or a pen. The students in *Introduction to Elementary Education* were told that they did not have to spend money to complete this assignment, which may be why they used such basic supplies. Even with the simple supplies they were able to create images that gave deeper meaning to their written stories.

Drawing their images was enough of a creative activity for all three participants. Shipe (2016) explained that drawing was a way toward a sharper attention than was normally obtained through reading or writing. Drawing can be considered an important mediation tool for thinking and making meaning, perhaps because it more closely represents thought (Brooks, 2009). The value of the multimedia reflective assignments may not be found in how the visuals were created but rather in what James, Ella, and Martine learned from the process of creation.

**Discovering the Self That Teaches**

In what ways did the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future educators change during the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education*? James, Ella, and Martine each experienced growth on the *Teacher Self to Teacher Identity* scale (see Figure 1), moving closer to a sense of teacher identity by the end of the semester in which they took *Introduction to Elementary Education*. As a result of reflecting on their disorienting dilemmas, James, Ella, and Martine experienced a shift in their perceptions about their roles as future teachers. By the end of the semester, they had specific goals for the types of classrooms they wanted to have and the types of teachers they wanted to become. James learned that different students need different levels of help in order to be successful; Ella learned that bullying can occur in students as young as five and all students need kindness from their
teachers; Martine realized that there are more challenges to teaching than she thought.

Learning is considered transformative if it involves questioning or reordering of how one thinks or acts (Brookfield, 2000), and though James, Ella, and Martine were at an early stage of their teacher preparation coursework, they revealed an understanding that their assumptions about teaching were being challenged, demonstrating that they experienced some shifts in their frames of reference about their roles as future teachers. As a result, the participants appear to have experienced transformative learning over the course of the semester. Hopefully, the three participants will continue to have their knowledge and beliefs challenged throughout the rest of their teacher preparation coursework. Through their education stories, James, Ella, and Martine shared the epiphanies they experienced about their roles as future teachers. In time, those epiphanies may lead to a deeper sense of teacher identity.

Implications

The implications of this study are connected to a change in how we train our future teachers by using more creative activities as part of the teacher preparation coursework. This study focused on one creative activity to help future teachers become reflective practitioners—the multimedia reflective assignments. Preservice teachers’ emotional or creative developments are not always addressed in teacher preparation programs, yet the person of the teacher is an essential element in what constitutes professional teaching (Kelchtermans, 2009; Lamote & Engels, 2010). If the current method of training preservice teachers in best practices and management techniques has proven inadequate preparation for classroom teaching, then new methods must be found (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shigo, 2016).

Creativity is considered an important trait in the 21st century (Pink, 2006; Robinson, 2016; Zhou, 2009), and it is a trait that K-12 teachers and teacher educators should encourage in
their students. Since creativity is at the top of Bloom’s Taxonomy, it may be helpful to inspire various types of creativity in our students at the K-12 and the university level. One way for beginning preservice teachers to explore the value of creative activity and thinking might be to have teacher educators and mentor teachers model creative practices and then allowing the beginning preservice teachers to practice the creative activities for themselves. Teacher educators should challenge themselves to discover more innovative, more creative ways to assist the development of their preservice teachers into reflective practitioners who might have the resilience, hopefulness, and passion that will carry them through long-term teaching careers.

In addition, “sage on the stage” lecture-based courses may not be enough to challenge preservice teachers’ existing beliefs, prompt transformative learning, or inspire creativity. “Sage on the stage” teaching leaves little opportunity for student metamorphosis since there is no room for students to imagine possibilities other than the ones presented by the teacher. It may be helpful for teacher preparation programs to become places of inquiry and reflection where preservice teachers can link their educational experiences and beliefs with possible future practices (Boyd et al., 2013). Reflectivity leads to fostering agency, professional growth, and understanding of identity. As noted in Chapter 2, some researchers believe that obtaining expertise and profound professional change is not possible without reflection (Allen & Casbergue, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Halter & Levin, 2014; Quirke & Zagallo, 2010). Human beings strive to create sense from their experiences, and introspection through reflection is one tool we can use to create that sense. The time spent reflecting on their education stories appeared to help James, Ella, and Martine generate new paradigms for themselves as future teachers. Teacher preparation programs may benefit from the deliberate inclusion of creativity and reflection as part of the required coursework and field experiences. The more we understand
about how beginning preservice teachers blossom into professional educators, the more we will be able to create teacher training programs that fit the needs of today’s teachers.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the self-reported nature of the data shared by James, Ella, and Martine. The multimedia reflective journal and the memoir reflective assignment were completed as classwork for Introduction to Elementary Education. As students in that class, James, Ella, and Martine may have created work they felt the instructor wanted to see as opposed to sharing their truths. Again in their interviews, James, Ella, and Martine may have shared information they thought they should share instead of what they truly thought or felt. According to Paulhus and Vazire (2008), self-reporting data may lead to exaggeration due to embarrassment.

The convenience sampling through which James, Ella, and Martine were recruited as participants in this study was another limitation since only students enrolled in Introduction to Elementary Education were considered for this study. The study was conducted over the limited time frame of one four-month semester, which may also be a limitation since it reflected a short time in the teacher preparation program. The sample size of three students out of a class of 42 was small, and James, Ella, and Martine do not necessarily represent the experiences of other beginning preservice teachers taking Introduction to Elementary Education who completed the multimedia reflective assignments. However, with this case study design, the intention was to provide thick description through narrative methods to allow readers transferability of the participants’ experience to their own situation.

Another limitation may have been the prompts posed in the multimedia reflective assignments. Ella and Martine had good ideas for changes to the multimedia reflective
assignments, including more instructions for the journal prompts and having the students share their journal entries with the class so they could get ideas from one another.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provided an opportunity to explore the education stories of three beginning preservice teachers. The opportunity to hear the education stories of more beginning preservice teachers may be helpful for teacher educators who strive to understand their students and provide the best educational experiences possible.

Future research might be based on creating a longitudinal study. It may be helpful to see how, or if, multimedia reflective assignments are a useful tool for reflection for beginning preservice teachers, preservice teachers who are student teaching, and finally new teachers with their first inservice positions. It may also be helpful to see how, or if, the new teachers grow as they begin their careers as educators. This study was conducted with three students from one *Introduction to Elementary Education* course, so conducting this study with other levels of preservice teachers in different teacher preparation courses may also provide useful data about how students become future teachers. The ways in which beginning preservice teachers develop their initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers have not been adequately explored, which is another gap future studies might explore.

This study focused on storytelling through multimedia reflective assignments, but other studies may be conducted using different types of storytelling, such as strictly written narratives, photographic narratives, or computer-generated narratives. Creative approaches could be further explored in an effort to find different and better ways of understanding the nature of learning (Taylor, 2007).
Conclusion

According to King (2003), if we want a different ethic we should tell a different story. The goal of this study was to tell different stories. Did James, Ella, and Martine’s initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers change as a result of reflecting on their education stories? Based on their responses in the multimedia reflective assignments and their interviews it appears that the answer is yes. Eisner (1998) believed that we have multiple ways of knowing, and inquiry would be more complete when we increase the ways in which we investigate, describe, and interpret the world. James, Ella, and Martine were able to investigate, describe, and interpret their education stories through both written and visual means, which helped them to better understand their roles as future teachers. Multimedia reflective assignments may be one way for preservice teachers to document the changes they might experience as a result of their teacher preparation coursework.

Creative teaching is connected to transformative learning and transformative teaching because it seeks to awaken a positive change in students. Introducing preservice teachers to creative activities is one way to expose them to creative teaching. Creative teaching reflects compassion and it provides an opportunity for students to not only be awakened to their world but to better that world (Baer, 2013). Arts-based education research is not aimed toward a quest for certainty, but toward the enhancement of perspectives (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Enhanced perspectives within their coursework and school observations could be a powerful learning tool for beginning preservice teachers. Through the creation of a new paradigm for teacher education, beginning preservice teachers may begin to understand that their emotions, imaginations, and creativity are as valuable as their knowledge of content, theories, and best practices.
The vibrancy of arts-based education research is at risk if it falls into the trap of insisting that only one story exists to be told (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Researchers employing arts-based education should remember that many stories exist and all stories have the right to be heard. Some beginning preservice teachers may find a deeper understanding of their education stories through the creation of visual multimedia images, as James did. Some might find a deeper understanding of their education stories through both the visual and the written element, as Ella did. Some may find a deeper understanding of their education stories through the written passages, as Martine did. Other beginning preservice teachers may not find any deeper understanding at all from the multimedia reflective assignments. It is difficult to say whether James, Ella, and Martine’s experiences were truly transformative since they were at the beginning of their teacher preparation coursework and had not yet had an opportunity to act on their epiphanies. What they thought they knew at the time of this study may well have changed by the time they have their own classrooms.

Research shows that new teachers often leave the profession within the first few years, but an understanding of their professional selves might help foster a strong sense of resilience that will pave the way for long-lasting careers (Chang, 2009; Pearce & Morrison, 2011). Cook (2009) believed that teacher preparation programs should take more responsibility for the first years of teaching, engaging preservice teachers in comprehensive studies that address the emotional, intellectual, and developmental processes of becoming a teacher. Our newest teachers should be cultivated to be reflective, intuitive, empathetic, adaptive, and resilient (Cook, 2009). Early career teacher resilience may be enhanced when teachers engage consciously in the construction of their professional identities (Pearce & Morrison, 2011).

Let me tell you a story.
James, Ella, and Martine were three beginning preservice teachers who took a one-semester course, *Introduction to Elementary Education*. Over the 16 weeks in which they took the course, they began the journey from students to future teachers. By exploring their education stories, James, Ella, and Martine developed an initial understanding of their roles as future teachers. Through continued coursework, field experiences, and reflection, these beginning preservice teachers may grow even closer to an understanding of the self that teaches. Already by that early stage of their teacher preparation coursework, the fairy tale image of what teaching would be started to fade for James, Ella, and Martine. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, James, Ella, and Martine appeared determined to become teachers who will make a positive difference in the lives of their future students.

I hope that when James, Ella, and Martine become involved in the day-to-day realities of teaching they do not lose their passion for helping children as a result of the discrepancy between what they thought teaching would be and what it actually is. I hope that James, Ella, and Martine will be able to hold onto the passions that led them toward teaching because they represent the kind of caring, devoted teachers our K-12 students need.
Appendix A: Directions for the Multimedia Reflective Journal

The multimedia reflective journals are the tools we will be using to reflect on our education stories. There will be two components to the multimedia reflective journal—a written and an image component.

Part 1—Explore the written stories of your developing sense of teacher self. This written portion should be at least 250 words. There are six prompts total. The due dates for the seven journal entries are available in our course syllabus. The explanation of what we mean by the term story will be discussed in class.

1. Tell a story about a memorable experience you had with a past teacher.

You can use the following points in your response:

Who was the teacher?
What was it about this experience that made it memorable?
Where and when did this memorable experience take place?
Why did you choose this moment as a memorable experience?
How might this moment have shaped your sense of self as a future teacher?

2. This semester you will be participating in four classroom observations for two hours each. For each of the four classroom observations, choose one event that you found interesting, important, eye opening, puzzling, disturbing, or humorous (Klein, 2010a, p. 42). After you have chosen an event from each observation, answer the following questions:

Who was involved in the event?
What happened during the event?
Why did you choose this as an interesting, important, eye-opening, puzzling, disturbing, or humorous event?
How did you feel during the event?
What did you learn about yourself and your role as a future teacher from this event?

Since you will be attending your school site four times, you should have four responses to this question, one for each of your four observations.

3. What do you know now about your role as a future teacher that you didn’t know at the beginning of this semester?
Who helped you with this new knowledge?
What is the difference between what you know now and what you knew before the beginning of this semester?
Why do you think this knowledge will be important to your future teacher self?
How do you feel knowing what you know now?
What did you learn about yourself and your role as a future teacher as a result of this new knowledge?
Part 2—Explore the images within the stories of your developing sense of teacher self.

For each of the seven stories above, students should create a multimedia image that represents what the stories mean to them. There is no correct way to create a multimedia image. Students can use any materials they like—construction paper, scrapbooking supplies, markers, crayons, colored pencils, paints, collage images, stickers, stencils, photographs, images or graphics from the Internet—to help create the multimedia images. If you are more of a technology person, you can create your multimedia images on the computer.

The written portion and the image can be created on the same page or on separate pages according to your own preference. You can create the written portion of the journal first or the image first. Again, that is your own preference. The rubric for the multimedia reflective journal is available in our course folder.

This multimedia reflective journal is a chance for students to experiment, practice, play, and explore their creativity. The purpose is not to create a work of art that will hang in a museum. The purpose of this activity is self-expression that goes beyond words. Examples of multimedia journal images and written responses will be available in our course folder online.
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

There was one interview at the end of the Fall 2017 semester to see if the beginning preservice teachers’ initial self-concepts of their roles as future teachers changed over the course of the semester. Questions were also asked to gauge their reactions to their multimedia reflective assignments.

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
3. What makes a good teacher?
4. What strengths will you bring to the teaching profession?
5. What are your biggest concerns about teaching?
6. How might your classroom observations have affected your developing sense of your role as a future teacher?
7. How might storytelling have helped you understand who you are becoming as a teacher?
8. Did you complete the visual or the written portion of the multimedia reflective assignments first? Why?
9. Which did you find most helpful—the written or the visual portion of the journal? Why?
10. What changes, if any, might you like to see in the multimedia reflective assignments?
11. What, if anything, did you learn about yourself as a person this semester? What, if anything, did you learn about yourself as a future teacher?
12. What does your role as a future teacher look like to you now at the end of the semester?
Appendix C: Memoir Reflective Assignment

As a way to complete a final reflection on our education stories, we will be writing a memoir. The memoir should be at least 5 pages long, typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, and double-spaced. Just as we did with the multimedia reflective journals, there will be a visual image component to this assignment. Again, you can create your visual image however you wish.

To complete this assignment:

1. Brainstorm a timeline of at least 10 important moments in your teacher learning—including books you’ve read, teachers and students you’ve known, events inside or outside the classroom, classroom observations, and other life experiences that have been significant to your decision to become an educator (Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, & Peyton, 2010). Use the work you’ve already completed on your multimedia reflective journal to help you. You can create this timeline on the computer or by hand. You will hand in your timeline with your memoir and image.

2. Choose one important moment to focus on—one that you believe has been most influential in shaping you as a future teacher.

3. Write a memoir where you explain the story behind this important moment. Describe what this moment means to you and how it may have affected your sense of self as a future teacher (Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, & Peyton, 2010).

4. The memoir should contain the elements of story we have discussed in class. The memoir should contain specific details, a sense of time and place, and a sense of importance about the moment you are writing about, and any lesson(s) you may have learned. There is a reason you have chosen this moment to write about. Let your readers see the meaning
contained within this story. Dialogue is always welcome in memoir although it is not required. Writing this memoir will allow us to explore one of our education stories in more depth so we can see how we may be growing as future teachers.

5. Create a multimedia visual image that illustrates some element of your memoir.

   Remember, your assignment is not complete unless you include the visual image.

Examples of the memoir reflective assignment and the rubric will be available in our course folder online.
Appendix D: Student Information on Transformative Learning

“The facilitator encourages learners to create norms that accept order, justice, and civility in the classroom and respect and responsibility for helping each other learn; to welcome diversity; to foster peer collaboration; and to provide equal opportunity for participation” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11).

Transformative teaching motivates students to learn from their mistakes and discover how their current knowledge is insufficient to solve a problem (McGonigal, 2005).

1. In order for transformative teaching to occur, there should be an activating event that prompts students to examine their thinking and the limitations of their understanding, an identifying of current assumptions, an encouraging of critical reflection from the instructor, and an encouraging of critical discourse with other preservice teachers, as well as the opportunity to test new paradigms or ideas (McGonigal, 2005).

2. Think Pair Share: Have you ever experienced a transformative teacher? Who was this teacher? How did he or she prompt a transformative learning experience for you? What did you learn that had such a profound experience for you? Share your thoughts with a partner. Be prepared to share with the class.

According to Mezirow (1991), a person may experience discomforts or disorienting feelings when making meaning within their current frame of reference is not possible or when long-held beliefs are challenged. Preservice teachers enrolled in education courses may feel some discomfort and disorientation as a result of their university programs. This may mean they are experiencing transformative learning.

Transformation occurs as the result of five conditions:

(1) an activating event that exposes the limitations of a learner’s current knowledge;
(2) opportunities for the learner to identify the underlying assumptions in his or her current knowledge;
(3) self-reflection as the learner considers where these underlying assumptions came from and how these assumptions may have influenced or limited understanding;
(4) discussions/activities with other learners and the instructor where alternative ideas and approaches are examined; and
(5) opportunities to test and apply new perspectives (Mezirow, 2000).

Quick Write:

1. How might you apply the theory of transformative learning/teaching to your future classroom?
2. Share your responses in small groups.
Appendix E: What is a Story?

1. A story has a sense of time and place
2. A story has a sense of the importance of the event you’re writing about
3. A story has conflict—there’s some kind of problem that needs to be solved
4. A story has characters (real or imagined)
5. A story has some kind of resolution
6. A story has specific details
Appendix F: How to Write Field Notes For School Observations

Sometimes we have to engage in observations to gain insight into various situations. To help this process, observers should take useful and reliable notes regarding the details of their observations. Methods of writing field notes can be very personal, and we are all likely to develop ways of writing them that work for us but might not work for others. Field notes should be written either during the observation or as soon as possible afterwards. Even though the observation seems like something that would stay in our minds, we’re still likely to forget important details unless we write them down during or right after the observation.

Your field notes should include:

1. Date, time, and place of observation
2. Specific facts, numbers, details of what happens at the site
3. Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells
4. Personal responses to the fact of recording field notes
5. Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language
6. Questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 1997)

There are four parts to field notes. Be sure your notes have each of the four parts.

1. Jottings: brief words or phrases written while at the field site or soon afterwards. Jottings are intended to help us remember things we want to include when we write a more detailed description of the observation for our multimedia reflective journals.

2. Description of everything about the observation—interactions, conversations, actions, a sequence of events, etc. Some general information about the environment is also helpful.

3. Analysis of what you learned during the observation. What questions do you have as a result of this observation that will help focus your observations during future visits? Can you begin to draw connections or conclusions based on what you observed?

4. Reflection on what you personally learned from the observation. What was it like for you to be doing this observation? What felt comfortable for you about being in this site and what felt uncomfortable? In what ways did you connect with what you saw, and in what ways didn’t you?
Appendix G: Participant Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY: Discovering the Self That Teaches: Multimedia Reflective Journaling and the Education Stories of Preservice Teachers

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jane McCarthy and Meredith Allard

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Jane McCarthy.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the Office of Research Integrity.

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study will be to explore teacher identity as examined through the creation of a multimedia reflective journal for preservice teachers enrolled in an elementary education course.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criteria: You are a preservice teacher who is currently enrolled in an elementary education course.

Procedures
The purpose of this study is to learn about the preservice teacher participants as they examine their developing teacher identities. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. You will sign the consent letter.

2. You will be interviewed once. The interview will last approximately 20 - 30 minutes. Your interview will be audio taped and field notes will be taken during the interview.

We are asking for permission to use the data from the class activities, the multimedia reflective journals, and the memoir reflective assignment in our study.

Benefits of Participation

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, through keeping a multimedia reflective journal, participants may begin to recognize how they are developing into future teachers. This may then help them evolve into more effective teachers who remain in the profession longer than they might have without the opportunity to examine their teacher development.

Risks of Participation
There are no risks associated with participating in this research other than those occurring in daily life.
Cost / Compensation
There may not be financial cost for you to participate in this study. This study will take approximately thirty minutes of your time for the interview.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All hard copy records will be stored in a locked facility and all digital data will be stored in computers with password protection for ten years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information will be shredded or deleted.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

__________________________________________  _________________________
Signature of Participant                        Date

__________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

Audio/Video Taping:
Participants in this study will be audio taped.
I agree to be audio taped for the purpose of this research study.

__________________________________________  _________________________
Signature of Participant                        Date

__________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)
Appendix H: James’ Memoir Education Story

Both of my parents are teachers so teaching runs in the blood. My dad is a high school math teacher and has taught math for years. My mother, who is a little more adventurous, has taught preschool, kindergarten, third grade, fourth grade, and began teaching middle school last year. All told, she has taught 22 years. The moment that most motivates me to become a teacher is not a single moment at all, but rather a string of moments across the course of a life changing year. The year was 2005. I was only in third grade and I had no idea what the year had in store.

When I had finished my second grade year at one elementary school, my mother changed schools. As a result, I was forced to abandon the friends I had made and began my third grade year in a completely different school, feeling very much alone. The anxiety I felt during the first few weeks of school was in no short supply. This move was very hard for me, but not having preexisting friends definitely helped me to focus on my education and taught me how to build new friendships – two life lessons I am very grateful for today.

My teacher during this time was an older woman by the name of Mrs. Faust. She was a fairly strict teacher, but she had high expectations for all her students and unbiasedly rewarded those who met her expectations. One day, during class, Mrs. Faust approached me and asked if I could explain an assignment to a student who had missed the class explanation. The student’s name was Kevin and I had noticed that he left the class with a group of other students pretty regularly. I remember that moment clearly to this day.

The room was abuzz as we worked on some Frankenstein’s monster of a project. The book was basically a collection of assignments and drawings all pasted onto a few pages of colored construction paper. Mrs. Faust led Kevin over to my table and explained that I was to show him what to do. I eyeballed Kevin, feeling some satisfaction that I was ahead of him and
knew more of what was happening in the class. I had always got the feeling that Kevin thought he was better than me. I could not have explained, even back then, why I felt that way, I just knew that is how I felt. As I explained the assignment, I began to realize that Kevin was really smart. As a matter of fact, Kevin was, I thought to myself, much smarter than I was. Now, at this point in my life, I was already very competitive and my pride was easily pricked when I identified someone else as being arrogant. While I do not remember exactly what was said, Kevin somehow expressed that he felt that he was a better student than I was. Later that day I learned that his absence was due to his participation in GATE (gifted and talented education). As soon as I came to the conclusion that Kevin was smarter than me, was a condescending jerk, and went to a special program that I did not get to attend, I hated his guts. I made it my goal from that moment on to be better than him in anything he did.

Kevin and I did not sit near one another, but the room was arranged in such a way that he and I faced one another from across the classroom. Frequently, my eyes would look to his posture and how well he was paying attention. He never looked back at me which, naturally, made me despise him all the more. I struggled with staying still and focusing for a period longer than ten minutes, but that changed very quickly when I noted how still Kevin was. Looking to his example, I mimicked his stillness and his intense focus on the teacher. I began to sit up straighter, to fold my hands on the desk, and also executed herculean efforts to stop myself from fidgeting. As the weeks went by, out of the corner of my eye, I began to catch Kevin looking at me and I must say...he did not look very pleased with what he saw. Competition.

The cat was out of the bag. As soon as Kevin took notice of my efforts to surpass him as the top student, he redoubled his own efforts to defeat me. Behaviors in class, such as who could sit most quietly and sit up the straightest were fair game, but our performance academically was
much more key in the competition. During one particular timed multiplication test, Kevin and I locked eyes. The game was afoot. I moved my hands into position to flip the paper over as fast as possible and Kevin followed in suit. We sped through the problem but, in the end, it was I who claimed the victory of finishing first and I relished in his slothfulness. I relished all the way up until the moment I found out that he had gotten more answers correct. This was not an isolated event. Throughout the year, every score, every timed multiplication test, and every project was compared.

Mrs. Faust awarded good behavior with a variety of different awards. A select few awards would be presented in front of the entire school and our parents at the end of every quarter. To the teachers, the awards were motivators, to the parents, the awards were cute, but to Kevin and I, the awards were glory and recognition incarnate. These fancy pieces of paper provided the ultimate way of keeping score between Kevin and I. Unfortunately, these recyclable sheets of honor were not so easily earned as good grades and good listening. The awards recognized crucial behaviors such as citizenship, respect, and caring. It was at this point that the competition expanded to impact the entire class as, ultimately, it was our behavior towards other students that would earn the prized certificates.

The first half of the year passed by without a single award. That is, no awards were given to me. Kevin, on the other hand, had received two. To say that I found my lack of awards dammingly vexing would have been a terrific understatement. Unbridled rage aside, my response was quite astonishing if I do say so myself. I tried treating everyone as nicely as I could, helping other students with assignments, and working to keep them focused in class as well. Although I did not see it then, I was acting as a miniature teacher of sorts, providing Mrs. Faust with some
much needed backup in the classroom. As a result of my efforts, during the last half of the year, I too was gifted with two awards, which brought Kevin and I to a draw.

Initially, Kevin was much better than I was in most areas of learning and behavior, but striving to be the best student in the class changed me. A little after the middle of the year, Kevin and I became equals. It was at that point, that Kevin and I became best friends, but I am thankful for our early animosity towards one another. If it was not for our animosity, we would have never grown as much as we did and, oddly enough, we probably would have never become friends either. Our intense competition had made nearly every day a difficult challenge. Looking back, I can say that these challenges played a big role into molding me into the man I am today.

My constant state of being challenged by Kevin pushed me to work hard and this had a variety of impacts on me. To begin, my third grade year marked the first moment I began to see education as being powerful in its utility. When I watched how my hard work translated into the material that I knew and the knowledge I could share with others, my desire to learn more was fanned from a spark to a flame. This flame, as time went on, would widen further into a desire to teach and so change the world through my impacts on students. My hard efforts during this one pivotal year made all following years of grade school fairly easy because of the strong educational foundation I had built.

Due to my experiences in the third grade, I can now relate to students who have been through tough school transitions, I can comprehend the impact one year of learning can have on a lifetime, and I have gained the understanding that any student can learn if properly motivated. For me, that motivation was competition and being rewarded for my efforts. I plan on using these two motivations on students who are similar to me in my classroom, but I will use anything I can find to inspire my students to work hard.
Appendix I: Ella’s Memoir Education Story

There are countless moments and events that have transpired to bring me to the point I am currently at. A lifetime of conversations, classrooms, experiences, and mentors has led me down the path of teaching. I suppose I’ve always known I wanted to be a teacher, whenever I changed my mind I always came back to it. But this memoir isn’t about those small everyday events. It isn’t even about some of the bigger moments that have tested my abilities or strengthened my resolve. It is about the moment I realized how passionate I am about becoming an educator. I often have bursts of passion about teaching, children, the education system, and anything else in between. But this particular instance made me stop and think to myself “Wow, that’s it. This is what I want.”

My mother and I often get into arguments or discussions about politics and the state of our country, she leaning slightly more conservatively and me leaning quite liberally. Usually it starts with a normal comment and spirals into whatever the most recent travesty committed by Donald Trump or some other person in charge. This one was a bit different because we had recently had a much more rational discussion about trying to understand the other person’s view rather than denying the validity. So instead of escalating to yelling and becoming angry, we sat at opposite ends of the kitchen on a cool November evening and made our points.

I’ll admit now, I don’t remember how the conversation started or how we got on the topic of children and education. But here we were. Completely seriously, she asked me, “Are you sure that with the way everything is going that you want to have kids? Are you sure you want to bring people into the world when it only seems to be getting worse?” I’ve always wanted to have children, and I had honestly thought this before but I simply told her, “Mom, there will always be problems in the world, some we can fix and others we can’t. But we can control how we look at
the world. I believe that there are more good people than bad people. I believe that these good people want to enact change to make the world better. I can choose to hope that one day the world will be a place that I want my children to grow up in. That one day the world will be a good place for the children currently on this Earth to grow up in. That is why I’m so passionate about things like social justice, climate, human rights, women’s rights, gun control, education and so much more. I have to believe that the choices I make and the causes I believe in will make a difference for the better so that the generations after me can reap the benefits of a better world. That’s why I want to teach. I want to create a change. I want to inspire young people to be better people. I want them to make better choices than my generation and the generations before me have made. I want them to want to learn and grow. I want to give children anything and everything they need to succeed. I don’t care what it takes. I have to believe that this will make a difference, otherwise what will?” And it was at this moment that I realized the root of why I wanted to come into education in the first place. I always knew that I wanted to help people, but I also want to change the world. What better way to change the world than by educating the future leaders of it?

This conversation helped me realize that I am much more passionate about teaching than I thought I was. I realized that teaching will bring me immense joy and I will have a sense of purpose. My students will all come from different backgrounds, life experiences, and abilities. For some students, I may be the only friendly adult they encounter all day, and school may be the only place they get a warm and healthy meal. Some of my student’s families may not be able to afford supplies. Some of my students may have IEP’s or disabilities. My goal is to meet the needs of each and every student that walks in my classroom. Of course, there may be these huge life changing “aha” moments that take place in classrooms where everything falls into place for a
student, but more often the things that change lives are teachers encouraging students and being there for them. Change happens when you let students know that they are important, necessary, loved, respected, and accepted. Change happens when students know they are in a safe space to learn, grow, and succeed.

I’ve had moments here and there where I question my decision to pursue teaching. Numerous people have asked me if I’m really sure I want to be a teacher. These talking heads tell me, “Well, you won’t get paid very much,” “Parents are a nightmare,” “What if you get some real problem kids,” “You’ll always be grading something,” and even “Thirty years from now you’ll be out of a job because a computer will take it anyways. Why don’t you choose something that’ll make you some money while it lasts?” While that last comment was made by my grandpa, and he thinks this about most jobs anyways, the rest of these statements do hold some level of truth. The pay isn’t always great, parents can be a nightmare, there is such a disconnect between policymakers and the classroom, many of my supplies for my classroom will be purchased out of pocket, etc. But what I’ve realized is that I don’t care. I have found something that I am extremely passionate about, and none of these things should derail my dreams of helping people on their journeys. I think about how I feel when I help a child understand something in their homework or learn a new big word like bioluminescence, I know that that feeling will only be multiplied exponentially when I am in a classroom.

One day I will be a teacher that has a group of young people that look up to me. I want to be a person worthy of being looked up to, so I’ve decided that I will do whatever it takes to be the best teacher I can possibly be. I take every opportunity to work with children by volunteering and babysitting. Babysitting has provided me with excellent experience working with numerous children. I’ve been able to see certain children grow over the course of two to three years, and it
is one of my greatest privileges. Thinking back on my time working as a babysitter, I can see how my thoughts and views have changed, and how I use techniques I have learned in my courses to handle children. I do absolutely everything I can to succeed in my classes, whether that be reading the textbook cover to cover, reaching out to professors and resources such as the writing center when I need help, or speaking to my professors and other educators about their experiences and any advice they’re willing to share. I do arguably more work than necessary for my assignments, but it is all worth it. When I am in a classroom and making some real change, all of my efforts will be worth it. Each student that comes out of my classroom knowing more about the world, themselves, and each other will be worth it. I am dedicated to giving each and every child that comes in my classroom the education that they need and deserve.

I have many fears about teaching. What if I’m not good enough? What if it becomes so time consuming that it takes over my whole life? What if my students aren’t benefitting from my instruction? What ways of instruction are best? How will I afford all of the supplies I will need for the classroom? What if? What if? What if? The list goes on, and will go on forever as my current worries die down and new ones appear. But what I’ve come to realize is that these worries are nothing in comparison to how it will feel to make a difference in children’s lives. I will always have worries, but these worries shouldn’t hold me back from my passion. There will always be people asking me if I’m sure I want to be a teacher. There will always be reasons to do something different with my life. But there will always be reasons why I want to become and stay a teacher. There will always be reasons I know I’m doing exactly what I’m meant to do with my life.

This moment with my mother may seem small, but it was a culmination of all of the other points in my life that led me to finally being positive that teaching is what I want to do with my
life. While many things caused my mind to stray from teaching, I’ve realized that all of the reasons I know teaching is meant for me outweigh the reasons that would keep me from pursuing my dream to teach. This conversation with my mom helped me come to the conclusion that I will do everything in my power to create an environment that promotes learning for all students, no matter their ability, language, race, religion, class, gender, or any other factor. It is my goal to make the world a better place, so I will make it better one child at a time.
Appendix J: Martine’s Memoir Education Story

As early as I can remember, I was always forming and creating my teacher self. From the very beginning of being able to comprehend what school and a teacher were, I knew that one day I would like to be one. As perhaps many stories go, the idea of choosing a profession, or what I thought at the time was a “grown up role”, all began within the crazy spaces of my imagination and inside the walls of my home and room. It all began with a dream and a game.

For me, the foundational event that had not only the earliest impact on my teacher self, but also the most influential impact in shaping my view on teaching was growing up playing “school” with my sisters. When my sisters and I were really young, we would always create the most random and craziest games ever, however playing school was our all time favorite; well, at least for me it was. When my sisters and I would play school, I obviously always assumed the role of being the teacher. I would create the most exciting lessons plans and activities for us to play and would always look forward to what fun thing I would create and make fun for my pretend students. The reason that I chose this particular event and time period as my most influential is because it was the very beginning for me to start to develop a love for education and teaching.

The true story behind this event is that it allowed me to explore my creativity. When my sisters and I would play school, I would come up with whatever activities we wanted to do for that particular day. One thing I especially loved more than anything was imagining myself in the actual role. These early memories, and soon to be foundational memories, helped me explore what exactly I was passionate about. Playing school and pretending to be a teacher showed me that it was not necessarily the teaching aspect that I enjoyed the most, but it was the creative and imaginative side of the job that I became most fascinated with from the beginning. I adored
creating fun activities for my “students” to do that also tied into what I was personally learning for myself in school and I absolutely loved being able to think outside the box and make things that my sisters actually enjoyed and were learning from. For me, this event meant wonder and freedom. It taught me to be diverse and that school can actually be fun. For me personally, it was more than just an average game that my sisters and I played in our free time, but an actual passion and interest. When I played this game with my sisters it made me feel a sense of happiness and peace knowing that I was doing something that was not only enjoyable to others, but also helping them expand their knowledge and have fun.

This experience helped shaped my future self because it helped me understand where my interest was. Every time my sisters and I would play it would give me more opportunities to test out if my passion was really genuine, as well as show me how far I was able to think outside the box. As a young child then, this moment heavily motivated me to want to continue on because I realized my passion for helping my sisters and I became devoted to making that passion a career. It really helped me see how I personally wanted to be as a teacher as well as see what qualities I thought a teacher ought to have, it was like endlessly being able to tap into my ideal world of education and live it out at the same time. It was the beginning of seeing how I wanted to be as well as how I wished my teachers were to me. I wanted to be a caring and attentive teachers and I wanted to truly help people grow in their love for learning. What may have been seen as a simple game for children who may not have thought so far ahead as far for what career choice they would like to have in the next ten years, I took the liberty to delight in the possibilities of what could be and how I could personally do better than the examples I had. “What could I create?” and “What is something fun?” were always questions on my mind, and little did I know that I was already shaping what kind of future teacher I would be. Because of this event, these
early memories have been the most influential because it was through those moments that I am able to look back and see how this road began for me. It always brings me back to the “why” of why I chose this career path, which was because I saw it as the most impactful and creative.

Whether it was creating fake homework for the game or actually helping my sisters with their own homework, what I can remember after all these years is how I felt while doing those things. Although it may not be the most exciting thing to some, I always thought it was the most amazing thing how teachers could grade homework and make their own worksheets however they liked as well as decorate their classrooms in so many fun ways! That passion and excitement I had while watching my sisters’ light bulbs go off and see them go from frustrated to excited and encouraged made my day and only fed my desire to want to do the same for many more individuals. It was the fuel for my imagination and the start of an interesting future. It was the very time period in which I started to really begin my love for educating. It allowed me to think ahead and decipher new knowledge and think how things could be taught for others to understand better. And although it was just a simple game, in which I enjoyed and delighted in, it was at the same time more than that. It was the foundation to who I am even today as a student because it was my imagination that lead me to want to enjoy learning.

This event has been influential because it has taught me that passion can fuel any dream that I may have. By being so young and already finding what I wanted to do with my life was amazing for the fact that as I got older I got to critique that dream and develop more of how I want to be when that day comes. By playing out that role with my sisters and with our pretend students I learned what works best for certain type of individuals. For example, my two little sisters that I would play with both learn two completely different ways. One is more hands on and the other needs things broken down every step of the way. If it was not for this event I would
not know that I wanted to be a teacher of academic diversity. I probably would not have had the
drive to see how can I teach and make things more fun, and I probably would not have had the
chance to have my own ideas come to life. I learned to be unique and I learned that I, as a future
mentor to a wide range of unique learning individuals, had to learn to make the process
enjoyable for myself as well. Without this experience I do not believe I would be as creative
thinking as I am today. I also do not think if I was not already exploring this passion early on that
I would have been ready or accepting of the many other events that would happen later in my life
that also helped contribute to the process of helping me develop my sense of teacher identity. For
me, this experience helped build my identity. It gave me wonder, drive, curiosity, and ambition
to pursue even greater ways to help others reach their academic peak.

I have chosen this moment because it is the one that gave life to my passion. It is the very
beginning of my exploration of education and it has been the most influential for me. And now,
as I think about these events that happened over ten years ago, I am able to remember my start
and continue dreaming of my future. For me this event has shaped me and changed me. Who
knows? If it was not for those weekend playtimes teaching my crazy sisters, I could have easily
chose to be something fancy like a lawyer or perhaps even an executive of some super nice
company, but no, I chose something far much greater. I chose to be a motivator of dreams, to
help others gain the knowledge that they too will need to one day pursue their own dreams just as
I did. And just like in the beginning, it all began with a dream and a game.
Appendix K: James’ Multimedia Images

Image 1  Image 2

Image 3  Image 4  Image 5
Appendix L: Ella’s Multimedia Images

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4
Appendix M: Martine’s Multimedia Images

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4


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Curriculum Vitae

Meredith Allard, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Teaching and Learning
College of Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
allardm@unlv.nevada.edu

Professional Experience
2015-Present
Graduate Assistant
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2014-Present
Doctoral Student
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2005-2015
Middle School English and Social Studies, 5th Grade Elementary, High School English, Teacher
Clark County School District
2003-2005
Learning Strategist, Middle School English, Teacher
Clark County School District
2002-2003
Middle School English and Social Studies, Teacher
Meridian School District
2000-2002
Middle School English, Teacher
Los Angeles Unified School District
1998-2000
Elementary School, Teacher
Phillips Academy
1994-1998
Kindergarten, Teacher
Oak Ranch School

Education

2014-Present
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, College of Education, Las Vegas, NV
Doctor of Philosophy, Teacher Education, Anticipated Completion Spring 2018

1991-1994
California State University, Northridge, College of Humanities, Northridge, CA
Master of Arts, English, Spring 1994
1987-1991
California State University, Northridge, College of Humanities, Northridge, CA
Bachelor of Arts, English, Spring 1991

Teaching

EDRL 425 Teaching Writing Secondary Schools
EDEL 408 Classroom Management Elementary
EDSC 408 Classroom Management Secondary
CIS 604 Classroom Management Secondary
EDSC 323 Methods Secondary Education
EDU 201 Introduction to Elementary Education

Research

2016
Discovering Identity, Discovering Self: Multimedia Reflections From a Teacher Educator

Presentation

2017
Multimedia Reflections From a Teacher Educator, presented at the Graduate and Professional Student Research Forum, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

License

Nevada State Teaching License: Elementary K-8; Secondary 7-12 English; Secondary 6-8 Social Studies

National Writing Project

2005
Southern Nevada Writing Project, University of Nevada, Las Vegas