Beyond Common Sense: Preservice Teachers' Negotiations of Quality English Language Arts Teaching in an Era of Acute Accountability

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Beyond Common Sense: Preservice Teachers’ Negotiations of Quality English Language Arts Teaching in an Era of Acute Accountability

by

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Beyond Common Sense: Preservice Teachers’ Negotiations of Quality English Language Arts Teaching in an Era of Acute Accountability
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Abstract

Staley, Sara (Ph.D., Education, Literacy, Curriculum and Instruction)

Beyond Common Sense: Preservice Teachers’ Negotiations of Quality English Language Arts Teaching in an Era of Acute Accountability

Dissertation directed by Professor Elizabeth Dutro

This dissertation inquires into the processes by which four preservice teachers of the English language arts (ELA) negotiated competing perspectives on teacher “quality” and “effectiveness” as they moved across contexts in their final semester of coursework in university-based teacher education. While the contested matter of “quality” is currently at the center of education-reform debates in the policy arena, and a whole host of perspectives are weighing in, high-stakes accountability-driven legislation is advancing powerfully narrow conceptions of what counts as effective teaching. Research has begun to illuminate the ways in which perspectives engendered by such reforms have impacted teachers’ classroom practice, but few studies have focused on how novices navigate that contested terrain in their university-based preparation to construct understandings of high-quality ELA teaching, and of themselves as high-quality ELA teachers. The present study is an attempt to fill that gap.

Grounded in sociocultural, critical, and poststructural theoretical perspectives, this qualitative study renders “quality” and “effectiveness” as necessarily contested terms. Guided by a D/discourse analytic frame (Gee, 2011a, 2011b), this work begins by critically analyzing two prominent perspectives, that is, two Discourses that frame “quality” teaching in very different ways: 1) the National Council on Teacher Quality’s Teacher Prep Review (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013); and 2) the Discourse of one university-based teacher education program. This work goes on to critically analyze four preservice teachers’ language to understand how they
navigated discursive contexts surrounding “quality” in learning to teach. Findings report how those novices positioned themselves in relation to contrasting perspectives on high-quality ELA teaching, for example, as advocates for equity and diversity, and as deeply committed to the human and relational dimensions of teachers’ work, but also how they struggled at times to overcome dichotomous thinking and a hesitancy to “rock the boat” for fear of imagined consequences aroused by Discourses of accountability. This work concludes with consideration of how university-based teacher education might better support novices as they negotiate across dissonance in learning to teach, and foster their capacities for self-control as they navigate increasingly high-stakes contexts in an era of acute accountability.
Acknowledgements

They say that energetically speaking, expressions of love and gratitude are of the highest vibrations. I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, I have the word *grateful* tattooed in inky, black cursive on the inside of my left forearm to remind me to practice and express gratitude daily. Buddhist teacher and philosopher Pema Chödrön advises us to “Be grateful to everyone,” and typically, I hold that aphorism close. But, I am called here to acknowledge by name the energetic forces in my life that have supported me through my own process of becoming, as it has unfolded beautifully and unpredictably, though not without struggle, over course of the last six years. Indeed, I am grateful to be gifted this opportunity to express my gratitude.

Mom. I thank you for the strength, love, and endurance you have always graced our family with. Alone, you have walked a long and tumultuous path, and though your bones are tired, it’s because you carried Eric and me that I have arrived at this destination. Your struggle has made me who I am today, and I am proud to represent the first generation of our family to move on to higher education. Brother. I thank you for almost 35 years of companionship, and for the support you provided me in a pivotal transition in my life. Richard. I thank you for the relentless encouragement you have given me throughout my time in graduate school, and for initiating me into feeling just a little bit more comfortable with the title, “Dr. Staley.”

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near and far, I thank you for sticking with me while on this journey, and for supporting my queer endeavor.

To Bethy, I thank you for your patience, forgiveness, compassion, and truth. Making this journey with you has been the most unexpected and amazing surprise, but something for which I am supremely grateful. I thank you for your head and heart. And, for sharing Fran with me.

Finally, to myself: I have not always treated you with compassion, kindness, and care, but I am learning. Slowly. I am proud of the person you are becoming, and I am grateful for the commitment you’ve made to learning, growing, and becoming better. Always.
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Chapter 1

Traversing the Sense-Making Challenge of Learning to Teach in Times of High-Stakes Education Reform

We’re trying to look in the mirror and fundamentally change how the Department of Education does business. Everybody else has to be willing to challenge themselves as well. Schools of education have to challenge themselves. What Doug pointed out in terms of common sense, basic teaching techniques? My simple question is why aren’t those being taught in schools of education? Why are teachers having to learn that on the job? Why isn’t that from day one being instilled in our future generation of teachers when they’re a freshman and a sophomore and a junior and a senior in college… (Duncan, 2009)

This study grew from a curiosity about how preservice teachers might construct understandings of “quality” English language arts (ELA) teaching in a sociopolitical climate characterized by higher-than-ever stakes for teachers, accountability-driven education reform, and large-scale efforts to “fundamentally change” public education, as Secretary of Education Arne Duncan put it in the quote above. When this study unfolded, the economic recession was still in full swing; states had slashed education funding, class sizes ballooned, teachers’ salaries froze, and districts tightened their financial belts by cutting positions and handing out pink slips to the freshest hires. The recession’s thrust collided with the rise of powerful education reform agendas that legislated radical changes to how teachers and teacher quality were assessed. High-stakes education reform policies implemented at the federal (e.g., Obama’s Race to the Top) and

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1 Duncan is referring here to Doug Lemov, founder of the charter school network Uncommon Schools and author of Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college (Lemov, 2010). Finn, Petrilli, and Scull (2010) describe the book as “a publishing phenomenon… [Lemov’s] forty-nine techniques—culled from observing über-effective teachers—seem commonsensical, even obvious. But they are precisely the nitty-gritty tips and practical tools that can keep a new teacher afloat in her first year in the classroom—and make her much more effective much more quickly” (p. 4). Examples of these techniques are writing on the board, using exit tickets, and maintaining high behavioral expectations.

2 In this work, I often bracket my use of quality and effectiveness with quotation marks to render the meaning of those terms as contested. I contend that the situated meanings of quality and effectiveness shift in important ways depending on their contexts of use, and what we take those terms to mean with regard to teaching and teacher preparation is not a given. Examining how participants in this study engaged that struggle over meaning is what I was ‘after’ in this dissertation.
state levels (e.g., one state’s Senate Bill 191) began institutionalizing the practice of tying assessments of teacher “effectiveness” to student achievement data, and scores on standardized tests were sanctioned as a proxy for quality teaching. Not only were these reforms advancing a rather particular and, as many policy researchers contend (e.g., Welner & Carter, 2013), narrow perspective on what constitutes teacher “quality,” but they also upped the ante for teachers to demonstrate that version of quality as it was narrowly conceived.

My interests in exploring how novices make sense of “quality” teaching were also motivated by understandings gleaned from my own tenure as a secondary ELA teacher. My experience learning to teach stretched across two years of university-based teacher preparation and six years of classroom practice. In those eight years, I made great strides toward becoming the kind of teacher with which I associated “quality”—that is, a teacher whose practice values and affirms the diversity of young people’s experiences; who fosters the development of all students’ hearts, minds, and potentials; and who maintains ambitious goals for what’s possible in the context of schooling. But, when I left the classroom, I had neither fully realized that vision of teacher quality, nor did I have teaching entirely ‘figured out’. Rather, my experiences informed me that learning to teach is an ongoing and most complex endeavor, and I had more questions than answers about how teachers develop repertoires of practice that are indicative of “quality.” In fact, I’d say that even now, with an additional six years of experience studying teaching and supporting teachers, I’m still learning what’s inside that “black box” of teacher quality, as Cochran-Smith (2005) calls it, and I’m far from having it all figured out.

In graduate school, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann’s work (1985) taught me to put words to the sense-making challenge that had characterized my experience learning to teach. Nearly 30 years ago, Feiman-Nemser & Buchman first employed the metaphor of the “two-
worlds pitfall” to point to the challenges involved in traversing the conceptual terrain that surrounds “quality” in teacher preparation. Their metaphor conveyed that learning to teach is challenging work that involves the preservice teacher navigating two different “worlds”—the distinct settings of the university and local schools—as she labors to knit together her emerging conception of high-quality teaching. Because these settings often have different perspectives on teaching and learning, foster accountability to different sets of purposes and goals, and value different tools and practices for realizing those purposes and goals, the preservice teachers’ task of bringing the knowledge and understandings developed in coursework to bear on instructional practice in conceptually coherent ways is a challenging one indeed.

As a theory that helped me understand better the struggles involved in my own learning-to-teach process, the two-worlds pitfall was certainly rich with resonance for me. In my present role as a teacher educator, however, I often find myself struck by how much more acute the stakes of accountability seem to be for novices learning the work today than they were for me when I entered the teaching profession just over a decade ago. I have often wondered how high-stakes education reform has intensified the sense-making challenge of learning to teach, and contemplated how aptly the metaphor of the two-worlds pitfall captures the challenges and experiences that novices tend to endure in these times of acute accountability. Moreover, I’ve questioned how preservice teachers might negotiate powerful perspectives—what I will also refer to in this work as *D/discourses* (Gee, 2008, 2011a; 20011b; Foucault, 1977)—that frame “quality” teaching as that which raises standardized test scores, and literacy as decontextualized skill set, and that rarely position teachers as professionals with the capacity to improve their practice from within. Thus, it is in the spirit of critical inquiry and curiosity that I situate this project in which I set out to understand the nature of novices’ sense-making challenge in these
new times, including how they make sense of “quality” teaching, of the teachers they aim to become, and of the different perspectives, or discourses, that they confront in the process.

The Contested Matter of Preparing “Quality” Teachers

A snippet of a larger conversation between Duncan and callers to the National Public Radio program Talk of the Nation in 2009, the quote that opened this dissertation begins to contextualize the tension I explore in this project. Coming from arguably the highest-ranking federal agent in the educational policy arena, Duncan’s comment provides a particularly illustrative example of one prominent perspective at play in a deeply contested question in these times: What constitutes teacher “quality,” and how should high-quality teachers be prepared?

Duncan’s remark echoes one popular premise put forth in that debate, and increasingly so by critics of university-based teacher education (e.g., Ballou & Podgursky, 1999; Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013; Farkas, Duffett, & Thomas, 2010; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Kagan, 1992; Levine, 2006). That premise posits that, generally speaking, teacher education has failed to prepare candidates with adequate practical knowledge and skills before sending them into the field. Here, Duncan invokes the theory-practice divide, a well-established source of tension in teacher preparation (Dewey, 1904). Further, Duncan implies that university-based teacher preparation does not provide any practical or “common sense” skills to candidates at all. This is curious when considering the nature of methods courses that have traditionally shaped teacher education coursework and are typically designed to foster pedagogical knowledge, practical tools, and strategies for teaching (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Lampert, Franke, Kazemi, Ghousseini, Turrou, Beasley, Cunard, & Crowe, 2013). How is it that such preparation, ostensibly grounded in the theory-into-practice notion of praxis, can be perceived as wholly impractical?
Currently, the matter of “quality” where teaching and teacher preparation are concerned is both contested (Britzman, 2012; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009), and up for grabs. Teacher “quality” is at the center of education-reform debates in the policy arena, and there are a whole host of overlapping and competing perspectives weighing in, though I will argue that some perspectives are exercising greater power than others. The implications of these competing perspectives on what “quality” means are, indeed, consequential. Since these competing perspectives conceive of both the work of teaching and what it means to be prepared for that work in divergent ways, this has potentially serious implications for novices preparing to become teachers of particular school subjects through university-based teacher education programs. What’s more, as I discuss below, these implications are particularly acute for novices who, like the preservice teacher participants portrayed in this dissertation, were learning to teach the ELA, which remains a most contested school subject (Applebee, 1974; Elbow, 1990; Sperling & DiPardo, 2008). Learning to teach the ELA involves the preservice teacher’s negotiation of these competing perspectives (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995)—cacophonous voices chattering away about the nature of the work involved and the knowledge, skills, and “intelligent capacities” (Buchmann, 1993) needed to become high-quality teachers of the school subject. What’s at stake here is how the preservice teacher will orchestrate these disparate perspectives. With which will she align herself? Will she come to understand the work of high-quality English teachers as complex, at times uncertain, but rich with possibility? Will she come to understand the work as generic—as what good teachers simply do—such that what it means to learn to teach the ELA amounts to little more than imitating role models and acquiring a set of what Duncan called “basic teaching techniques”? How will she negotiate commitments to equity and justice, fostered in teacher education, and...
competing demands of accountability? This study was designed to seek insight into those important questions.

**Project Objectives**

This study is grounded in close examination of how teacher “quality” is presently being constructed by prominent perspectives at play in a larger debate on education reform—namely, perspectives, like Duncan’s, that promote accountability- and outcome-driven education policy reform, and perspectives taken up in the literature on learning to teach in university-based teacher preparation. It seems a common thread running throughout those competing perspectives is that many of the prevalent questions that have been asked over the past two decades, and that continue to be asked with regard to teacher preparation in these times, are focused on “effectiveness” (Shulman, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2000a). Does teacher education “work”? Does teacher preparation “matter”? (Greenberg et al., 2013). I argue that casting questions about learning to teach a subject like the ELA in such a polarizing light—either it’s effective or it’s not, either it matters or it doesn’t, either you learn it in the school of education or in the local classroom—is a misguided approach. What “effective” means in learning to teach, and what “works” and “matters” in preparing high-quality teachers, will depend entirely on how one frames the work and goals of teaching. Indeed, there are many perspectives at play, many different answers to these hard questions, and no right or wrong answers per se, so to continue working within such a problematic framing of either-ors (Dewey, 1938/1997) seems akin to running around in circles, chasing after elusive rights and wrongs. And in the end, there are no guarantees; learning to teach is a complicated process rife with ambiguity (Labaree, 2000) and “twisting” paths (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003) that novices must navigate. With regard to coming to a deeper understanding of how preservice teachers of the ELA construct
understandings of “quality” teaching, we might be better served to problematize this “effectiveness” as necessarily contested, and to inquire into the process itself. That is, a generative site of inquiry involves exploring how preservice teachers endeavor to make sense of the work in the face of contrasting perspectives, and also critically analyzing the language practices of those perspectives in search of what this “working,” this “effectiveness” means to the various participants involved. This dissertation is located at the center of that generative site.

As proponents of teacher research posit, teachers’ perspectives and voices are too frequently insufficiently represented in the findings of educational research, and thus they are often excluded from shaping the scholarly knowledge base on high-quality teaching and what’s involved in preparing teachers to do that work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992). In particular, we know little about how preservice teachers struggle to orchestrate the perspectives at play on learning to teach a subject like the ELA during their university-based teacher preparation. By inquiring into the process of negotiating these competing perspectives from the preservice teachers’ and teacher educators’ perspectives, I sought to gain a better understanding of the nature of their sense-making processes. This is the first of three objectives of this study. Second, researchers have examined the mitigating effects of a policy context characterized by high-stakes, accountability-driven reform on students’ perspectives (Dutro & Selland, 2012) and motivation to learn (McCaslin, 2006), and on teachers’ attitudes and classroom practice (Ketter & Pool, 2001; Marx & Harris, 2006; McCarthey, 2008; Stillman, 2011; Valli & Buese, 2007). There is less available research that asks, What of our most novice teachers? A second objective for this project, then, was to critically inquire into how the policy context of acute accountability—a context in which powerful discourses of high-stakes education reform were prominently featured—figured into the preservice teachers’ negotiation of “quality”
ELA teaching. Finally, turning an eye toward this study’s conclusions, how university-based teacher education, and, more specifically, the program with which I am affiliated, might prepare teachers to navigate with confidence and integrity the contested terrain surrounding “quality” is one that warrants more exploration and scholarly inquiry. In order to do that work, however, scholars must turn toward the novices and their teachers and listen with care and compassion to the challenges, successes, struggles, hopes, and fears both groups give voice to as they share their sense-making perspectives on learning to teach and position themselves in these times of high-stakes education reform. This was a third objective of this project.

Given these objectives, I centered my inquiry on the following question:

How do preservice teachers negotiate competing discourses on “quality” and “effectiveness” that they encounter as they move across contexts in their final semester of coursework in university-based teacher education?

Map of the Dissertation

There are three key strands at play in this work: 1) a sociopolitical climate of high-stakes education reform’s acute accountability; 2) a range of overlapping and competing perspectives surrounding “quality” teaching and teacher preparation; and 3) four preservice teachers’ processes of learning and sense-making of high-quality ELA teaching. In the chapters that follow, I bring those three strands together in the service of understanding what was involved in those preservice teachers’ sense-making processes. A contrasting approach to the one I take here would focus on the third strand in isolation of the other two—that is, it would focus analysis of the preservice teachers’ sense-making of “quality” at the local level, as the novices engaged in micro-level interactions in the immediate contexts of university-based coursework and field placements in local schools. I resist such an approach on grounds that it would leave unexamined
how larger systems of power are reproduced in micro-level interactions and shape meanings made. I situate this study, then, in a critical assumption that larger systems of power were operating through discourses of high-stakes education reform, and, thus, were a shaping feature of the larger sociopolitical context and important to interrogate and critically analyze.

Given the above, I attended closely and recursively in this work to the relationship between discourse, power, identity, and agency as they shaped the preservice teachers’ sense-making process. In Chapter Two, I elaborate the sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1978), critical-sociocultural (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007), and poststructural (Davies & Harré, 1990; Foucault, 1977; Hall, 1996, 2001) perspectives that enabled that close attention. I also discuss how I leveraged those theoretical perspectives to conceptualize high-stakes, accountability-driven education reform as constituting one important strand of a larger field of discourse\(^3\) that was powerfully and authoritatively shaping the educational contexts in which these preservice teachers were making sense of “quality” ELA teaching.

In Chapter Three, I provide a detailed map of the contested discursive terrain surrounding “quality” in these times. That is, I review a range of overlapping and competing perspectives at play in the debate on education reform, and elaborate how teachers and the “quality” of their practice were positioned at the center of the debate. Additionally, I trace the rise to prominence of a “new educational paradigm” (Mehta, 2013) to show how the discursive landscape shifted to feature prominently a single perspective on teacher “quality” and to consider the implications of

\(^3\) Consonant with my theoretical framework, which I outline in Chapter Two, I conceive of discourse broadly here. By discourse, I mean to signify not just language-in-use, but also the whole host of practices (e.g., high-stakes testing, measuring teacher quality with student achievement data, disciplinary practices for not demonstrating effectiveness in teaching), norms, rules (e.g., policies), and so on that high-stakes education reform policies organize and institutionalize, as well as the meanings (e.g., about what counts as “quality” and “effectiveness” in teaching and teacher preparation) that are constituted within and through this discourse. I also mean to suggest that this discourse is not singular in nature; rather, it is constructed by many different, related discourses (e.g., discourses of deregulation, privatization, neoliberalism, etc.).
that shift for university-based teacher education. Finally, I discuss recent trends in research on learning to teach that frame learning teachers’ professional work as a cognitively and morally complex process of negotiation that confronts novices with particular challenges as they make sense of quality practice (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009, 2010, 2011; Forzani, 2014; Jones & Enriquez, 2009; Lampert, Beasley, Ghouseini, Kazemi, & Franke, 2010; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013).

In Chapter Four, I detail this study’s research design and methods of data collection and analysis. First, I construct the research context by describing the teacher education program in which the preservice teacher participants were learning to teach, and situating that local setting in the surrounding policy context, which was undergoing significant changes, to illustrate how discourses of high-stakes education reform were exercising power and authority in educational contexts germane to this study. Second, because I was positioned uniquely in relation to the preservice teacher participants I portray here (I was their Secondary ELA Methods course instructor and a highly participatory participant observer in this work), I also discuss my positions and reflexivity as researcher. Finally, I describe the D/discourse analytic framework (Gee, 2011a, 2011b) and analytic tools (e.g., big-D Discourses, critical approaches to discourse analysis) that facilitated my analysis and interpretation.

In Chapter Five, I critically analyze the discourse of the National Council on Teacher Quality’s (NCTQ) Teacher Prep Review (Greenberg et al., 2013)—a highly relevant policy document that, as an instantiation of the discourses of high-stakes education reform, represents one major D/discourse that the preservice teachers negotiated in learning to teach. My analysis uncovers the taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in that discourse’s framing of quality teaching and teacher preparation, and the language practices that construct and position novice
teachers and university-based teacher education in relation to the “problem” of education and education reform.

In Chapter Six, I provide a map of the discursive terrain on quality ELA teaching that the preservice teachers navigated in their final semester of coursework in their Secondary ELA teacher licensure program. Bringing my D/discourse analytic framework to bear, I report findings from an analysis of institutional and program-level discourse of the teacher education program in which these preservice teachers were making sense of high-quality ELA teaching and of themselves as ELA teachers. In that report, I attend to the distinctive ways of being and doing (Gee, 2011b) as an effective ELA teacher that were promoted in the teacher education program, which represents another major Discourse that the novices negotiated.

In Chapter Seven, I turn to the novices themselves and critically analyze their discourse to understand their processes of negotiating competing D/discourses and making sense of high-quality ELA teaching in learning to teach. My analysis constructed these novices as actively engaging complex processes of negotiation of their prior histories and experiences, the Discourse of their teacher preparation, and competing demands of accountability and high-stakes education reform. How each preservice teacher engaged that process of negotiation differed in important ways in relation to their backgrounds and personal and social histories, as well as how each saw herself and her position as a teacher-to-be.

In the concluding chapter, I draw connections across all four novices’ sense-making journeys to consider what can be learned from their successes and challenges. I conclude with an argument for a more dynamic and human reframing of the public and political discourse surrounding what constitutes “quality” teaching and teacher preparation, and of what’s involved in the process of becoming a teacher professional.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Orientations

This aim of this study was to inquire into how four preservice teachers constructed emergent understandings of high-quality ELA teaching in their final semester of coursework as they negotiated competing discourses on “quality” and “effectiveness” and a sociopolitical climate of high-stakes education reform. In this chapter, I elaborate the theoretical orientations on learning and sense-making, discourse, and power-knowledge relations that grounded my inquiry and guided my analysis.

A Sociocultural Perspective on Learning

The social and cultural nature of learning and human development. The theory of learning and development that undergirds this dissertation is rooted in sociocultural perspectives and the work of L.S. Vygotsky (1978, 1981), which views human cognition and action as situated squarely in the social and cultural worlds. Wertsch (1990) summarizes Vygotsky’s sociocultural approach to human cognition and the construct of the mind as encompassing three general but interrelated themes: 1) human development as best understood via genetic analysis (i.e., seeking to understand the social origins and genetic, or developmental, progressions of a phenomenon); 2) higher mental functions and individual development as socially constituted; and 3) human cognition and activity as mediated by and through the use of culturally available tools and signs. Together, these themes comprise the sociocultural perspective that oriented my investigation of how preservice teachers made sense of effective teaching. Below, I discuss each theme and demonstrate how it functioned as a grounding assumption to guide this study.

The first theme conveys the importance of accessing sociohistorical context when exploring any social phenomenon. In other words, to understand thought and action, one must go beyond simply investigating the action or event in isolation, and also inquire into the histories of
the cultural worlds in which it takes place. Attention to history entails turning an eye toward the legacy of achievements, developments, material conditions, practices, discourses, and social relations related to the phenomenon under study and examining the link between past, present, and future. That perspective sensitized me to “thinking historically” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 155) in this work—that is, to consider how the novices’ personal histories were powerful mediators of their present learning and the ways in which university-based teacher education, as a cultural world, has been figured by a history of developments in research on teaching, learning, and learning to teach, as well as how that history has shaped the current work of teacher education programs, including the TEP represented in this study. Thus sensitized, I inquired into the novices’ experiences before they entered teacher preparation, and into the sociohistorical context surrounding university-based teacher education, which, as I will develop throughout this dissertation, is being (re)figured in the present historical moment of acute accountability via policy discourses that construct and position it as a “problem” (Cochran-Smith, 2005) in the debate on education reform. In Chapter Three, I situate that debate and university-based teacher education’s positioning in it in sociohistorical perspective.

Addressing the second theme, Cole and Wertsch (1996) qualify that for Vygotsky, “the social world does have primacy over the individual in a very special sense. Society is the bearer of the cultural heritage without which the development of the mind is impossible” (p. 253). Here, Cole & Wertsch assert the inherently social nature of the origins of human thought. Consider how as infants, our parents, guardians, and other close keepers bring us into cultural worlds that have long-established systems of meaning—particular ways of knowing, being, and doing in the world that are socially recognized and accepted, and that will inform and guide our future behavior. It is through these sociocultural systems of shared meaning that we learn to interpret
and make sense of things. Indeed, the sociocultural perspectives undergirding this work frame preservice teacher learning as a socially situated and culturally organized phenomenon—an inherently social process that unfolds as novices participate in particular contexts. In this case, the Secondary ELA teacher education program (TEP) was one primary context in which the preservice teachers were making sense of teaching and their future role as teachers. That context likewise constituted one system of shared meaning—what I will also refer to in this work as a discourse community—that mediated, to some degree, the preservice teachers’ learning.

Inquiring into the nature of that system of shared meaning, which is the scope of Chapter Six, was an important first step toward understanding how the contexts of the program, the preservice teachers’ experiences in local schools, and the discourses they encountered related to achievement and accountability were complexly intertwined in their navigations of what it meant to become effective ELA teachers.

The second and third themes are certainly complementary, and a bit hard to disentangle. As Wertsch (1990) noted, the theme that claims higher mental functions are culturally mediated by tools and signs “is analytically prior to the other two” (p. 114). In other words, the notion that mental functions such as thought have social origins rests on the principle that social activity and human cognition are mediated by the use of signs and tools, and chief among them is language. Language is the sign system we use most in our day-to-day interactions and also the first that many of us learn to master. So, to explicate the third theme—the inextricable link between a sign system-in-use and the shaping of cognition—I turn to sociolinguist Halliday’s (1978) assertion that language and the social actor are “a unified conception” (p. 12). In this perspective, without language there are no social actors, and vice versa. As a child develops language, through interacting with people and objects in her sociocultural worlds, she also begins to construct an
increasingly complex picture of reality—a worldview that is “inseparable from the construal of the semantic system in which the reality is encoded” (Halliday, 1978, p.1). Thus, language is social in nature. It facilitates our ways of communicating, and as an artifact that we are socialized to and through, it mediates our interpretations of the world and understandings of our lived realities. Culture is also a system, one that Halliday (1976) likens to an “information system,” a “semiotic construct” (p. 581) of which language is but one part. In this way, language is also a cultural artifact. Focusing on the significant role that language plays in shaping contexts and cognition, Halliday’s ideas provide an important lens for my study. Coupled with critical perspectives, which I discuss below, that posit a relationship between power and the constitutive function of discourse, that lens animated my D/discourse analytic framework. It enabled me to analyze language as an appropriate artifact and data source that reflects the preservice teachers’ cognitive processes, the system of shared meaning that was produced in the TEP, and contrasting systems of meaning that produced competing conceptions of what counts as quality teaching.

Finally, Cole & Wertsch (1996) note that “higher mental functions are, by definition, culturally mediated… [A]ll psychological functions begin, and to a large extent remain, culturally, historically, and institutionally situated and context-specific” (emphasis in original, pp. 252-3). The innovation of “Vygotsky’s sociocultural approach to mind was to specify how human mental functioning reflects and constitutes its historical, institutional, and cultural setting” (Wertsch, 1990, p. 115). In part, this is what my analysis of the novices’ emergent understandings attempted to do—that is, I endeavored to understand how their sense-making of high-quality ELA teaching was contoured by aspects of their personal histories, as well as by the institutional, historical, and cultural contexts in which they moved in and out during their final semester of coursework.
Sense-Making as Negotiating Competing Discourses: Critical-Sociocultural Perspectives

The sociocultural perspectives discussed above undergirded this study’s design in important ways. For instance, my theoretical assumptions about the social and cultural nature of learning, and the ways in which the individual and culture are mutually constituting, presumed that examining program inputs alone (e.g., course syllabi, sequence of required coursework) would not suffice as an appropriate method of data collection. In other words, those data would not yield insight into the social processes through which the preservice teachers interacted with and negotiated those inputs vis-à-vis their personal histories and competing perspectives related to what counts as good teaching. Thus, in the service of accessing the system of shared meaning of the TEP and the preservice teachers’ negotiation of it, I considered program inputs, but I also inquired into participants’ talk about high-quality ELA teaching and enactments of their emergent understandings (e.g., instructional plans). Another assumption that grounded this study posits the sociopolitical context surrounding the preservice teachers as they pursued entry into the profession as also figuring the present research context in significant ways. My analysis, for example, examined the relationship between the preservice teachers’ sense-making and the set of power-knowledge relations embedded in discourses of high-stakes education reform. It follows that theories of power, identity, and agency were important to my analysis, in addition to the sociocultural views of learning discussed above. In this section, I discuss the critical-sociocultural perspectives that oriented my inquiry into the shaping role of power in relation to preservice teacher learning.

A critical-sociocultural perspective on the mediating role of power in learning.

Addressing the limits of sociocultural research, Lewis, Moje, and Enciso (2007) raise concerns regarding sociocultural theory’s tendency to emphasize the individual as embedded in local
contexts and engaged in micro-level interactions, and to undertheorize the relationship between larger systems of power, identity, and agency and their influence on learning. Calling on sociocultural perspectives to take up more explicitly the relationship between learning and macro systems of power, Lewis and Moje (2003) put it this way:

Learning, we argue, is the acquisition or appropriation of, the resistance to, and/or the reconceptualization of skills and knowledge that have the potential to make and remake selves, identities, and relationships. More important, however, is the recognition that learning is always situated in participation within discourse communities. If learning is situated in discourse communities, and discourse communities produce and struggle over cultural tools, resources, and identities (both within and across communities), then it follows that learning is shaped by power relations, even—or especially—those relations that are not obvious acts of power. (p. 1992)

*Discourse communities* are the social and cultural groups, spaces, and contexts within which we enact distinctive identities and activities, and within which learning is situated. The perspective cited above asserts that discourse communities are always contested, because they are characterized by unequal access to tools, material goods, resources, and identities (Lewis & Moje, 2003; Moje & Lewis, 2007). For instance, school is a discourse community in which certain language and literacy practices are valued over others. Gee (2004) associates those privileged practices with varieties of academic language that are related to disciplines and content areas, and notes that some children, generally middle-class, white children, enter school with “early prototypes of academic varieties of language” (p. 19). As those children enter the discourse community of school with the beginnings of academic linguistic competence already in development, they do so with a kind of capital that affords them greater and unequal access to identities as proficient, ‘good’ readers, and successful students. Those identities afford potentially greater access to advanced curricula and programs, the highest quality teachers, and other tools and resources that can ultimately position those students as highly selective applicants to colleges and universities. Importantly, Gee points out that students who are not afforded the
same access and capital, and are generally from non-dominant communities, also enter school with rich linguistic resources and practices. The difference is that those students’ home, everyday language practices—what Gee (2011b) associates with “primary Discourses” or the culturally distinctive ways of being an “everyday person” (p. 179) in our home communities—are not similarly valued in school. The contested nature of school, then, and the differential access to resources and tools afforded therein, constructs a set of unequal power relations that shape how both groups of students are positioned in that discourse community, how they position themselves, and how their identities are constructed and enacted. In this way, power plays an important mediating role in their learning, interaction, and participation in the literacy classroom.

I situate this project in the perspective, discussed above, that learning is always constitutive of power relations. Attention to power in relation to learning is crucial, because it problematizes the matter of whose knowledge, and whose primary Discourse(s), ‘count’ in a context of learning, and also implicates identity construction, positioning, and social roles related to ways of being and doing that learners take up (e.g., resisting, assimilating, and/or reproducing particular norms, skills, and knowledge) as they participate in discourse communities (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). As I discuss in Chapter Six, through their participation in the TEP, the preservice teachers were being socialized into what one teacher educator and secondary participant described as a “different way of thinking” that involved shifting novices’ conceptions of the nature and purpose of the ELA and literacy instruction, who their future students would be, and what their roles and responsibilities as professionals were to ensure the learning of every student. In the TEP that “different way of thinking” was associated with good and high-quality teaching, but it was also recognized among faculty and program instructors as working against dominant cultural practices and norms of traditional schooling, and, therefore, challenging for
novices to enact once they moved beyond the university. That finding points to just one way in which larger systems of power were operating in the contexts in which the novices were making sense of effective teaching and their roles and positions as teachers of the ELA. As I will develop later on, that “different way of thinking” that the TEP was socializing its teacher candidates into positioned those novices as competent professionals committed to democratic purposes of education and a social justice mission. In contrast, and as Chapter Five’s critical discourse analysis of NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013) will demonstrate, competing discourses constructed and positioned those novices as incompetent, as having received inadequate preparation, and as valuing above all raising student achievement. What was at stake for these novices as they were learning to become teachers and negotiating the competing D/discursive terrain on quality was their identity development, that is, how they would they see themselves and their roles, and which commitments, priorities, pedagogies, and practices they would recognize as valued ways of being teachers of the ELA.

Gutiérrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995) argue that to understand “the consistently asymmetrical power relations and epistemological conflict, or what counts as knowledge, evident in school communities, we need to examine communities of practice and knowledge construction from a situated and sociohistorical perspective” (p. 447) because those contexts are situated in larger sociocultural and political frameworks. To do that examining work, Gutiérrez et al. call for the coupling of critical and sociocultural theoretical perspectives in the study of learning. Indeed, Literacy Studies scholars who take up sociocultural theories of learning have also called for sociocultural research that leverages critical perspectives and analytic methods for examining the shaping role of larger systems of power in the study of learning (e.g., Collins, 2011; Gutiérrez, 2007, 2008; Gutiérrez & Larson, 1994; Kinloch, 2010; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Winn & Behizadeh,
2011). I situate this work in those calls and frame the university-based TEP as a discourse community that, like school, is contested by nature and constituted by asymmetrical power relations and epistemological conflict, and especially so in the present historical moment of acute accountability, because it is embedded in a larger sociopolitical framework. In the next section, I elaborate these orientations through a discussion of the critical and poststructural perspectives on discourse (e.g., Foucault, 1977, 1988) that I leveraged in my analysis of the discursive terrain of “quality” ELA teaching that participants were negotiating in their talk about teaching. As part of that discussion I elaborate on Gee’s concept of Discourses as a key tool that enabled my analysis of the shaping role of power in the production and construction of meaning and identities in this study.

**Competing perspectives as D/discourses.** Building on Lewis & Moje’s assumption that learning is always situated within and across discourse communities that are contested by nature, I leveraged competing D/discourses as an organizing concept for understanding how contested discursive contexts played a mediating role in the preservice teachers’ sense-making in relation to the profession. To establish what I mean by competing D/discourses, I turn to sociolinguist Jim Gee (2008), who coined the term “big-'D' Discourse” (p. 2) to capture distinctions between little-d discourse, or language-in-use, and Discourses—shorthand for the whole host of things wrapped up in enacting an identity that is socially recognizable and counted as “people like us” (p. 3) among a particular discourse community. As Gee (2011b) observes,

> Being in a Discourse is being able to engage in a particular sort of “dance” with words, deeds, values, feelings, other people, objects, tools, technologies, places and times so as to be recognized as a distinctive sort of who doing a distinctive sort of what. Being able to understand Discourse is being able to recognize such “dances.” Discourses are not units or tight boxes with neat boundaries. Rather they are ways of recognizing and being recognized as certain sorts of whos doing certain sorts of whats. (pp. 177-178, emphasis in original)
In the quote above, Gee compares being in a Discourse to being able to recognize and enact a particular kind of “dance.” Building on that metaphor, Discourses are unique orchestrations of ways of being, doing, valuing, thinking, believing, and using tools—distinctive ‘moves’ shared among a particular social and cultural group that are valued forms of participation in that group. Learning to be in a Discourse involves learning those moves. In this study, the TEP comprised one discourse community in which distinctive sorts of whos engaged in distinctive sort of what's. Put another way, the program constituted a Discourse in which distinctive ways of being and doing were associated with the socially recognizable identity of a high-quality ELA teacher engaged in the valued activities associated with high-quality ELA teaching. The novices’ task was to learn to orchestrate those distinctive ‘moves’ in order to enact that dance and be recognized as high-quality teachers.

Learning to participate in Discourses, however, can be quite complex. Discourses is used here in the plural, because, as Gee notes, we are all “members of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities” (2008, p. 4). A point that I develop below, as the preservice teachers were learning to participate in the Discourse of their TEP, they were also negotiating competing D/discourses that positioned them in contrasting ways. Further complicating matters, Discourses encompass value systems and taken-for-granted knowledge that get treated as “common sense”—knowledge that Gee calls tacit theories, which dictate what counts as normative ways of thinking, being, and doing within a particular context. Gee (2008) writes, “Such theories, which are part and parcel of each and every Discourse, and which, thus, underlie the use of language in all cases, are what I call in this book ideologies. And thus, too, I claim that language is inextricably bound up with ideology and cannot be analyzed and understood apart from it” (p. 4). Because they are ideological in nature, Discourses can appear to
be natural and neutral rather than socially and culturally constructed. Thus, novices might not even have recognized how taken-for-granted Discourses were mediating their sense-making in learning to teach.

Gee’s notion of D/discourses was a powerful theoretical tool of inquiry and method in my analytic framework, which I outline in Chapter Four. Gee’s approach to analyzing D/discourses accounts for the utterance itself (i.e., discourse) but also inquires into the particulars of context in which language takes on situated meaning. Bringing that approach to bear in my analysis, I aimed to discern the Discourses present in the data. In Chapter Six, for example, I articulate the distinctive ways of being and doing that constituted the TEP’s Discourse on high-quality ELA teacher preparation. In Chapter Seven, I examine the preservice teachers’ discourse to show how the program Discourse and competing D/discourses were shaping (and not shaping) their sense-making. Gee’s assumption about the ideological nature of Discourses was also another feature of the critical lens I brought to bear on my discourse analysis, and in Chapter Five I analyze an influential policy document, NCTQ’s report, to uncover how language was shaping particular notions of rigorous and effective teacher preparation that also appeared natural and neutral. I also explore how that text discursively constructed and positioned novice teachers as subjects.

**Discourse, power, and the production of knowledge.** D/discourse provides a useful lens for examining how systems of power, such as those instantiated in policy discourses that advance high-stakes education reform, were putting knowledge to work in the contexts germane to this study. By “putting knowledge to work,” I mean to invoke Foucault’s (1977) argument that discourse produces knowledge, as well as power, insofar as knowledge functions discursively to organize meaning in particular ways, depending on the context at hand (Hall, 2001). In the discussion above of Gee’s concept of “big-D Discourse,” I established that D/discourses
organize ways of thinking, being, and doing that are accepted and valued in a discourse community. In a Foucauldian sense, this is how discourses govern, or “structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 1983, p. 221). As discourse governs which practices are accepted and which are not, discourse also organizes the norms and processes by which authority is established and exercised, and disciplined maintained (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). Discourse, then, is always wrapped up in a set of power-knowledge relations. Critical approaches to discourse analysis, which were foregrounded as a central component of my D/discourse analytic framework that I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, “recognize that inquiry into meaning making is always also an exploration into power” (Rogers, 2011, p. 1) and is keenly interested in uncovering the effects of power-knowledge relations.

Foucault (1977) argued against the notion that power is something individuals or groups disproportionately possess; rather, from this vantage point, power is produced within and through discourse, as discourse organizes particular sets of practices that regulate our social conduct—including thought and sense-making. Put another way, knowledge, discursively produced, is put ‘to work’ as it shapes and governs the systems of rules, norms, and disciplinary practices that regulate and discipline our bodies—how we conduct ourselves, how we position ourselves, how we get positioned, and how we enact senses of ourselves in particular contexts. In this way, as I elaborate below, the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse also bears on identity construction.

**Discourse, power-knowledge relations, and identity.** In this study, I use identity to refer to the preservice teachers’ senses and enactments of self—their understandings of who they were becoming as teachers of the ELA and of the ways of being and doing in the ELA classroom as high-quality teachers. Identity is a concept that gets taken up in a variety of disciplines.
ranging from psychology to anthropology to sociology (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). I use *identity* to mean the “sense of self” that an individual constructs and enacts at the intersection of a particular time and place (Gee, 2005; McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Gee (2000/2001) describes identity as “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given context” (p. 99, emphasis my own). In this perspective, recognition is what links identity and D/discourses—as individuals move across different discourse communities, they enact identities that are socially recognizable in those communities. I situate my perspective in a discursive view of identity (e.g., Foucault, 1982; Hall, 1996, 1997) that posits identity as not just linked to D/discourses, but as constructed within them. Hall (1997) explains that in this view, “the subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it is subjected to discourse. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge” (pp. 79-80, emphasis in original). In other words, identity, as I use it here, indexes the socially recognizable formation of a (human) subject in a discourse community (e.g., being recognized as a ‘good’ teacher or a ‘bad’ teacher). What constitutes recognizability is figured in large part by the D/discourse conventions and discursive practices of that community. I draw here on Davies and Harré’s (1990) definition of discursive practices as “all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities” (p. 262). Grounding these theoretical assumptions in the context of this study, I presumed that what constituted the identity of an “effective” teacher varied in important ways in relation to the different discursive practices that were produced in the various discourse communities that the preservice teachers participated in during teacher preparation. Of significance, as they learned to navigate those competing discursive landscapes, the novices were also engaged in a process of identity construction.
A discursive view on identity does not suggest that the “self” signifies a stable, unitary object residing somewhere within each of us, or that our “senses of self” are stable configurations that we enact at will. Rather, this view posits human subjects as constructed in and through D/discourses, and thus, identities as “never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Luke (1995/1996) describes subjectivities (i.e., human subjects’ socially constructed identities) as neither unified nor singular, because they are discursively constructed and located within institutional contexts (e.g., schools, university-based teacher education). Moreover, as Hall (1996) asserts, because identities are constructed “within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, and by specific enunciative strategies” (p. 4). As discussed above, institutional contexts, and the discourse communities embedded therein, are sociohistorical in nature and contested spaces characterized by unequal power relations and access to privileged goods and resources. As such, identities, which are developed and (re)shaped as individuals learn to participate in discourse communities, reflect, are shaped by, and shaping of histories and power relations (Moje, 2004) in which those communities and contexts are embedded.

Indeed, how we construct and enact our identities is a complex matter—a process that is both enabled and constrained by D/discourse and the discursive practices that make available particular ways of being and doing in a given context. Dutro, Kazemi, Balf, and Lin (2008) leverage Foucault’s (1977) ideas to argue this point, positing that “individuals’ experiences of self—how we define who we are in the world—can only be expressed and understood through categories and concepts available to them through language or discourse” (p. 276). In this study,
which categories and concepts were available for novice ELA teachers’ identities depended on
the implicit cultural understandings and circumstances of the discursive contexts in which those
individual struggled to make sense of, define, and enact their experiences of self as teachers (e.g.,
“effective” or “ineffective”). As such, identity is always implicated in relations of discourse,
power, and knowledge. Identity matters in this study, because as the preservice teachers made
sense of effective ELA teaching, they drew on their personal histories, foregrounded some
aspects of themselves and ensconced others as they learned to do the work, and in the process
they were engaged in a process of identity construction. How they constructed and enacted
senses of themselves as teachers of the ELA and members of the profession was also importantly
shaped by the Discourse on “quality” ELA teaching that was promoted locally in the context of
the TEP, as well as by competing D/discourses (e.g., Discourses of high-stakes education
reform) that were at work in the broader sociopolitical context.

The role of agency in discourse, power-knowledge relations, and identity. Thus far, I
have situated my theoretical perspectives on the complex relationship between discourse, power,
and identity that were central to my research design in this study of learning. I now turn to the
question: What about agency? Agency is a complex and contested construct; what agency means,
exactly, and the extent to which individuals can exert agency is far from a given in this
theoretical terrain. As I have discussed above, the theories on which I draw challenge the idea of
a stable “self” capable of acting independently in the world. Yet, many scholars argue that a
discursive view of identity does not have to imply the absence of agency. For instance, Moje &
Lewis (2007) define agency as the “strategic making and remaking of selves, identities,
activities, relationships, cultural tools, and or histories, as embedded within relations of power”
(p. 18). Poststructural theories of identity and discourse posit subject positions as importantly
linked to that strategic making and remaking of selves. Davies & Harré name as a “strength” of the poststructural paradigm that it recognizes the constitutive function of discourse and discursive practices, and also “recognizes that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices… because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in” (p. 262). In other words, discursive practices make available particular subject positions and storylines, but because people navigate multiple, overlapping, and competing D/discourse as they interact in their social worlds, there is possibility to position oneself in relation to those possibilities.

As Luke (1995/1996) explains, “In negotiating everyday life, we tend to assume various positions in discourse. Together, these available positions and discourses offer possibilities for difference, for multiple and hybrid subjectivities that human subjects actively make and remake through their textual constructions, interpretations, and practices” (p. 14). Which positions are available to a subject is enabled and constrained by the discursive practices of the community in which an individual participates. Because the contexts in which we construct and enact our identities are always contested spaces animated by shifting power relations, there is possibility for individuals to assume agentic stances by voicing and enacting ways of being that are resistant to what functions as dominant in any given context. Lemke (2002) provides a helpful reminder that also key to Foucault’s analysis of power is the assertion that the individual subject is never wholly dominated by power, nor wholly autonomous from it. Indeed, a Foucauldian perspective takes keen interest in the tension that emerges between the discursive structuring of the field of an individual’s possible actions and “the ‘autonomous’ individual’s capacity for self-control” (Lemke, 2002, p. 52). Put another way, this perspective asserts that a tension emerges from the individual subject’s struggle to negotiate her capacity for self-control, or what Foucault calls
(1988) “technologies of the self,” vis-à-vis the effects of power, or “technologies of domination.” But, that tension is potentially a productive one, as it also animates the subject’s potential for a kind of agency that is not outside of discourse, as I discuss further below.

Technologies of domination include the various means through which power is exercised to regulate, discipline, and punish individuals’ social conduct; in the context of this study, relevant technologies of domination include high-stakes accountability systems and practices such as standardized testing as well as the goals and commitments articulated within a TEP. Conversely, technologies of the self include the ways and means that “permit individuals to effect [on their own] or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). In the present research context, a technology of the self could be any practice that enables a novice to recognize herself as an “effective” teacher of the ELA, for example, organizing a writer’s workshop to teach writing. On the other hand, using scripted curricula and materials because they of district policies and mandates would reflect a technology of domination. Gore (1992) clarifies that individuals do not invent technologies of the self; rather, “they are patterns found in culture which are proposed, suggested, and imposed on individuals by their culture, their society, and their social group” (Foucault, 1988b) (p. 53).

Research has documented how discourses of high-stakes education reform instantiated in accountability-driven legislation have functioned in local contexts to regulate teachers’ conduct in the classroom (e.g., teachers’ resistance or submission to prescriptive instructional practices). A particularly germane example, given this study’s goals, comes from McCarthey (2008), who drew on Foucault’s theories to examine the effects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on teachers’
writing practice. Addressing how NCLB functioned as a larger system of power to “control” teachers’ practice, McCarthey argued that,

the intention of the law is to control others by structuring the field—a set of rules such as requiring teachers to be competent in their fields that are enacted through technological means, in this case, standardized tests. The result of the law, however, is the production of asymmetrical relations in most cases; however, individual teachers can exercise technologies of the self to resist dominant practices in their classrooms. (p. 464)

Of 16 participants, McCarthey found one teacher at a low-income school who exercised “technologies of the self” to resist the dominating effects of NCLB. This finding is an important one. It points to teachers’ capacity for agency and self-control, as it suggests the possibility for teachers to resist some of the effects of larger systems of power produced in and through discourses of high-stakes education reform. A question I will explore in this dissertation’s concluding chapter concerns how university-based teacher education might propose particular technologies of the self, that is, tools that novices might employ to resist potential effects of larger systems of power on their instructional practice.

In the sections above, I discussed the theories of D/discourse, power, identity, and agency that were important lenses for my study that was centrally interested in exploring how preservice teachers negotiated competing D/discourses on quality ELA teaching. I now turn to complementary concepts of language, conflict, and ideology from Bakhtin’s theories that were also important to my approach in this study.

A Bakhtinian Perspective on Contradiction, Conflict, and Cacophony

In this section, I turn to Bakhtin (1981) and his concept of ideological becoming to demonstrate how a Bakhtinian perspective offers a generative way for understanding the prevalence of conflict and competing D/discourses on what it means to be a quality teacher as rich resources for learning and for strategically making and remaking of selves and identities, rather than as problematic tensions.
The concept of ideological becoming. In concert with the perspectives I discussed previously, Bakhtin (1981) speaks to the shaping role of the sociocultural context on consciousness, which “does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world” (p. 14). I would add to this by putting “world” in the plural to denote the multiple and oftentimes conflicting ideological worlds we move through.

By “ideological world,” Bakhtin refers to the sociocultural environment, which is saturated with D/discourses and always ideological. Freedman and Ball (2004) note that ideological environments are “characterized by a diversity of voices” (p. 6). Important here is Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, or the idea that all discourse can be understood as part of an ongoing social conversation, and thus, enmeshed in every utterance are the voices of others. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this cacophony of voices—these sometimes competing perspectives—provides rich terrain in which the individual can stretch and grow. Bakhtin’s view is that it is precisely these heteroglossic spaces, which are distinguished by a chattering of disparate D/discourses, by tension, and by struggle, that are most generative in terms of fostering personal growth, or ideological becoming. Ideological becoming is a process by which “we develop our way of viewing the world, our system of ideas, what Bakhtin calls an ideological self” (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 5). This process is not meant to unfold seamlessly and harmoniously; rather, it necessitates dissonance, conflict, and struggle. The struggle comes as we negotiate authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses. Authoritative discourse, or what Gee would call a big “D” Discourse, is imbued with power. In the words of Bakhtin (1981), authoritative discourse is:

the word of our fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given (it sounds) in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact… It is not a free appropriation and assimilation of the word itself that authoritative discourse
seeks to elicit from us; rather, it demands our unconditional allegiance. (pp. 342-3, emphasis in original)

Authoritative discourses are rigid, inflexible, reified, and imposing, though they can be resisted by the individual actor (Morson, 2004). Internally persuasive discourses, on the other hand, are the antagonist to authoritative discourse. Bakhtin (1981) describes them as “half-ours and half-someone else’s” (p. 345). Internally persuasive discourses are everyday discourses in much the way Gee conceptualizes little-d discourses, discussed previously. They are by nature flexible discourses that can be appropriated rather than strictly assimilated. We internalize the discourses of others, but through the process of internalization, the discourse is transformed; in this way, an internalized discourse can also be a technology of the self (Luke, 1995/1996). We play, work, and mold others’ discourse as our own, leaving the mark of our fingerprints on the discourse all the while. It is “not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely developed, applied to new material, new conditions, it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a struggle with other internally persuasive discourses” (Bakhtin, 1981, emphasis in original). As Freedman and Ball (2004) note, internally persuasive discourses are malleable and ever-evolving:

[They are] what each person thinks for him- or herself, what ultimately is persuasive to the individual. As we form our own ideas, we come into contact with discourses of others and those discourses enter our consciousness much as authoritative discourse does . . . However, unlike its authoritative cousin, internally persuasive discourse is subject to change and is constantly interacting with our ever-evolving ideologies. (p. 8)

As preservice teachers of the ELA learning to teach and making sense of “quality” teaching, the novices in my study were well-poised to engage in a struggle of ideological becoming. That is, they moved in and out of different contexts (e.g., the methods classroom, the practicum classroom, the sociopolitical context), each encompassing a different ideological world, and they struggled to appropriate, assimilate, and/or resist the range of discourses made
available in each. Theirs will be a struggle to organize and to harmonize the cacophony of voices that work to persuade and impose on them particular ways of recognizing and enacting “quality” teaching. In this way, the idea of ideological becoming was important for discerning the possibility for these novices’ agency—for their strategic making and remaking of selves and imagining of “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) as they negotiated competing D/discourses and contrasting subject positions made available to them in the various discourse communities in which they participated.

**Summary: Negotiating Discourses, Power-Knowledge Relations, Identity, and Agentic Becoming in This Work**

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical foundations for my study, including sociocultural views of learning and development, and critical and poststructural perspectives on discourse, power, identity, agency, and ideological becoming. These lenses were each important to my study, as I was interested in bringing a situated and sociohistorical perspective to bear on my inquiry into how larger systems of power were mediating novices’ sense-making and identity development as they negotiated competing D/discourses on “quality” teaching in their teacher preparation. Poststructural theories of identity posit the process of identity construction as ongoing and never complete. Hall (1996), for example, frames identity as a “process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (p. 4). Coupled with Bakhtin’s theory of ideological becoming, those lenses enable a way of seeing the struggle of becoming a teacher in these times, and the related processes of navigating accountability- and achievement-driven policies and contrasting D/discourses of what is possible in the ELA classroom, in a new light. That is, those perspectives offer a way to
reframe the struggle to become as a generative, ongoing process of negotiation and appropriation, and rich with possibility, rather than as an impossible challenge. As I will discuss at the end of this dissertation, the hopeful possibility engendered by that reframing is crucial given the present historical moment of acute accountability.

In the next chapter, I turn toward the sociohistorical and sociopolitical context in which the major competing D/discourses on teacher “quality” and “effectiveness” at play in this study are situated.
Chapter Three

Mapping the Contested Discursive Terrain on “Quality”: A Review of Perspectives

Guided by the theoretical orientations established in Chapter Two, this chapter takes as its starting point that perspectives on “quality” teaching and teacher preparation exist neither in isolation, nor as stable assertions, devoid of context, about the nature of teaching; rather, they are importantly shaped by broader social and political discourses (e.g., Discourses of high-stakes education reform, accountability, and achievement), and the ideologies operating therein, as well as by the sociopolitical context in which those discourses are situated and become meaningful (van Dijk, 1998). Indeed, perspectives on “quality” are complex compositions that are embedded with a range of assumptions about the purposes and goals of schooling. The nature of those assumptions bears on how each perspective frames the “problem” of education, and the degree to which teaching and teacher preparation are implicated as part of the solution. The articulated problems and solutions, then, include assumptions about what counts as “quality” in teaching and teacher preparation, and about how such “quality” should be assessed and managed.

Competing Ideologies

Britzman (2012) implicates the “politics of education” in this tangled web of perspectives, pointing to the ideologies that lie at the core of such debates. As Britzman writes, on the one hand,

Education is considered a human right and so is associated with the possibilities for social justice, social change, and self and cultural transformation. This is because educational attainment and sophistication with literacy are related to one’s life chances and to the capacity to participate in civic life. When joined to the imperatives of social transformation, those entering teacher education are often seen and see themselves as social change agents… On the other, education is considered in more conservative terms. Education is used to promote national unity and uniformity, protect respect for authority, and serve as a common mechanism for the preservation of traditions and their continuity. When joined to conservative agendas, teacher education is likely to emphasize the acquisition of stable knowledge, skill-based teaching, and curriculum practices that are accountable to the teaching of the basics. (p. 5)
Perspectives that frame the work and goals of schooling expansively—that is, as significantly tied to children’s life chances, opportunities, and access to the “good life”—are also likely to frame the “problem” of education expansively. That is to say, those perspectives are likely to look well beyond teachers and achievement gaps to understand what’s contributing to hard-to-disrupt, “savage inequalities” of schooling. In similar fashion, such perspectives are likely to imagine solutions for reform that critically attend to the deep historical, political, and structural inequalities, and complex relationship between school and society, that function to distinctly disadvantage some students, particularly students who have been marginalized through racism, poverty, immigration policy, sexism, and homophobia and heterosexism (e.g., Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006; Ayers, 1998; Bartolomé, 2000; Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 1992).

On the other hand, a dominant Discourse in education reform focuses in on the system of public schooling as the “problem” of education and employs a more narrow framework for imagining possible solutions. Instantiated in what Britzman described above as a “conservative” view on education, this perspective seems to emerge in times of economic instability and recession as a revitalized political elán that calls on the institution of public education to serve as the platform for lifting us out of hard times, and for restoring the United States’ position as a competitive economic superpower. We saw such calls made, for example, in the post-Sputnik era of the 1950s (NCTE, 1959), in the 1980s with the Regan administration’s publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and most recently following the economic recession of the first decade of the 21st century (Zeichner, 2010).

Moreover, there seems to be a pattern in which variations of this perspective manifest in calls made by policy makers for a reductive, “back to basics” approach to skills instruction. Such calls
seem to resurface particularly in the face of economic instability and a perceived decline of students’ math and literacy skills, as was the case with *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Later in the chapter, I devote more attention to this perspective, its rise to prominence, and its influence and implications for teacher education and novices learning to teach.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first, I explore these contrasting frames in some depth as I trace a map of the contested discursive terrain that shaped the preservice teachers’ negotiations of “quality” and “effectiveness” in this study. In tracing the peaks and valleys of that terrain, I use the concept of competing perspectives (i.e., competing Discourses) to organize my discussion of the three key, interrelated strands, briefly outlined in Chapter One, that together construct the phenomenon under study. Again, those strands are: 1) the sociopolitical climate of high-stakes education reform’s acute accountability; 2) the range of overlapping and competing perspectives surrounding “quality” teaching and teacher preparation; and 3) the preservice teachers’ processes of making sense of high-quality ELA teaching. I begin to chart my course of the competing perspectives at play in this contested terrain by situating them in the first strand—that is, in the broader sociopolitical context and the larger debate on education reform. In sketching the contours of that debate, I take care to review prominent perspectives that have weighed in, mark where those perspectives have tended toward convergence and divergence, and discuss how teachers and their “quality” have become positioned in the foreground of that debate. From there, I turn more directly toward the second strand and present three prominent Discourses surrounding “quality” teaching and teacher preparation. Then, moving onto the third strand, I review how the activity of learning to teach has been constructed in the literature as a most complex endeavor in order to situate my
perspective on the nature of the sense-making challenge that confronted the preservice teachers in this study.

Guided by Bakhtinian perspectives, my theoretical orientations assert that these preservice teachers potentially had to negotiate a whole host of overlapping and competing perspectives surrounding “quality” as they made sense of high-quality ELA teaching, and, as demonstrated by my research questions, one of my central aims in this work was to discern the major Discourses on quality that the preservice teachers negotiated in their processes of becoming ELA teachers. In this dissertation, I will argue that the perspective on quality generated by authoritative, policy Discourses of high-stakes accountability was particularly powerful. In the second part of this chapter, I lay the groundwork for that claim, as I review how that perspective rose to prominence. Looking ahead to Chapter Five, I employ there a critical discourse analysis of NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013)—a highly visible instantiation of accountability-driven Discourses—to uncover the assumptions, masquerading as common sense, and views on “quality” embedded therein.

Strand #1: Sociopolitical Context

Situating “quality” in a longstanding debate and need for education reform. The debate on teacher “quality” comprises one strand of a larger debate on education reform. The contested nature of that debate is engendered by a pressing need: to provide every child equitable access to quality public education. Meeting that need necessarily involves providing every child equitable access to high-quality teachers. These are generally agreed-upon points. Given the compulsory nature of schooling in the United States and the foundational role it plays in our democratic society, issues related to education, and to the quality and performance of schools and teachers in particular, have been of keen interest to a diverse and expansive range of public
and political stakeholders (Kirst, 2004). In this way, a whole host of overlapping and competing perspectives have shaped the nature of the debate for decades. To get a lay of that discursive land, I begin by briefly outlining where the range of perspectives weighing in on the debate tend to overlap.

Three broadly recurring, related themes have animated calls for education reform, and implicated teacher “quality” in the process. First, concerns for quality of schooling and student achievement have been consistently tied to concerns for the economic vitality of the United States. As Goodwin (2008) observes, “Students’ performance levels are seen as a reflection of teacher quality, competence, and preparation… Maintaining our economic edge keeps our attention on teacher quality” (p. 400). Second, calls for reform have been motivated by a pervasive struggle in this country for equal educational opportunity, and concerns for what Nieto (2000) regards as “consistently, systematically, and disproportionately unequal and unfair” (p. 181) schooling conditions for students who represent racial, ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, gender, and sexual diversities. The perspectives at play tend to agree that these inequalities are unjust, and that they must be rectified; one would be hard-pressed to argue against the need to remedy those inequalities, or the imperative that high-quality teachers be available in every child’s classroom, “regardless of their zip code.” In fact, in a cursory review of websites and media from a range of reform-based organizations seeking to eliminate educational disparities and strengthen educational quality in the name of increased equity and access, “regardless of their zip code” emerged as a recurring turn of phrase. As one example, Michelle Rhee’s organization StudentsFirst states in its mission: “We Believe: Every child, regardless of their zip code, deserves to attend a great school; all families should have quality school options available” (StudentsFirst, Our Mission, para. 5). Similarly, recruitment materials for Teach for America

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4 A Google search of “education reform” and “regardless of their zip code” yields 19,200 search results.
portray its corps membership and alumni as “working from inside and outside the field of education to ensure that all children, regardless of zip code, receive an excellent education” (Columbus Campus Teach for America, 2014).

Third, prominently featured among calls for reform has been what Ladson-Billings (2006) calls “one of the most familiar phrases in today’s education literature: the ‘achievement gap’” (p. 3). Typically, the “achievement gap” has been invoked to signify the persistent “gap” in achievement, as measured by standardized test scores, between middle-class, White students and students who are positioned outside of what counts as the racial, socioeconomic, and/or linguistic norms of whiteness, economic stability, and “standard” English. As Ladson-Billings points out, the meaning of the “achievement gap” has been agreed upon and enthusiastically embraced by political stakeholders, regardless of partisan affiliation, as evidence of the inequalities manifested in schooling and need for reform. A Washington Post article from 2009 illustrates this well: Titled “Something Gingrich, Sharpton Can Agree On: Close Education Achievement Gap,” the piece featured Newt Gingrich and Reverend Al Sharpton—the “Original Odd Couple”—sharing a stage at a D.C. rally for “closing the achievement gap” (Schulte, 2009). As another example, the National Governors’ Association (2005) called the achievement gap “one of the most pressing education-policy challenges that states currently face.”

Of significance, some scholars in the educational research community (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2006; Carter & Welner, 2013) have contested the “achievement gap” metaphor, arguing that it is limited in its ability to capture both the enduring socioeconomic effects of pervasive inequalities on historically marginalized students, as well as the complex, systemic causes that have positioned those students at a distinct disadvantage in school and society. Welner and Carter (2013), for example, favor the metaphor of the “opportunity gap” over the “achievement
gap,” contending that the “opportunity gap” frame critically attends to “key out-of-school factors such as health, housing, nutrition, safety, and enriching experiences” (p. 3) that also significantly shape children’s life chances—that is, in addition to chances enabled by quality education. The “achievement gap” frame, they note, fails to address those causes, and maintains instead a narrow focus on outputs and outcomes such as standardized test scores. Further, Welner & Carter argue that because opportunity and achievement are “very different goals” that yield different approaches to reform-based policy agendas and solutions, “a narrow focus on the achievement gap predictably leads to policies grounded in high-stakes testing, which in turn leads to narrow thinking about groups of students, their teachers, and their schools” (p. 3). A point I will develop in Chapter Eight, that critique signals the contested nature of metaphors, like the “achievement gap,” that we use to frame complex concepts. It also underscores a lesson that Lakoff and Johnson (1980) offered up long ago: the metaphors we use and “live by” matter, as they order the sense we make of complex social realities.

Indeed, it has been well established why our schools and society should be doing better to guarantee every student’s right to access quality teachers and schools in their own communities, as decades-long calls for reform have emphasized. In 1983, the Reagan administration made one of the most vociferous calls with the release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform*—a text that significantly shaped the debate on education reform and teacher quality. The report boldly announced, “… the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, p.1). That erosion, the commissioners claimed, compromised the nation’s global economic standing, as well as a “strong public commitment to the equitable treatment of our diverse population… [and to] the twin goals of
equity and high-quality schooling” (p. 14). Several years later, Jonathan Kozol’s (1991) heartbreaking bestseller *Savage Inequalities* presented American readers with an in-depth portrayal of just how unjust the inequalities are that distinguish the experiences middle-class, white students have in school from those of low-income, African-American and Latina/o students.\(^5\) Kozol’s exposé of the stark disparities in resources (e.g., experienced teachers, course selections, curricular materials, building conditions) generally afforded to well-funded suburban schools but deprived of grossly under-resourced urban schools also functioned to underscore race, ethnicity, and poverty as key variables that determine unequal schooling conditions.

Since 1991, however, little substantive progress has been made in granting all students reliable access to high-quality teachers and schools (Welner & Carter, 2013), and as the racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversities of our K-12 student population has continued on an upward trajectory, so have the inequalities. I offer just a few statistics here to contextualize that point. First, data from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (2007) suggests that English language learners (ELLs) represent the fastest growing student population in the United States; ELLs are also the population most likely to have the least-qualified teachers and attend the least-resourced schools (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). Drawing on extensive data, historical records, and qualitative inquiry, Gándara and Contreras (2009) bring those statistics to bear on their argument that the United States currently faces a “Latino education crisis” in which Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic minority but also “lagging dangerously far behind” (p. 1) in educational attainment because of a history of educational reforms and immigration policies that

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\(^5\) Discourses of education reform tend to give short shrift to students whose identities challenge norms of gender and sexuality. I pause here to recognize that omission and to contend that we must continue to push on those discourses to account for those students’ inequitable and unjust experiences in school. I return to this point in Chapter Eight.
have failed to position Latinos as able to achieve the American Dream. Second, in 2010, more than one in five children lived in poverty—the highest rate since the U.S. Census Bureau began collecting such data in 2001; 38% of African American children and 32% of Hispanic\(^6\) children lived in poverty, compared to 17% of white children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Third, in school, African American and Latino students are overrepresented in special education (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000), while affluent, white students are overrepresented in gifted and talented education (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Fourth, African American and Hispanic students are also more likely to drop out of school: in 2001, half of African American students and 53% of Hispanic students graduated from high school (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

Evidence of what Gándara and Maxwell-Jolly (2000) have called “a clear and persistent correlation between poverty, ethnicity, and the quality of education,” (p. 6) these national trends have certainly intensified the need for reform.

To summarize, the perspectives at play in the debate on education reform seem to converge around the points that rectifying the inequities manifested in the achievement gap, and creating equitable access to high-quality teachers and schools for all children are moral and economic imperatives. Despite those points of general consensus, the broad and diverse body of stakeholders invested in education reform (e.g., teachers, teacher educators, educational researchers, parents, students, local communities, policy makers, business leaders) remains divided on how to get to the other side of those well-documented savage inequalities. In the 30-year lapse since *A Nation at Risk*, there have been grand attempts at rectification exerted at the federal level (e.g., Clinton’s Goals 2000, Bush’s No Child Left Behind, Obama’s Race to the

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\(^6\) “Hispanic” and “Latina/o” are, indeed, contested terms. I use “Latina/o” to refer to individuals and groups who share cultural, familial, and geographical roots in Latin American. In 1980, the U.S. Census Bureau adopted the term “Hispanic,” so I use that term when referring to data collected by the Census Bureau. I also use “Hispanic” when it is consonant with language used by the primary source from which I am reporting data.
Top). Arguably, the most ambitious federal reform was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). NCLB set as a national goal that by 2013-14, all students, barring severe learning disabilities, reach proficiency in reading and math. Within the policy context of NCLB, proficiency is determined by a student’s scores on state-level standardized tests. Because the law afforded states control to set passing or “cut” scores that delineate what constitutes proficient and not proficient in their local contexts, there is variation across states with regard to what “proficiency” actually means. Nevertheless, the goal of 100% proficiency remains far from reach.

In 2011, most states were able to boast proficiency rates of only about 20-30% in reading and 30-40% in math (National Center for Education Statistics). As Lee and Reeves (2012) found, state-level average achievement gains in reading either declined or remained the same as they were pre-NCLB, and though there were modest achievement gains in math, the “magnitude of those cumulative achievement gains or losses in the post-NCLB period (2003–2009) was relatively small” (p. 224). According to McDermott (2007), more than a decade after the enactment of the most expansive education reform policy agenda in recent history, we have landed not far from where we were in 1983, and were again in 1991—that is, still in search of a solution that will propel us closer to the goal of providing every child access to high-quality schools and teachers, and still divided on the pathway that will get us there. Of course, NCLB, along with the federal reforms that followed in its wake, was centered on the assumption that standardized test scores function as an appropriate metric for assessing progress made toward increasing all students’ access to high-quality teachers and schools. The problematic nature of that assumption notwithstanding, the burgeoning testing machine spawned by NCLB has proven hard to disrupt, and, as Olsen and Sexton (2009) note, the policy’s failure to live up to its
established goals has made NCLB a “lightning rod for concentrated attacks, defenses, punditry, and sweeping education reforms in our country’s public schools” (p. 10). Finally, as DeLuca & Bellara (2013) point out, recently drafted federal policies such as the Blueprint for Reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) have motivated states to expand their use of large-scale standardized assessments as measures of student achievement and of teacher effectiveness, as well as technologies of public policy (i.e., technologies of domination).

**Positioning teachers and their preparation, front and center in the debate.** Given the central role that teachers play in the narrative of public schooling, perhaps it is no surprise that teachers and their preparation have been implicated in the education-reform debate as contributing to the “problem” of education. In fact, teachers’ qualifications have long been under scrutiny in the debate, and, as some scholars have argued, policies prior to NCLB aimed to “teacher-proof” (Apple, 1990) literacy curriculum and instruction through the implementation of basal readers and scripted curricula proven “effective” through scientific research (Larson & Phillips, 2006; Luke, 1987; Shannon, 1983, 2001). Currently, that scrutiny has expanded under a growing consensus that teachers matter, and that teacher “quality” must be a variable figured into the problem-solving equations imagined for rectifying injustices manifested in schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b, 2011; Wang, Odell, Klecka, Spalding, & Lin, 2010). Below, I discuss two key findings that bolster that consensus. Demonstrating that teacher quality matters—whatever we take “quality” to mean, those findings were significant insofar as they challenged longstanding, albeit grossly misguided, wisdom gleaned long ago from the Coleman Report (Coleman, 1968), which attributed variation in student achievement to differences in home and family background, and decidedly not to differences in quality of schools and teachers. In this way, those findings likewise initiated a sort of discursive turn in the debate—in the
current construction of the “problem” of education, the Discourses at play are increasingly focused on teacher “quality,” thus positioning teachers and teacher preparation front and center in the debate.

First, Darling-Hammond, Wei, and Johnson (2009) argue that in the United States, teachers are “the most inequitably distributed resource” (p. 614), a finding that has resonated in research for decades. In her well-known national study, Oakes (1990) found that among urban schools serving predominantly low-income students of color, students were far less likely to have access to the most qualified teachers; among schools with over 90% low-income students of color, students were less than 50% likely to be taught by a math or science teacher who held a degree in the field they taught. A decade later, Gándara and Maxwell-Jolly (2000) found that only one-third of the state of California’s EL population had access to a credentialed teacher. Post-NCLB, according to data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2000), 74% of classroom teachers reported having received “no recent professional development for working with ELs” (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008, p. 608). Though NCLB included a provision that attempted to guarantee every child access to credentialed, “highly-qualified” teachers, Darling-Hammond (2004) notes that disparities in equitable access to high-quality teachers are, in fact, “large and growing worse” (p. 218). Rueda and Stillman (2012) maintain that given these troubling trends, the preparation of teachers “to effectively serve ELs is of urgent concern” (p. 246).

Second, there is a growing body of research that suggests the positive impact—the “value added”—that teachers of quality have on student learning and achievement (e.g., Darling-Hammond, Beardlsey, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2005; Hanushek, 1986, 1992; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Podgursky, 2004). Stanford economist Eric Hanushek has written extensively on the matter of teacher quality (e.g., Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006, 2010; Hanushek, Rivkin, Rothstein,
Podgursky, 2004), leveraging economic frameworks to frame and analyze the issue. In a review of research on the economics of education, Hanushek (1986) found that school quality differs so “dramatically… [because of] differences in teacher ‘skills’ that defy detailed description, but that possibly can be observed directly” (p. 1142). Worth noting is Hanushek’s hedging of how aptly one might be able to identify, observe, and delineate what exactly constitutes teacher “quality.” As I will discuss below, although Hanushek’s work has been rigorously challenged by policy scholars (e.g., Baker, 2012; Betebenner, Wenning and Briggs, 2011; Briggs & Domingue, 2011), his research has had traction and impact.

To be sure, teacher quality has proved an elusive construct that defies detailed description; even among studies where the construct is taken up centrally, how it has been operationalized has varied significantly. Further muddying the waters, as Goodwin (2008) observes, the matter of quality invokes a long-contested question about who can and who should teach—a question that is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve because it “is inextricably tied to definitions and enactments of diversity, democracy, and equality, [and] brings into the foreground issues such as the representativeness of the teaching force, teacher preparation for diverse school populations, and the (un)even distribution of quality teachers across dissimilar communities” (p. 400). Despite these considerable tensions, evidence that teacher “quality” determines differences in student achievement is driving the debate’s current and intent focus on teachers. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) put it thusly:

Teacher effects appear to be sustained and cumulative; that is the effects of a very good or poor teacher spill over into later years, influencing student learning for a substantial period of time, and the effects of multiple teachers in a row who are similarly effective or ineffective produce large changes in students’ achievement trajectories. (p. 614)

Strand #2: Competing Perspectives on “Quality” Teaching and Teacher Preparation
While the pressure on districts, schools, teachers, and teacher education programs to strengthen their quality is perhaps greater than ever, what we mean by “quality” in the context of teaching and preparing teachers remains contested. “Effective,” “high quality,” and “highly qualified” are a few turns of phrase circulating through discourses weighing in on the matter. Depending on the context in which those words and phrases are used, their situated meaning changes in important ways. To illustrate these points, below, I pull through the threads of three prominent perspectives at play in the debate—competing Discourses that are engaged in a struggle of meaning to advance a particular conception of what counts as “quality” where teaching and teacher preparation are concerned. By no means is this discussion exhaustive, but what I capture below provides some context for understanding how each perspective frames “quality” and the assumptions, embedded in those views, about the kinds of knowledge, disposition, and skills that matter in determining that construct.

A policy perspective. NCLB employed the language of “highly qualified” in its provision mandating that every state establish a protocol with which to guarantee every child access to “a highly-qualified teacher.” The Department of Education (DOE) clarified that in order for a teacher to be “highly qualified,” she must: 1) hold a bachelor’s degree; 2) be fully certified, as per state-certification requirements; and 3) demonstrate competency, as defined by the state, in each core subject she teaches. Still, the DOE concedes, “There is much confusion about exactly what NCLB’s highly-qualified teacher provisions include and what they mean for individual teachers” (“NCLB: A Toolkit for Teachers,” 2009, para. 1). Contributing to the confusion are the allowance NCLB gave for state and local control, as well as different sets of expectations, requirements, and timelines for teachers to demonstrate their compliance with the law’s provision. Those expectations vary depending on when teachers were hired, where they
teach (e.g., more time was allotted to teachers in small rural districts while teachers in Title I schools were required to demonstrate immediate compliance with the law), and how many core subjects they teach. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) describe the provision as “historic,” in part because it targeted students and communities who are the least likely to have access to the most qualified teachers, but they also take note of how the law invited states to stimulate growth of alternative certification programs and count candidates of those programs as “highly qualified.” States took up that invitation in different ways—some have made more rigorous teacher certification requirements while others have altogether eliminated requirements for pedagogical preparation, in essence contributing to the ambiguity regarding how “highly qualified” should be practically interpreted. In short, the provision’s loosely outlined criteria of “highly qualified” has raised more questions regarding how teachers’ characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, number years of classroom experience), dispositions, and skills should be considered in the question of what counts as “quality.” In the context of NCLB’s perspective on “quality,” what matters above all is that teachers can demonstrate a particular level of subject-matter knowledge—via a passable score on a state-approved standardized test—of the core subject(s) she teaches (Kaplan & Owings, 2003; Michelli, 2004; Wiseman, 2012).

**Perspectives from teacher education.** Next, as a point of contrast to the policy perspective outlined above, I turn to perspectives from the field of teacher education and their shared emphasis on the need to prepare teachers for diversity. These perspectives tend to agree that positioning teachers to be effective with diverse populations involves helping them develop a toolkit of practical and conceptual tools (e.g., democratic dispositions, sociocultural consciousness, culturally responsive pedagogy, critical literacy) for supporting diverse learners’ success in the classroom. For example, there is an expansive body of literature that supports the
benefits for diverse students—the same students that rationales for education reform tend to
target—of preparing teachers with knowledge and practice in culturally relevant (Ladson-
Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogies (e.g., Banks, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 1997;
Rosebery, Warren, & Conant, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Importantly, however, even within
this Discourse, there are also competing perspectives at play with regard to how best to prepare
teachers (i.e., with which tools teachers should be equipped) to teach in a diverse society. Paris
(2012), for example, provides a useful, critical discussion of these contrasting perspectives and
offers “culturally sustaining pedagogy” as an alternative to culturally responsive and culturally
relevant pedagogies. These scholars emphasize the importance of preparing teachers to attend
critically to how culture mediates learning in concert with challenges that accompany the
diversity differences that have historically separated teachers and their students. Moreover, these
scholars have recently made calls for a “re-mixing” (Ladson-Billings, 2014) of D/discourses, and
specifically of the D/discourse of culturally responsive pedagogy, that have a history of traction
in the field (e.g., McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Discourses of teacher education tend to recognize those diversity differences as crucially
meaningful. Focusing on the racial and ethnic dimensions of those differences, Sleeter (2008)
notes that while diversity among K-12 students continues to blossom, diversity among the
teaching force literally pales in comparison: less than 16% of teachers are of color—a stark
contrast to the 42% of K-12 students of color. As the majority of teachers in the United States are
White, middle-class, monolingual, heterosexual people who identify as women, their experiences
in schools and communities are relatively homogenous compared to the diversity of experiences
and backgrounds shared among K-12 students. The consequence of that homogeneity, Sleeter
explains, is that those teachers enter teacher education without well-developed frameworks “for
understanding visible inequalities other than the dominant deficit framework” (2008, p. 560). As such, Sleeter and myriad other scholars argue that preservice teachers must be equipped with coherent, critically-oriented, and culturally responsive pedagogical preparation in order to teach across differences and to support the academic, social, and emotional well-being of all students.

That argument can be traced across professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and accrediting organizations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, now CAEP⁷), which have constructed guidelines that delineate “dispositions for effective English Language Arts Teachers” (NCTE, 2006), in the case of the former, and professional standards of quality for university-based teacher education programs, in the case of the latter. While these organizations’ guidelines and standards articulate quite detailed and comprehensive visions for what constitutes quality and effectiveness with regard to ELA teachers and their teacher preparation, both NCTE and NCATE place considerable emphasis on valuing diversity as a crucial disposition of “effective” teachers. Within NCATE’s framework, for example, Unit Standard 4, titled “Diversity,” assesses how well programs prepare teacher candidates with “the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn… [and] demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity” (Unit Standards in Effect 2008, Overview). In order to meet that standard at the “Target” level, programs must demonstrate, for example, that “candidates learn to contextualize teaching and draw effectively on representations from the students’ own experiences and cultures” (CAEP Standard 4a. Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Curriculum and

⁷ While NCATE’s transition to CAEP is well underway, I draw on NCATE Standards here instead of CAEP Standards, because most institutions, including the teacher education program that was part of this study’s research context, are still being accredited according to NCATE’s framework. As CAEP clarifies, “After release of the revised CAEP Standards in 2013, there will be a transition period during which programs… would continue to have the option to use NCATE or TEAC standards. CAEP standards will become the norm as early as spring 2016” (CAEP, Transition Q&A).
Experiences). While NCATE’s Standards make no explicit mention of culturally responsive methods of teaching, in order for candidates to demonstrate proficiency in the above standard, they arguably must have developed knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.

But, of course, this terrain is fraught, too. Some perspectives in teacher education press the field to continue to move toward embracing social justice as a critical personal and professional disposition to cultivate in the preparation of quality ELA teachers (e.g., Apple, 2006; Ayers, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1999; Miller & Kirkland, 2010; Morrell, 2005). As Alsup and Miller (2014) note, the tenet of social justice, which has gained traction in English education in the last few decades, is a controversial issue in the field. As evidence of that controversy, Alsup & Miller point to NCATE’s removal of social justice “as an explicit performance indicator for assessing teacher dispositions” (p. 196), and replacement of a more generic, “politically comfortable” emphasis on diversity and cultural and linguistic awareness. Of note, the authors indicate that NCATE’s removal of social justice was influenced by the rhetoric of NCLB, which employs language practices that construct the responsibilities of teachers in seemingly politically neutral terms.

**Perspective #3: A public perspective.** Using the medium of film to weigh in on the education-reform debate, Davis Guggenheim, director of the highest-grossing documentary of 2010, *Waiting for Superman: How We Can Save America’s Public Schools*, squarely implicated teachers in his construction of the “problem” of education. To make that move, Guggenheim prominently featured the perspective of economist Eric Hanushek (recall that Hanushek leverages economic frameworks to analyze and discuss the matter of teacher quality). In this way, Guggenheim also situated his film’s narrative in a particular perspective on teacher
“quality.” In a companion text to the film, Hanushek (2010) authored a chapter in which he claims that “the difference” in achievement outcome disparities between middle-class white students and low-income students of color “is great teachers.” After conceding that the features that distinguish “good” teachers are hard to identify and measure, Hanushek argues,

> From this new perspective, a good teacher is one who consistently evokes large gains in student learning, while a poor teacher is one who consistently gets small gains in student learning. In other words, the quality of a teacher is best judged by performance in the classroom as reflected in the gains in learning by the students. (p. 84)

This “new perspective” employs the language of “effectiveness” to signify a very particular, situated meaning of teacher quality: in this context of use, “quality” teaching is that which raises achievement scores on standardized tests. This perspective has risen to considerable prominence in the education reform debate, and the policy arena in particular. Currently, there is a burgeoning arm of research aimed at devising statistical models capable of assessing with some measure of precision the “value” a teacher adds to student learning as measured by achievement outcomes on standardized tests. Though the reliability of value-added models is still highly variable (Darling-Hammond, 2011)—as one example, Briggs and Domingue (2011) found that “teachers’ measured effectiveness” varies significantly when different statistical models are used—at present, they are informing the design of state- and federal-level, accountability-driven reform policies (e.g., Obama’s Race to the Top; one state’s Great Teachers and Leaders Bill) aimed at strengthening educational quality.

**Perspectives on Preparing “Quality” Teachers: Does Teacher Preparation Matter?**

These competing perspectives also posit different conceptions of what it means to prepare high-quality teachers, and thus of what matters in learning to teach. Currently, these contrasting conceptions are well captured by two broad, competing national agendas: the agenda to professionalize teachers and teacher education and the agenda to deregulate teacher preparation.
Before I elaborate the contrasting features of those agendas, I pause to clarify what I mean by the phrase “learning to teach” and to situate myself among these competing perspectives. Here, I mean to employ that phrase as it has been used in the literature (see Borko & Putnam, 1996; Carter, 1990) that has documented the nature of process, the challenges involved, and range of outcomes of learning to teach a particular subject, like the ELA, in preservice teacher preparation. I draw on Lampert’s (2010) notion of learning in “learning to teach” as “whatever one does to get better at that work” (p. 1). In this study, I situate myself within those perspectives that view teaching as complex and intricate work (e.g., Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Sykes, Bird, & Kennedy, 2010). Teaching involves holding multiple and often conflicting goals simultaneously, and a high-quality teacher is a skilled negotiator of such conflict (Lampert, 2001). She is able to decide which goal to embrace to support student learning given the unique circumstances of the context in which she is teaching at a particular moment in time. Furthermore, I conceptualize both the work and learning the work as being discipline- and subject-specific. That is, as I discuss below, the work of a teacher of the school subject of the ELA is mediated by her formal knowledge of the discipline of English as much as it is mediated by her pedagogical knowledge of adolescent learners, of diverse learners, of curricular materials and methods for teaching the ELA, as well as by her previous experiences and beliefs about the nature and purpose of schooling and of ELA instruction.

**Professionalization Agenda.** The perspectives discussed above on what “quality” might mean in the work of learning to teach are reflective of the professionalization agenda that, as Cochran-Smith & Fries (2001) note, is led by Linda Darling-Hammond and tied to the K-12 standards movement and professional organizations such as NCATE and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Briefly, this agenda “advocate[s] standards-based teacher
preparation and professional development as well as teacher assessments based on performance across the professional lifespan” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 3). From this vantage point, learning to teach is understood as an activity rarely mastered upon receipt of licensure, as it continues to unfold as novice teachers move into the field and confront new sets of challenges. Proponents of professionalization (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Shulman, 1998; Stigler & Thomas, 2009) contend that university-based teacher education “matters” (Darling-Hammond, 2000b), as it plays a crucial mediating role in developing the necessary knowledge, dispositions, and skills of high-quality teachers.

**Deregulation Agenda.** In contrast, proponents of deregulation (e.g., Ballou & Podgursky, 1999; Fordham Foundation, 1999; Hess, 2009; Pogursky, 2004) call for the “dismantling” of university-based teacher education and opening of alternative pathways into the classroom (e.g., alternative certification programs). From this vantage point, teacher licensure requirements are understood as an imposition of excessive restrictions and undue cost that potentially limit the best and brightest from entering the field. Simply put, deregulationists advocate eliminating licensure requirements altogether. Cochran-Smith & Fries summarize the agenda’s argument in this way: To strengthen the quality of teaching, deregulationists assert that “what schools need more than anything else is the freedom and flexibility to open their doors and thus recruit, hire, and keep all teachers who can ‘up’ students’ test scores regardless of their credentials (or lack thereof). From this perspective, the ‘free market’ represents the ultimate ‘freedom’ for American society” (p. 10). NCTQ’s *Teacher Prep Review* demonstrates this argument well, as I will illustrate in Chapter Five. To bolster that argument, proponents of the deregulationist agenda point to what they interpret as weak evidence of the efficacy of university-based teacher education. The Fordham Foundation (1999) put it this way:
We are struck by the paucity of evidence linking inputs [courses taken, requirements met, time spent, and activities engaged in] with actual teacher effectiveness. In a meta-analysis of close to four hundred studies of the effect of various school resources on pupil achievement, very little connection was found between the degrees teachers had earned or the experience they possessed and how much their students learned. (p. 18)

**Teachers’ specialized knowledge and an argument for professionalization.** Cochran-Smith & Fries observe that these two agendas are embroiled in a battle to establish the “evidentiary warrant” that will give greater credence to their respective arguments for/against teacher education as a necessary component of preparing high-quality teachers. In so doing, they argue, each agenda has constructed its case “as if it were neutral, a-political, and value-free, based solely on the empirical and certified facts of the matter and not embedded within or related to a particular agenda that is political or ideological” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 6).

Constructing the case for/against teacher education in this way is problematic insofar as these agendas are necessarily tied to particular ideological positions—invoking my earlier discussion of what Britzman called the “politics of education.” Cochran-Smith & Fries call on each agenda to be explicit in naming the assumptions and values that motivate their arguments. In the spirit of such disclosure, then, I situate my perspective on preparing “quality” teachers in the professionalization agenda and render explicit my assumption that teacher education does, indeed, matter. To situate that view, I turn to a brief review of the role that “pedagogical content knowledge” (Shulman, 1986; PCK) has played in the literature on learning to teach.

PCK refers to a special kind of discipline-informed knowledge that only teachers develop. As a domain of teachers’ knowledge, it is a sort of synergistic space in which the teacher weaves together her disciplinary knowledge of content with her knowledge of her students’ backgrounds and of her students’ understandings (and plausible misunderstandings) given the content to be taught, to then represent that content knowledge in a form that will
organize students toward meaningful engagement and conceptual understandings. Shulman’s construct of PCK changed the way educational researchers studied and conceived of the work involved in high-quality teaching and learning to teach. Shulman (1986) looked to the artifacts of a century’s worth of examinations of teachers entering the profession to identify how teachers’ knowledge was being defined. In 90 to 95% of the exams he reviewed, the material was on content (i.e., the subject matter to be taught or the knowledge base assumed to be needed by teachers of a particular subject), indicating that the assumption about teachers’ knowledge on which these exams rested was that subject matter knowledge was paramount in learning to teach. When contrasting these artifacts from a previous era to the examinations commonly used in the 1980s, the difference was stark. Shulman observed that subject matter was so noticeably absent, not only from the contemporary examinations, which appeared to be no more than tests of basic competencies (e.g., the three R’s: reading, writing, and arithmetic), but also from the discourse of researchers and policy makers alike, that he called this glaring omission the “missing paradigm.” Wilson (2004) explains that in the decades prior to the 1980s, and well into the 1980s too, educational psychologists led the march of educational research. She calls their approach to inquiring into issues of teaching and learning a generic one, as they conceptualized teaching generically, without consideration of nuances brought by different subjects and content areas. Within these generic conceptions, teaching was teaching, regardless of if the subject taught was biology, algebra, or world literature, and so subject matter, if mentioned at all, was treated in this research as little more than ancillary detail.

Returning to the contested question, Does teacher education matter?, I assert PCK as one plausible explanation that can be leveraged to answer that question with an affirmative and declarative yes. Subject-specific coursework in university-based teacher education, for example,
affords candidates opportunities to develop this specialized knowledge. In the 1980s, Grossman (1989) conducted a well-known study of three beginning secondary ELA teachers who entered teaching equipped with strong content knowledge (e.g., knowledge of literature), but without any formal teacher preparation. For these teachers, PCK was the missing variable, and Grossman inquired into how well these teachers were able to transform their disciplinary knowledge into pedagogically rich instructional material. She found that “without formal systems for induction into teaching, learning to teach is left largely to chance” (p. 205). That is to say, without reservoirs of PCK to draw on, the novices in Grossman’s study struggled to understand the importance of careful instructional planning, and lacked methods and tools to facilitate such planning when they finally recognized its value; to imagine teaching students unlike themselves; and to confront their own assumptions and biases about students who stood outside their imagined “ideal.” Grossman concludes that these findings focus attention on the problems of learning to teach from experience alone, without the benefit of the frameworks, vocabulary, or assumptions embedded within teacher education. While subject-matter knowledge, good character, and the inclination to teach are important characteristics of beginning teachers, they do not necessarily lead to a pedagogical understanding of subject matter nor to a theoretical understanding of how students learn a particular subject. (p. 207)

Recalling Duncan’s perspective that opened this dissertation (i.e., that quality teaching amounts to “common sense,” “basic teaching technique”), this bit of historical perspective is illuminating. At issue here is a conception of teachers’ knowledge as specialized, much as the knowledge of doctors, lawyers, accountants, and other professionals is specialized. Shulman’s contribution of a specialized type of teachers’ knowledge worked to discredit theories that good teachers are born, not made; that teaching is largely intuitive, idiosyncratic, and learned through experience. It also worked to lift up the teacher’s status to that of a professional—one who has a unique kind of knowledge that others, even those in discipline-related fields, do not. Indeed, the
concept of PCK, or that “special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8), was a significant advancement, and in the last three decades, PCK has remained a well-researched and key idea in teacher education.

Strand #3: Perspectives on the Sense-Making Challenge of Learning to Teach

Turning now toward the third strand, I extend the above discussion and situate my view on learning to teach as a complex endeavor in perspectives from the learning-to-teach literature. My goal here is to establish the nature of the sense-making challenge that the preservice teachers confronted in learning to teach. In the final part of this chapter, I will add another layer of complexity—that is, the particularly powerful, but narrow perspective on “quality”—to the sense-making challenge at play.

Learning to Teach as a Complex Endeavor

Overcoming the apprenticeship of observation. The learning-to-teach literature emphasizes that learning to teach is a cognitively demanding, complex, and even an “unnatural” (Ball & Forzani, 2009) process. This is a reality made more complicated by the common perception that teaching looks easy. Labaree (2004) treats this perception as the central problem of preparing teachers, and he chalks it up to the many years candidates spend in classrooms before they set their sights on securing a teaching credential. This phenomenon, what Lortie (1975) called the “apprenticeship of observation,” is unique to teaching because unlike other professionals, preservice teachers enter their professional preparation having had at minimum 18 or so years of experience observing and interacting with teachers in classroom settings. From this apprenticeship, preservice teachers develop hard-to-disrupt beliefs about teaching, and tied up in these beliefs is the notion that one comes to know quite a bit about teaching just from being a
student. What Labaree astutely notes, however, is that the apprenticeship of observation affords students only a one-sided view of teaching. That is, “what students don’t see is the thinking that preceded the teacher’s action, the alternatives she considered, the strategic plan within which she located the action, or the aims she sought to accomplish by means of that action” (p. 58). The other side of teaching that involves reasoning, judgment, and “unnatural” thinking is what candidates have to learn in teacher education, but because they already have well-formed beliefs about teaching, and because these existing beliefs filter future learning (a point I will elaborate in the next section), preservice teachers often resist concepts and ideas about teaching and learning that they encounter in their preparation (Grossman, 1991).

**Teaching as complex work.** Related to the complexity of teaching, the learning-to-teach literature has also demonstrated how preservice teachers have difficulty managing the complexity in the moment of learning to teach. This has been attributed to a few different aspects of teacher preparation. Smagorinsky, Cook, and Johnson (2003), for instance, point to the theory-practice divide that public and political discourses tend to invoke in their critiques of teacher education as too theoretical and idealistic. As exacerbating the divide, those authors implicate the long-standing tradition of university professors’ valuing of their formal, disciplinary knowledge and expertise above the wisdom of practice that also shapes teachers’ actions and beliefs inside the classroom. Ultimately, they reject the theory-practice divide as a polarizing dichotomy that precludes teacher education’s conceptualization and realization of the possibilities of a Vygotskian framework in which theory and practice share a dialectical relationship and are mutually influential—not mutually exclusive—in fostering concept development and rich thinking as opposed to mere knowledge acquired. They argue that such integrated frameworks
are crucial for helping novices navigate the “twisting path” of concept development (Vygotosky, 1987, p. 156) and to move toward conceptual coherence in learning to teach.

As another example, Clift and Brady (2005) note in their review of research on methods courses and field experiences that preservice teachers often get conflicting messages about teaching and learning as they move from the university to the classroom (and even as they move across courses within the same university-based teacher education program), and this can result in confusion and frustration. They offer the example of one preservice teacher motivated to implement a writer’s workshop approach, which was supported by her university coursework, in her student teaching. The approach was not well supported by the culture of the school in which she was placed, and she began to worry that she would not be able to find a job if she adhered to such progressive instructional approaches because of their mismatch with what she was observing being common practice in schools. She struggled to negotiate these conflicting messages and the workload demands of the workshop approach, and ended up aligning herself with the culture of the school.

Those findings resonate with Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Johnson, & Fry’s (2004) findings from a study that documented the case of novice ELA teacher Sharon as she moved from a university setting in which a progressive Discourse of constructivism was emphasized, to a local classroom setting for student teaching in which her cooperating teacher modeled a more “traditional” pedagogy. At the university, how the concept of constructivism was interpreted and enacted by individual faculty and instructors in coursework varied, which sometimes caused confusion among the preservice teachers. Sharon was encouraged by neither the local school setting nor the cooperating teacher to try out a constructivist pedagogy, and she resisted enacting that Discourse of her teacher preparation in her student teaching. However, when, as a first-year
teacher, she found herself at a school that embraced constructivist ways of being and doing in the ELA classroom, she returned to the Discourse of her teacher preparation and integrated it into her classroom practice.

Other researchers (e.g., Borko & Eisenhart, 1992; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) have also made the case that schools of education tend toward progressive pedagogies (e.g., constructivist learning, student-centered teaching, teaching for social justice) that are in stark contrast to the traditional, conservative pedagogies (e.g., teacher-centered methods, transmission of knowledge) of local schools. As Borko & Eisenhart found, this invites a sort of cognitive dissonance as preservice teachers move across contexts, but if this dissonance is not well mediated (that is, if candidates don’t have support in working through their confusion), they often struggle to negotiate the dissonance and, as illustrated by the above example, gravitate towards the culture and practices of the school in which they work (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999).

Finally, Jones & Enriquez (2009) conducted a four-year qualitative study of two graduate student preservice teachers’ trajectories of becoming particular kinds of literacy teachers. Those authors found that as the novices moved from their teacher education program, which foregrounded a Discourse of critical literacy, and into the elementary schools in their first years of teaching, the ways in which they appropriated, and also resisted, the Discourse of their preparation were hard to predict and challenged traditional notions of who might have been better positioned to become a critical literacy educator. Their processes of negotiation were shaped in complex ways by their personal, social, and political experiences, as well as by their formal experiences in teacher preparation. Pointing to the unexpected ways in which those two novices’ negotiated the Discourse of their teacher education, Jones & Enriquez argue for teacher
educators to see the “dynamic processes” that novices engage in learning to teach for social justice, and to see their preservice teachers as “complex beings negotiating various spheres of their past, present, and future lives and trying to how and whether to integrate an intellectual and moral stance toward social justice” (p. 149). These findings resonate with what I will share in Chapter Seven, as the novice participants in this study likewise engaged dynamic, moral processes of negotiating “quality” and “effectiveness” in learning to teach.

Examples like these further support the notion that teachers’ knowledge is constituted by a complex, interrelated set of knowledge domains (e.g., knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of content, knowledge of context) that intersect in still unknown ways (Grossman, 1995).

Conflicting findings and implications for how teachers should be prepared. The complexity of learning to teach has led researchers to interpret findings differently, to offer divergent perspectives for how teachers learn, and to suggest contrasting pedagogical implications of these findings for the conduct of teacher preparation. Two decades ago, in a review of research on learning to teach, Kagan (1992) infers from the studies she reviewed a stage model of development. In her model, preservice teachers move through a series of stages in which they first turn inward to develop a positive image of self as teacher, then gradually turn outward to focus the procedures of classroom teaching, and finally turn toward understanding students and how they learn. Because of this intense desire to focus on constructing a positive self-image, she argues that teacher education should “capitaliz[e] on the naturally occurring processes and stages” (p. 162) of preservice teacher learning and growth by helping them tap into their own autobiographies as learners first and foremost, and by providing them with procedural and practical, as opposed to theoretical, knowledge. In Kagan’s model, preservice teachers aren’t developmentally ready to grapple with theoretical knowledge because their primary concerns are
with “survival” in the classroom. As such, what they need most in teacher preparation is knowledge of procedures such as how to manage a class and how to transition between activities.

In that same period, Hollingsworth (1989), whose work informed Kagan’s argument, similarly argued for teacher educators to reduce the complexity of teaching demands by isolating particular tasks of teaching to accommodate preservice teacher learning. For example, students would get “extensive and comprehensive” attention to management skills before learning subject-specific pedagogies. Other researchers, both at that time and more recently (e.g., Grossman, 1992; Munby et al., 2001), argue, however, that reducing the complexity of teaching is not productive for preservice teachers because of the rich complexity they will inevitably encounter as they move into schools and classrooms. Responding to Kagan’s argument, Grossman (1992) points to Kagan’s flawed methods in reviewing the learning to teach literature, namely her exclusion of Shulman's Knowledge Growth in a Profession work (Grossman & Richert, 1988; Shulman, 1986, 1987) and the work on Knowledge Utilization in Learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). She argued these were glaring omissions that would have shifted the final argument. Thus, Grossman refutes Kagan’s stage model of development and resulting pedagogical implications that favor reduction of theoretical knowledge on the grounds that it is too complex for preservice teachers to handle. As she writes, “Teacher education can also help raise the questions regarding ethical and moral issues that will not necessarily arise from experience alone but which will frame how prospective teachers think about and continue to learn from their work in classrooms. I do not believe that prospective teachers are incapable of this challenge” (p. 176).

Grossman’s argument continues to echo through recent scholarship in teacher education (e.g., DiPardo, Staley, Selland, Martin, Gniewick, 2013; Jones, 2010; Smagorinsky, Cook,
Moore, Jackson, & Frye, 2004; Stillman, 2011). For instance, DiPardo et al. (2013) contend that preservice teachers can (and should) grapple with contradictions, ambiguity, theory, and moral and ethical concerns related to teaching, as crucial to fostering their capacities as agentic, problem-solving, critical-minded professionals. I will return to this idea in the final chapter of this dissertation.

In the remaining section of this chapter, which follows below, I detail the rise to prominence of a particular conception of “quality” teaching and consider how it has exacerbated the sense-making challenge of learning to teach in these times of acute accountability.

**The Era of Acute Accountability: A Single Perspective Rises to Prominence**

* A nation at risk and the rise of a new educational paradigm. 2011 marked a decade’s passage since NCLB instantiated what I have been calling the era of “acute accountability” in education. Two features have distinguished the era: first, the subjection of schools, teachers, and students to unprecedented levels of strict scrutiny by state and federal governments, as well as the public at large; second, the proliferation of accountability-driven policy reforms. Working in tandem, those features have contributed to the transformation of public education, but as Jal Mehta (2013) contends, the education reform policies alone were not responsible for that transformation; rather, standards-based and accountability-driven policies like NCLB were the “culmination” of changes that had been building since 1980. Drawing on findings from extensive archival research, Mehta provides a compelling argument that the catalyst for transformation of the educational policy landscape was a paradigm shift initiated by the Reagan administration’s (1983) release of *A Nation at Risk*. Resonating deeply with diverse constituencies, the document functioned to organize a new policy agenda and to solidify a “powerful educational paradigm” that has driven school reform for the last quarter century (p. 286). Mehta argues that key to the *A
Nation at Risk paradigm taking successful and powerful hold was its assertion of a new “problem definition” in education. Taking advantage of a perceived decline in the quality of American education, as well as an economic shift in which a skilled workforce was becoming an increasingly valued commodity, the architects of A Nation at Risk effectively linked the so-called problem of education to the economic vitality of individuals, states, and the nation. What’s more, they framed as imperative the need for an educational reform agenda that could at once improve schools’ performance and also prepare the next generation of workers for the economy’s shifting demands in the service of boosting America’s standing in the global economy.

Drawing on Kuhn’s (1962) definition, Pajares (1998) describes paradigms as “consist[ing] of basic and incontrovertible assumptions” about the nature of things (p. 31). Paradigms become powerful—even transformative, as Mehta argues—when the assumptions embedded in them are widely embraced by stakeholders. Included among the basic assumptions of A Nation at Risk’s problem definition were a presumed link between educational quality and national economic prosperity; the belief that schools, rather than society, should be held accountable for improving their performance; and the belief that school accountability should be managed by the state and federal government (Mehta, 2013). That problem definition, Mehta contends, was imbued with power as it found resonance with political actors. In this case, those political actors were state governors—Republicans and Democrats alike—who lined up to support the paradigm alongside interest groups and business leaders who shared similar concerns about the shifting economy. Those diverse stakeholders converged to form a broad but powerful base of support for an educational policy agenda that could serve their economic interests, while also raising expectations for educational quality. Driving that policy agenda was the design of new sets of state- and national-level goals and objectives for education. At the heart of those
goals and objectives were accountability-driven and standards-based policy reforms designed to put into practice a system of checks on how well schools were preparing the next generation of workers. NCLB took those reforms to massive scale. But, sweeping education reform legislation was not the only consequence of the *A Nation at Risk* paradigm shift; the nature of the discourse of education and education reform also shifted in consequential ways.

**A shifting discursive landscape and the rise of a neoliberal agenda.** Mehta suggests that the *A Nation at Risk* paradigm was so impactful that it “change[d] the nature of the debate”—that is, it changed the nature of public and political discourse on education, educational quality, and education reform. In the United States, local control had traditionally reigned supreme (Ryan, 2004); in fact, before *A Nation at Risk* was published, Reagan had been seeking to dismantle the Department of Education altogether. Under the “reign” of the *A Nation at Risk* paradigm, however, “more powerful political actors have entered the domain; interest groups have shifted to embrace the new paradigm; critics out of step with the paradigm have been rhetorically marginalized; and the venue in which education policy is discussed has shifted upwards…” (Mehta, 2013, p. 286).

The rhetorical tenor of the debate facilitated the shifting “upwards” of education decision-making from local to national contexts. A much-critiqued feature of *A Nation at Risk* has been the authors’ use of garish rhetoric to construct a sense of crisis around public education (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). In the report, the commissioners employed war imagery and metaphor to suggest that the nation has brought upon itself an act of “unilateral educational disarmament,” and that the United States was, indeed, “at risk” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, p.1). Berliner and Biddle (1995) emphasize that “never before” had such rhetoric about education flowed from the federal government (p. 140). Framed as an “open letter to the
American public,” *A Nation at Risk* marked the first time that many Americans had heard public education was “truly” failing. Though some concerns raised in the report were valid, Berliner & Biddle indicate that “they also reflected the blossoming of conservative ideologies then underway,” which, echoing Mehta, were “concern[ed] about an economic crisis thought to be pending for American business, coupled with a belief that this crisis was linked to changes needed in education” (p. 140). In short, the rhetorically constructed sense of urgency and crisis in *A Nation at Risk* at once garnered public support for the sweeping education reform policies that would come to pass in the era of acute accountability, while also opening the door for a grand convergence of pro-business interests and conservative agendas to enter the debate. Mehta called this convergence a shifting of interest groups, and Berliner & Biddle capture it as “the blossoming of conservative ideologies” (p. 141). As Apple (1997) explains:

> The panic over falling standards, dropouts, and illiteracy; the fear of violence in schools; and the concern over the destruction of family values and religiosity… These fears are exacerbated, and used, by dominant groups within politics and the economy who have been able to shift the debate on education (and all things social) onto their own terrain—the terrain of traditionalism, standardization, productivity, marketization, and industrial needs. Because so many parents are justifiably concerned about the economic and cultural futures of their children… rightist discourse connects with the experiences of many working-class and middle-class people. (p. 169)

There is a growing body of critical literature arguing that this convergence of discourses was symbolic of a “conservative turn” (Apple, 1997) in educational policy, and marked the rise of a neoliberal agenda in education (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Gabbard & Atkinson, 2007; Kumashiro, 2011; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007; Sleeter, 2008; Tuinamuana, 2011; Zeichner, 2010). Briefly, Duggan (2003) explains that neoliberalism evolved from 17th-century, classical liberalism that promoted free markets, individual freedoms, and small government, and over the years it has “morphed” and adapted in response to changing cultural politics. In the 1970s, neoliberalism’s shape-shifting nature responded to concerns, detailed above, for global
competition, corporate interests, and falling profits, as well as to conservative critiques of New Deal- and Great Society-era, progressive social reforms. Duggan contends that this “pro-business activism” provided “the foundation for late-twentieth century neoliberalism” (p. xi), which has been driven by an agenda that seeks upward redistribution of wealth and resources and “shrinking” public institutions in favor of expanding privatizing interests. In this way, neoliberalism is neither a stable nor unitary discourse, but rather an amalgamation of multiple, overlapping, and, at times, contradictory discourses, practices, and relations, of which conservative, rightist, and neoconservative perspectives and interests are a part.

**Considering the Implications of a Shifting Discursive Landscape for Teacher Education**

In an article on equity, diversity, and “neoliberal assaults,” Sleeter (2008b) posed this question: “What does this have to do with teacher education?” (p. 1948). Her question resonated for me as my data revealed the presence of acute accountability as a prominent Discourse preservice teachers were navigating in relation to what counted as “quality” teaching. Scholarship in policy and teacher education points to three connections between the rise of neoliberalism and teacher education. First, scholars have connected the rise of neoliberal discourses in the education reform debate with several significant, patterned changes in the education policy landscape, including: greater interests and moves toward privatization of schools through the expansion of charter school networks (Barber, 2004), increased surveillance of schools and teachers through an expansion of the high-stakes testing machine and accountability systems they engender (Kumashiro, 2010), narrowing of the curriculum in the name of “achievement” (McNeil, 2000), and a move to deprofessionalize teachers and dismantle teacher education altogether (Kumashiro, 2010; Sleeter, 2008b; Zeichner, 2010). Second, as I will elaborate in chapter three, the changing policy landscape in which university-based teacher preparation programs are situated has shifted as well (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). More and
more, they are being confronted with excessive accountability measures ordered by state and national accreditation systems such as the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ), and are the subject of much public and political fervor. Though it is important to have some reasonable accountability measures in place to be able to assess these programs, Zeichner notes a trend toward growing support for extreme measures such as the “positive impact mandate” (Hamel & Merz, 2005). This mandate evaluates teacher preparation programs based on the standardized test scores of students of their recent graduates. As reasons why such extreme evaluative measures are unwise, Zeichner points to serious technical issues (e.g., manipulation of data due to statistical method) with value-added assessments such as the positive impact mandate, as well as the consequences of footing the financial bill for such a costly evaluation system in a climate marked by a steady defunding of public institutions of higher education.

Third, high-stakes education reform has changed the face of public education, shifting the way teachers conceive of and approach their work. As discussed in Chapter Two, McCarthey (2008) studied how NCLB impacted the English teachers’ attitudes toward writing instruction in both high- and low-income schools. In her review of literature, she cites studies that confirm negative effects of NCLB on teachers of all subjects (see Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Valli & Buese, 2007). As the level of control imposed on them from external authorities and accountability systems grew, teachers experienced increasing levels of stress, ailing relationships with students, decreased motivation, a narrowing of the curricula, and no overall improvement in job performance. In her own study, McCarthey found that regardless of setting (e.g., high- or low-income school), 16 of the 18 participating teachers reported the presence of high-stakes testing as part of their lived reality, though teachers in low-income schools reported far greater pressure and degree of impact. Teachers in low-income schools were also far more likely to use
prepackaged or scripted curricula, and among teachers in high-income schools using a genre-based approach to writing instruction, there was a trend toward highly-structured, prompt-based writing that aligned with state tests.

There is less research available documenting how Discourses of high-stakes education reform and accountability have impressed preservice teachers of the ELA and the nature of their preparation in teacher education in their negotiations of quality and effectiveness. For example, the field needs to better understand how the sociopolitical climate has influenced how teacher educators approach their work in teacher preparation, or how preservice teachers make sense of the work of highly qualified teachers of the ELA in these times of acute accountability and my study was designed in part to fill that void. But, given the demands on schools to make annual yearly progress in order to continue receiving federal funds, the demands on teachers to demonstrate their effectiveness via student achievement scores on standardized tests (Smith, 2004), and the documented influence that cooperating teachers and school environments have on preservice teachers learning teaching in clinical field experiences (Anderson & Stillman, 2013), it is perhaps not unreasonable that the constraints and negative consequences of acute accountability experienced by teachers and schools have likewise impacted preservice teachers’ emerging understandings that will guide them in their first years of in-service teaching.

In this chapter, I have situated in sociohistorical and sociopolitical context the education-reform debate, in which the contested matter of “quality” teaching and teacher preparation has been positioned in the foreground. I reviewed prominent, competing perspectives weighing in on that debate, and situated my own perspective among those that frame learning to teach as an personally, intellectually, and morally complex endeavor. I also traced the rise to prominence of
a single perspective on education reform that currently drives the debate. In the next chapter, I elaborate this study’s methodology.
Chapter Four
Methodology

In this study, I sought to understand how preservice teachers made sense in the face of multiple and often competing Discourses about “quality” ELA teaching. I focused my inquiry and analysis on two prominent Discourses: first, Discourses of high-stakes education reform, accountability, and achievement that were producing narrow conceptions of what counts as quality and exercising great power in the contexts in which the novices were learning to teach; and, second, Discourses of “quality” ELA teaching they encountered in their TEP. In this chapter, I discuss the interpretive (Erickson, 1986) and D/discourse analytic methods (Gee, 2011a, 2011b) I used to document and analyze the preservice teachers’ negotiations of competing Discourses as they made sense of quality ELA teaching in one local context of learning to teach, as well as to document and critically analyze the D/discourses that I found in the data. I begin this chapter by situating this study’s context in a general overview of the Secondary ELA teacher education program (TEP) and a description of primary and secondary participants, including a description of my own participation and positioning in this work. Then, I situate the TEP in the state’s larger policy context to instantiate how discourses of high-stakes education reform were powerfully at work during the time of data collection. I also outline data sources that informed my analysis. In the second half of this chapter, I elaborate the D/discourse analytic framework and the interpretive tools that informed my data analysis.

Research Context and Participants

Teacher Education Program. The local context in which this study unfolded was constructed in large part by the TEP that was housed in the School of Education at Research University, a large, public institution in the western United States. The flagship institution in a four-campus, statewide system, Research University was the first in the state to eliminate its
bachelor’s degree in education. In addition to completing arts and sciences major requirements, candidates must also complete education requirements, which I outline below, to pursue one of three licensures: elementary (grades K-6), secondary (grades 7-12), or K-12 music. ELA licensure candidates entered the program through one of three pathways: as undergraduates pursuing a bachelor’s degree plus licensure, as post-baccalaureate students pursuing licensure only, or as graduate students pursuing a Master’s degree plus licensure (i.e., Master’s Plus program). According to data reported to the Professional Education Data System, racial demographics of undergraduates enrolled in an initial teacher licensure program during the 2011-2012 academic year included 84.6% White; 6.3% Latina/o; 2% Asian; .2% African American; and .2% American Indian students. 1.4% of students reported identifying with two or more racial categories, and 5.1% of students’ racial demographics were unknown. As a point of comparison, demographics of the larger undergraduate student population of Research University included 76.4% White students; 8.1% Latina/o; 5.6% Asian; 1.6% African American; and .5% American Indian students, with 1.8% of students identifying with two or more racial categories. 6% of students’ racial demographics were unknown. All primary and secondary participants in this study, including myself, identified as White. Because all four preservice teacher participants also pursued secondary ELA licensure, I focused data collection and analysis on the Secondary ELA licensure program in particular. Likewise, I focus my discussion below on that program. In the next section, I introduce a general overview of the TEP and a description of the Secondary ELA Methods course in which I was instructor and all four preservice teacher participants were enrolled during data collection. Readers should note that in Chapter Six, I elaborate much more on the program and its requirements via an in-depth report of the TEP’s Discourse on high-quality teacher preparation.
**Selection criteria.** Regarding minimum criteria for undergraduate admission to the Secondary ELA program, applicants were required to: 1) demonstrate a 2.75 cumulative grade point average (GPA) and a minimum 2.75 GPA in all content area coursework; 2) have completed or be in progress of completing 26 or more semester-hours of coursework; 3) have clocked 25 hours of “age-appropriate” experience working with youth in local community and/or school settings; and 4) demonstrate proficiency of math and verbal skills by submitting standardized test scores (e.g., SAT—500 or higher in math and verbal; ACT—20 or higher in math and verbal; Praxis I—175 in math, 174 in writing), or receipt of a B- or higher in college-level math and composition courses. Additionally, applicants were required to submit a letter of recommendation from a college-level instructor and a 1000-word personal statement that addressed why they wanted to become a teacher, described a powerful learning experience and how they expected that experience to shape their future teaching, and reflected on their personal strengths and lived experiences that they would build on “to teach all learners” (Undergraduate Application, p. 2, emphasis in original).

**Coursework requirements.** Once accepted into the TEP, candidates worked toward completing major requirements in their selected discipline (e.g., English, humanities, linguistics, communications) as well as 36-42 semester hours of education coursework. Table 6 (see Appendix F) displays which courses candidates seeking Secondary ELA licensure were required to take before moving into the final student teaching semester. At the time of data collection, all preservice teacher participants had taken or were concurrently enrolled in the courses displayed there. In addition to completing coursework requirements, candidates were also required to log 800 hours of field experience. Candidates amassed a majority of those hours during the full-time

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8 I cite here the specific requirements for undergraduate admission to an initial teacher licensure program, but note that requirements for post-baccalaureate and Master’s Plus admissions were very similar. One distinction is that Master’s-Plus candidates had to satisfy a minimum GPA requirement of 3.0.
student teaching semester, but they also logged many hours in courses that required field-experience components (Table 6 also indicates which courses included mandatory time in the field). The program partnered with 14 districts in the greater metropolitan area to place candidates in classrooms where they assumed observer and teaching roles to meet field-experience requirements.

**Researcher’s relationship to coursework.** In the sequence of required courses, Secondary ELA Methods was the capstone—the culminating methods course in which students were charged with the task of bringing together all they had learned in teacher preparation before moving into student teaching the following semester. Given that, and this project’s goal of understanding how preservice teachers negotiated competing Discourses as they endeavored to make sense of “quality” in their final semester of coursework, Methods was an appropriate context to study and from which to select primary participants. It was also one of three courses in the program that I had the opportunity to teach during my doctoral work. Inspired by Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald’s (2009) argument for organizing methods curriculum in teacher education around a set of “core practices, in which knowledge, skill, and professional identity are developed in the process of learning to practice (Grossman & McDonald, 2008)” (p. 274), I organized my course around a set of six core practices that I understood then as essential practices for teaching the ELA: 1) organizing a classroom culture that supports learning; 2) establishing norms and routines; 3) providing clear instructions; 4) facilitating large- and small-group discussions around a text; 5) planning an instructional sequence; 6) anticipating students’ responses. For each, I intended to balance in-class time and attention to learning what’s involved in the practice and also affording opportunities for candidates to enact the practice and receive feedback in the low-stakes, safe space of the Methods course. Turning a reflective eye to what I
attempted that semester, there is much I would hone, knead, and rework if I taught the course again, but I see the curriculum as an artifact that represents a particular point in time in my own professional development as a novice teacher educator.

**Participants.** Below, I provide information about all primary and secondary participants (see Table 1). Primary participants included the four preservice teachers who, at the time of data collection, were completing their final semester of coursework, which included Secondary ELA Methods, and would complete student teaching during the following semester. Secondary participants were faculty and course instructors who taught required courses in the literacy block during the fall semester in which I conducted this study.

**Primary participants.** During the fall 2011 semester, 21 preservice teachers enrolled in Methods. I invited all 21 students to participate, and all but one consented. Of those, all 20 identified as white, native speakers of English; one student identified as gay; and another student shared with me her queer gender identification. With regard to participant selection, I did not seek representativeness; rather, I heeded Erickson’s (1986) advice to identify a broad range of variation in role relationships and meaning perspectives of participants involved. Thus, I selected from the pool four preservice teachers who represented a range of experiences as learners, teachers, and people in the world; of content knowledge and pedagogical understandings; and of motivations for entering teaching. To that end, I administered a background questionnaire (see Appendix A) to all consenting students and used their responses to construct a range of variation that guided participant selection. Of significance, that process was also guided by a personal and scholarly commitment to support novice teachers and their growth in learning to teach above all, and to leverage my position as researcher to challenge, wherever possible, dominant narratives that construct and position teachers in terms of perceived shortcomings and deficits.
Table 1 Focal Participants’ Positions in the Secondary ELA Licensure Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position in program</th>
<th>Degree/ certification sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preservice teachers (primary participants)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Teacher candidate</td>
<td>BA, plus licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Teacher candidate</td>
<td>MA, plus licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Teacher candidate</td>
<td>MA, plus licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Teacher candidate</td>
<td>Post-baccalaureate licensure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Faculty &amp; instructors (secondary participants)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Course(s) taught</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Instructor; National Board Certified Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Graduate student instructor, doctoral candidate, and researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, in my selection of participants, I excluded three candidates who would likely have been positioned in this study as not knowing or not willing. The four candidates whom I selected as primary participants were Hope, Annie, Emily, and Sam. In Chapter Seven, I better acquaint readers with these novices and their sense-making journeys.

**Secondary participants.** The inclusion of secondary participants was important, not only because the literature on learning to teach has long cited the shaping roles that teacher educators can play in the development of novices’ emergent conceptions of their roles and work as teachers of the ELA (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1989), but also because this study endeavored to represent the TEP’s Discourse on high-quality teacher preparation. To that end, I accessed the meaning perspectives of those secondary participants by inquiring into how they conceived and approached their courses and work with candidates.
**Researcher’s positions.** As the last-named participant, the table above also indexes my role as a highly participatory participant observer in this work (Spradley, 1980), in which I was positioned as a White, middle-class, female (novice) researcher and teacher educator, graduate student, instructor of the Methods course, former classroom teacher, and insider to university-based teacher education. These various positions overlapped and intersected at times in interesting ways. Before this study, as a graduate student, I had twice taken a class outside of the school of education in which a primary participant was also enrolled as a graduate student. Positioned alike in those classes, we were peers. In the semester prior to data collection, I was positioned as a teaching assistant, alongside lead teacher Nancy, in Composition for Teachers when all four primary participants were enrolled in the course. It was from that position that I began to get to know those participants as teachers-to-be. In the context of Methods, my position as instructor wielding the power of the metaphorical red pen surely influenced the nature of my interactions with the preservice teachers and what they made available to me with regard to their emergent sense-making. I can imagine that there were things they shared only in the company of each other—stories told at the cohort’s weekly happy hour at a local brewpub, when faculty and instructors were out of earshot. My sense, though, is that, in my role as researcher, I occupied a sort of hybrid space, constructed by my positions as former classroom teacher, graduate student, and instructor, that afforded me unique access to the primary participants’ processes of making sense. As someone who had just exited the secondary classroom four years prior, coupled with my age—I was 10 years older than the youngest participant, and 5 years younger than the oldest—I was positioned as closer to peer status than a professor might have been. Also, given how participants sought me for conversation and what they shared, at times I seemed to be in the role of a trusted confidant.
In Methods, I got to know my students as learners, thinkers, and people, and by the end of the term, I had developed a relationship of mutual trust and respect with most of them, including all four primary participants. The semester during which they took Methods was also the first semester I taught the course. It was a vulnerable position to assume. I was nearly certain that the teaching process would be bumpy as I navigated unfamiliar terrain, and, indeed, it was. I stumbled at times, as I discovered what worked and what didn’t, what motivated and engaged students and what fell flat, and what these students’ needs were at a particular point in their personal and professional development. What’s more, I was engaged in aspects of self-study of my own teaching (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran, 2004, 2007; Russell, 2006)—as my course was part of the TEP context through which participants were making sense of “quality” ELA teaching. Although my teaching in the Methods course was not the primary focus of the project, I, nevertheless, documented my pedagogy, in all of its complexity. Anticipating the vulnerability novice teachers were experiencing as they learned and tried out practice, I set an intention to try to embrace it, to invite it in, and to treat it as an opportunity to model a “distinctive way of being and doing” (Gee, 2011b) in the classroom that I valued and that I hoped my students might draw on when they assumed their own positions as novice teachers in student teaching. By embracing vulnerability, I mean that I tried to “lean in” (Staley & Leonardi, 2013) to the tender position of being expected to know and be able to do in the face of complexity and uncertainty. This meant sharing that I was also a learner, being forthcoming when something didn’t go as I had planned, and treating the missteps and wrong turns made in steering the course as generative sites of entry for reflective practice.

**Reflexivity.** My subject position as Methods instructor and insider to this TEP certainly complicated my role as researcher and my process of studying how “quality” was discursively
constructed in the program and negotiated by this study’s primary participants. I will perhaps never know the extent to which my role as instructor influenced the novices’ sense-making, or if, as one example, they also leaned into vulnerability when confronted with it. Moreover, the assumptions I brought as instructor, for example, about what ‘counts’ as quality ELA teaching and about what my students needed by way of instruction and opportunities to learn, practice, and reflect, deeply shaped how I organized the course and data I collected as evidence of how participants were making sense.

My analysis of the TEP’s Discourse was also informed by my experience being socialized into the larger institution and discourse community in which the TEP was situated. In this work, I took great care to “make the familiar strange” (Erickson, 1986), but my subjectivity, and more specifically, my commitments to advocating for teachers and supporting the enterprise of university-based teacher education, shaped both the design of this study and my own sense-making of what happened. But, that is not necessarily a bad thing. As Peshkin (1985) writes, subjectivity’s “virtue” is that it “concentrates and focuses attention; and it produces an ‘it’. Since in doing so subjectivity has also narrowed my perception and awareness… I need to discover what interpretations I slight or ignore in the course of exploiting the ones that I favor” (p. 278).

Throughout the various stages of this project’s evolution, I have self-consciously examined what I slighted and what I favored, and reflected on how I am positioned in this interpretive research, and how that positioning has focused in particular ways the lenses I wielded to ‘see’ and make sense of my data. Later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter Five, I share examples of what that reflexive process looked like.

**Policy context.** In previous chapters, I established the importance of situating preservice teacher sense-making in the present historical moment of acute accountability and also argued
that the sociopolitical climate has (re)figured the world of university-based teacher education, and figured the present research context in important ways. To ground those claims, I turn now to the state’s education policy context, which was undergoing radical transformation at the time of this study. In May 2010, the state legislature passed the “Great Teachers and Leaders Bill,” or Senate Bill 10-191 (SB-191). Under the new law, student achievement as measured by standardized test scores provided the basis for half of a teacher’s evaluation; in other words, those data played a significant role in determining whether or not a teacher was considered “effective” or “ineffective.” The effective label also bore on teachers’ salaries, with so-called highly effective teachers earning more under a performance-based pay ladder. But, the stakes of this conception of effectiveness were higher still. Although teachers earned “non-probationary” status, formerly called tenure, after three consecutive years of demonstrated effectiveness, after two years of demonstrated ineffectiveness teachers’ non-probationary status could be revoked and put them at risk for losing their jobs. While the state department of education named the law’s “ultimate goal” as “continuously supporting educators’ professional growth” (Department of Education, 2013), it remains precariously unclear just how teachers’ professional development will be supported in the new evaluation system, and especially so should a teacher begin to approach the precipitous cliff of non-probationary status.

Despite still fuzzy details about how and by what process the law will support and scaffold teachers toward professional growth, as of July 2013, all districts in the state were to have in place an evaluation system in compliance with the law. Of significance, the law implicated TEPs, as they, too, would be held accountable for demonstrating their alignment with the newly legislated conception of what counts as educator effectiveness. Michael Johnston, the senator who spearheaded the bill, touted SB-191 as a “model for reform efforts across the
nation.” In the years since the policy passed, Senator Johnston—himself a Teach for America alum—has developed additional large-scale education reform legislation that would more directly affect university-based teacher education. His most recent proposal, which was expected to go up for a vote just before the legislative session ended on May 9, 2013, but was postponed, would repeal and reenact the Educator Licensing Act of 1991 and open up alternative pathways to teaching by eliminating the requirement of traditional licensure. (This is despite the already strong presence in the state of alternative pathways to teaching.) Under the possible legislation, an aspiring teacher would meet the requirements for “basic preparedness” with a bachelor’s degree, passing scores on a state-approved content knowledge exam, and a clear background check, and would receive a transitional license that acts as a passport to classroom teaching. Completion of an accredited teacher preparation program would amount to little more than an endorsement on the transitional license. In a description of the possible bill on the senator’s website, Johnston’s discourse framed “traditional” teacher education as an unnecessary, costly “hiring tax” that should be eliminated in order to open up the field to the best and brightest.

Of course, all policy contexts, certainly these, are highly complex and, as I argued in Chapters Two and Three, highly ideological. I recognize that complexity and my own ideological stance as critic of the ways high-stakes assessment have been marshaled in a now long-standing neo-liberal approach to education and how novices and youth are positioned by those Discourses and their resulting accountability-focused practices. In keeping with my theoretical grounding, my questions, thus, were not focused on whether the competing

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9 It was decided on April 16, 2013, that Johnston’s possible legislation would not be proposed before the legislative session’s end. On November 4, 2013, voters rejected another of Johnston’s proposed bills that would have overhauled the state’s school funding system, slowing the momentum of Johnston’s education-reform legislative push. Currently, a 33-member working group of stakeholders, comprised of policy makers, local teachers, and education leaders in the state, has convened to discuss and decide “tough issues” related to teacher evaluations, licensure, and policy before putting anything to a vote.
Discourses surrounding quality ELA teaching would position novice teachers in important and consequential ways—dominant, institutional Discourses are always consequential. Rather, my aim was to examine how those negotiations occurred for these novices in this particular context.

**Data Collection**

I turn now to a description of data sources that informed my analysis in this study. The bulk of data collection was contained in the fall semester of the 2011-2012 academic year; interviews with two secondary participants were conducted in spring semester 2012.

**Data sources.**

*NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review.* In this work, I frame NCTQ’s *Teacher Prep Review* (hereafter, the *Review*) as a highly relevant policy document currently weighing in on the debate on “quality” teaching and teacher preparation, and an instantiation of Discourses of high-stakes education reform and accountability. In Chapter Five, I report findings from a critical discourse analysis of the *Review* that aimed to uncover how discourse functioned in that text to disguise assumptions as natural and neutral, to construct and position, and to (re)produce asymmetrical power relations that have unequal effects on groups (e.g., preservice teachers and teacher educators) and institutions (e.g., colleges and universities that prepare teachers). My analysis was informed by a reading of the entire 112-page document. I then focused my detailed discourse analysis on the report’s four-page Executive Summary. Later in this chapter, I describe my critical approach to discourse analysis.

*Semi-structured interviews with primary and secondary participants.* To access the meaning perspectives on “quality” from the participants themselves, I conducted two semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews with each primary participant, one at the beginning and one at the end of the fall semester (see Appendix B for interview protocol). As required by the
university’s Institutional Review Board for research involving human subjects, I arranged for a colleague to conduct the first interview with each preservice teacher. This decision, although required, was also one that felt important to me in the design of my study. Because I was the Methods course instructor, I wanted to position participants to speak without fear of retribution and as candidly as possible about their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes related to experiences they had in the TEP, which included their experience in my class.

To capture potential shifts in their language and descriptions of their experience over the semester, I conducted a second interview with each primary participant after final course grades were submitted. Before that second round of interviews, I reviewed recordings from the first and made notes about how participants responded. The protocol used in the first round of interviews served as the foundation for the second, but my notes informed where I asked for clarification, elaboration, and follow-up in the second interview. For instance, in my interview with Sam, I wanted to pursue a conversation about his emphasis on critical thinking that I had noted as a theme in the first interview early in the semester. In addition, the second interviews were informed by my, by then, almost year-long observations of and interactions and relationships with each participant.

I also conducted one interview with each secondary participant—faculty and course instructors who taught core courses in the literacy block (see Appendix C for interview protocol). My objective was to gain insight into how those teacher educators talked about their roles; the nature, purpose, and scope of their course(s); and what they associated with “quality” ELA teachers and teaching. Those interviews also created an opportunity to discuss course syllabi—important artifacts that informed my analysis of the TEP’s Discourse. In advance of the interviews, I asked each secondary participant to provide me with an electronic copy of their
syllabus, which I reviewed to ensure I had some context for making sense of participants’ interview responses in the moment. I printed two copies of each syllabus, and during our interviews, when we engaged the questions related to course design (see protocol in Appendix C), I asked if they would look through the syllabus and discuss their decisions and rationale for each major component of the course. Reviewing syllabi together and asking participants to explain the meaning of particular components was a crucial move toward understanding the meaning and intent of the course design from the actors themselves. I transcribed all interviews with primary and secondary participants (see Table 2 below for transcription conventions).

**Table 2** Transcription Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(#)</th>
<th>Measured pause length [e.g. (3) indicates a 3 second pause between words]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( . )</td>
<td>Pause of .5 seconds or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underline</td>
<td>Emphatic stress; increased amplitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Exclamatory utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Rising intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Continuous intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Self-interruption ( - placed at point of interruption)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Unknown transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(( ))</td>
<td>Transcriber comment [e.g., ((laughs))]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student work.** I collected and treated as data all work that primary participants completed as part of their participation in Methods. Salient examples of data sources include:

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1. **“Taking Stock” reflections from spring 2011**: This data source reaches back to the semester before Methods, when students were enrolled in Composition for Teachers. Twice during that spring semester, we asked students to “take stock” of their learning related to the teaching of writing and to write a one-page reflection on what was coming up for them by way of questions, break-through insights, tensions, and uncertainties. I was able to collect from each primary participant one of those reflections (assignment description is Appendix D).

2. **Reflections on “What is English?”**: The first written assignment I gave to students in Methods asked them to reflect on the nature and purpose of the ELA and literacy instruction as they understood it at that very early point in the term (assignment description is Appendix E). I was aware that students had thought about these questions in the context of Nature of English, and the goal of this assignment was for students to revisit their thinking, to share it with me, and to use those big ideas about nature and purpose to inform our thinking about practice.

3. **Reflections on “Who do I want to be as a teacher of the ELA?”**: Also assigned at the beginning of the term, students responded to the prompt, “Who do I want to be as a teacher of the ELA?” (assignment description is Appendix F). This written reflection was intended to elicit students’ emergent understandings about the nature and purpose of the ELA; their aspirations, commitments, and fondest imaginings for their future students; their emergent identities as ELA teachers; and how they imagined bringing those big ideas to life in their future practice. At the end of the term, I asked students to revisit their initial reflections for consideration of whether or not and how their visions shifted, and to capture that consideration in an end-of-semester reflection. As data, those reflections were useful maps of the novices’ emergent understandings of “quality” as well as of D/discourses they encountered and were negotiating in learning to teach.

**Other relevant artifacts.** I also collected a range of artifacts that informed my understanding of the research context, including the state’s performance-based standards for teachers, documents generated by the TEP in advance of its accreditation review, and information accessible on the TEP’s website. Finally, I collected syllabi from each course in the
required sequence for candidates seeking ELA licensure. Analyzing the discourse of those syllabi helped me understand and represent the TEP’s Discourse on quality.

*Researcher’s notes and reflections.* Throughout the fall semester, I kept a journal in which I documented post-teaching reflections and notes about the goings-on from class. Because my role as instructor did not often make it possible for me to capture in-the-moment fieldnotes of our class sessions, I tried to record detailed notes related to my own emergent sense-making immediately after each class session (Merriam, 1998).

**Data Analysis**

In this section, I discuss the D/discourse analytic framework and analytic tools that guided data analysis.

**D/discourse analytic framework.** My D/discourse analytic framework was figured in large part by Gee’s (2011a, 2011b) notion of D/discourses, which I leveraged in this work as an analytic tool (see Chapter Two for my discussion of Gee’s approach to D/discourses). In Chapters Six and Seven, I use D/discourses to uncover what was recognized and associated in the TEP with high-quality ELA teachers engaged in high-quality ELA teaching, and to draw connections across those findings and the preservice teachers’ talk and sense-making related to quality.

Framed as a critical approach to discourse analysis, and in concert with the theories grounding my study, Gee’s D/discourse analytic approach also facilitated my interpretation of the relationship between language practices at play in the NCTQ *Review* and the discursive (re)production of larger systems of power indexed in authoritative discourses (e.g., policy discourses of high-stakes education reform) and competing conceptions of “quality” teaching and teacher preparation. Below, I situate my perspective on discourse analysis in critical
Critical approaches (e.g., Fairclough, 1995, 2009; Gee, 2011a, 2011b; van Dijk, 1993, 2001), explain the analytic tools that guided my analysis of D/discourse, and detail my process of data analysis.

**Critical approaches to discourse analysis.** Rogers (2011) refers to *critical discourse analysis* as the range of theories and methods that facilitate critical inquiry into language practices. Indeed, scholarship in the domain of critical discourse analysis employs a collection of approaches that resist rigid categorization and being reduced to a single method or tradition. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) use the term “theory/method” to capture the variety of approaches and methods analysts might take when critically examining the form and function of language practices. While there is a whole host of ways to practice this theory/method, all approaches to critical discourse analysis presuppose that discourse is multimodal social practice, rather than reflective of objective reality (Tracy et al., 2011). This view of discourse connects to my earlier discussion of discourse as socially constituted and constitutive. As I discussed in Chapter Two, a key theoretical orientation guiding this study assumes that discourse is shaped by and constitutive of contexts, subject positions, and knowledge-power relations. Conceiving discourse as social practice also implies discourse’s constitutive, (re)productive, distributive, and consumptive functions (Rogers, 2011). Because critical approaches recognize those functions of discourse as socially influential, critical discourse analysis is always interested in examining issues of power (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Assuming, then, that discourse is constitutive of social practice, and that social practices have implications for the unequal production, reproduction, distribution, and consumption of goods that are deemed worth having in society, it follows that discourse can have potentially powerful effects on people, groups, and institutions (Gee, 2011a). In Chapter 5, I ground this theoretical argument in a critical discourse analysis of
language practices in the *Review* to explore that discourse’s potentially powerful social influence.

**Key terms.** If critical analyses of language presuppose a relationship between discourse, power, and social inequality, then to understand the complex set of relations at play in a particular discursive event, critical approaches, such as the stance I take in this work, must inquire into the structures, strategies, and properties that contribute to the (re)production and/or challenge of dominance in that event (van Dijk, 1993). As part of describing and situating my approach to using these perspectives as analytic tools, below I define and situate my use of some key terms germane to this discussion: *text, social goods, power* and *dominance*.

**Text.** Critical discourse analysis centers on examination of the language practices of text and talk.\(^{11}\) Fairclough (1995) defines texts as “social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction. A multifunctional view of text is therefore essential” (p. 6). In this work, I situate my use of *text* in Fairclough’s “multifunctional view” detailed above, as it assumes the socially constitutive nature of discourse and also complements my critical-sociocultural theoretical framework that posits a complex set of relations between discourse, identity, agency, social interaction, and learning and sense-making. Thus, by *texts*, I refer not just to printed words on the page; rather, I use *texts* expansively to index any “social space” in which language-in-use takes on many functions (e.g., constitutive, (re)productive, distributive, and consumptive).

**Social goods.** To point to discourse’s powerful effects, Gee (2011a) uses the notion of *social goods*, which he defines as “anything a social group or society takes as a good worth having” (p. 90). Important to note is that social goods include both material goods, like wealth,

\(^{11}\) Some critical approaches to discourse analysis move beyond traditional notions of “text” by taking a social semiotic approach (e.g., Kress, 1976, 1993, 2009) to examine how linguistic forms influence social processes (Collins, 2010).
and also non-material goods, such as knowledge, status, solidarity, respect, access, and inclusion. Gee argues that we use language to build and dismantle social goods; in this way, all discourse is political, “because the distribution of social goods and claims about them—goods like a person being taken as acceptable, normal, important, respected, an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’… are ultimately what give people power and status in a society (or not)” (pp. 31-32). In my analysis of the Review, I considered what social goods are at stake for the groups (e.g., novice teachers, teacher educators) and institutions (e.g., colleges and universities that prepare teachers) implicated in that text’s discursive (re)production. In addition, I used this lens to think of the social goods that are at stake for novice teachers in their sense-making of what it means to be a “quality” ELA teacher. For instance, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, when asked what it takes to be an effective ELA teacher in these times, Sam talked about not being able to “rock the boat” as a first-year, untenured teacher for fear of losing his job by challenging dominant Discourses.

**Power and dominance.** Power and dominance are interrelated concepts that take center stage in critical discourse analysis. Drawing on van Dijk’s (2001) definition of power as a form of “control” (p. 302), power indexes privileged access to social goods and involves one group’s control over another group’s actions and/or cognition. Fairclough (1995) conceptualizes power as asymmetrical relations between participants in a discursive event, as well as unequal ability to determine or “control” (p. 1) the (re)productive, distributive, consumptive functions of discourse in particular sociocultural contexts. In other words, because of differences in positions and roles, participants generally do not have equal access or capacity to shape and control a text’s form and function (e.g., the ability to determine a text’s grammatical choices, choices of topics and themes, choices of what content to include and what to omit, and so on). A good example of this asymmetrical relationship among participants involves NCTQ’s exclusion of university-based
teacher education as a participant in the discursive production and distribution of the Review.

While the Review provided overall ratings of 1, 130 institutions associated with university-based teacher education, the institutions were not invited to the metaphorical table to participate in the report’s production or distribution. To account for such asymmetries, van Dijk (2001) prompts critical discourse analysts to begin systematic inquiry into textual properties by examining which participants have access and ability to control a text’s context, whose voices are “censored,” and whose are excluded.

Van Dijk (2001) distinguishes dominance as appearing to be a more “legitimate and acceptable form of power” (p. 302) insofar as dominance gets enacted and reproduced via “everyday” language practices—that is, linguistic strategies and structures that appear natural, neutral, and as common sense. Luke (1995/1996) calls this discourse’s “hegemonic function: Its principal effect is to establish itself as a form of common sense, to naturalize its own functions through its appearance in everyday texts (Collins, 1989)” (p. 20). Fairclough (2009) describes ideology as operating most effectively when it remains invisible and cloaked in common-sense garb; once we can detect that common sense is operating to maintain asymmetrical power relations and to enact dominance and oppression, Fairclough notes that it “ceases to be common sense” (p. 71). A principle aim of critical discourse analysis, and that which guided my approach, is to “denaturalize” (Fairclough, 1995) language practices that at once disguise speakers’ status, authority, and ideological affiliations, and discursively (re)produce ideology through the enactment of dominance.

Reflexivity in my critical discourse analysis of the Review. A final point I want to make about my critical approach to discourse analysis concerns a tension constructed by the

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12 Language practices is an umbrella term I use to capture the range of discursive strategies (e.g., linguistic choices and strategies, grammatical choices and structures, stylistic choices, etc.) that a text employs to build and design meaning in a particular way. I use these words and phrases interchangeably in this work.
positioning I brought to bear on my inquiry into the *Review* as a teacher, teacher educator, and member of the professional community that NCTQ took to task. Pointing to a standing debate in the field of discourse research, Wetherell (2001) posed the question, Should the analyst be politically engaged? Critical discourse analysts (e.g., Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Luke, 1995/1996) would respond with a declarative yes. Therefore, I situate my perspective in alignment with scholars who treat discourse analysis not as a neutral activity, but as dependent upon the analyst’s theoretical assumptions and values—indeed, upon the typical story constructed by the analyst’s figured world. Moreover, I heed Fairclough’s (2009) assertion that “it is important not only to acknowledge [our perceptions on social matters] rather than affecting a spurious neutrality about social issues, but also to be open with one’s readers about where one stands” (as cited in Tracy et al., 2011, p. 246). Given my analytical goal of uncovering the taken-for-granted nature of the *Review*’s discursively figured worldview and my methodological commitment to reflexivity, I returned to this question throughout data analysis: What am I taking for granted, and how is my own figured worldview shaping my reading and interpretation of the *Review*? In Chapter Five, I describe my process interacting with the *Review*, positioning myself as a teacher educator in my initial reading of the document and in subsequent readings as a critical discourse analyst, and all the while, reflexively considering the relationship between my findings, how I positioned myself, and how I was constructed and positioned by the *Review* as a person affiliated with the institutions of university-based teacher education.

**Data Analysis**

I divide this final section into two parts. The first explains what informed my critical discourse analysis of the *Review*. The second explains what informed my analyses of the TEP
D/discourse and primary participants’ experience of navigating and negotiating the D/discourses about quality ELA teaching they were encountering.

**Critical discourse analysis of the Review.** As Dutro (2010) points out, the language of policy documents often functions to construct versions of the world that appear natural and neutral. Given that, and critical discourse analysis’s broad interest in uncovering discourse’s hegemonic function, it seemed especially important that in critically analyzing the Review’s discourse, I aim to “denaturalize” the text’s everyday language practices in order to understand how they functioned to construct a particular worldview—a natural, taken-for-granted sense of ‘the way things are’. Thus, for the analysis of the Review, I focused on analyzing language at a more micro level than the approach I took to analyzing the multiple artifacts and interviews I collected to address my questions related to the D/discourses of the TEP and of novice teachers’ navigation of some of the multiple D/discourses of quality teaching they were encountering on their paths toward certification (as I discuss further below). My aim in analyzing the NCTQ document was to gain a critical understanding of how the Review discursively represented the complex set of relations between teachers, university-based teacher education, a climate of acute accountability, and the contested matter of “quality” in its construction of the problem and proposed solution of education reform.

*Figured worlds as analytic tool.* As part of his “toolkit” for analyzing D/discourse, Gee (2011b) introduces “figured worlds” as a theoretical tool of inquiry that can denaturalize everyday language practices. In their influential text *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Dorothy Holland et al. (1998) define a figured world as:

A socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set
of agents who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of state as moved by a specific set of forces. (p. 52)

As a socially and culturally constructed representation of a “simplified world,” a **figured world** functions as a framework that organizes what is taken for granted as ‘normal’ and treated as common sense, and what is meaningful and valued within a perspective shared among a particular community. In other words, **figured worlds** are simplified theories about the world that help us make sense of the vast and complex social and cultural worlds in which we live and make sense. In these simplified worldviews, there are what Gee (2011b) calls “typical stories [that] are stored in our heads… in the form of images, metaphors, and narratives” (p. 169). In these typical stories, certain explanations are assumed; beliefs and values, privileged; and actors, foregrounded. The matter of how we construct these stories, or figure these worldviews, is neither random nor independent of context; rather, what counts as typical, normal, and common sense in a person’s figured world is shaped by her “sociocultural affiliations” (Gee, 2011a, p. 41). In this way, figured worlds function as cultural “scripts” (van Dijk, 1993) that facilitate communication, shared meaning making, and interpersonal relations. However, they can also (re)produce power and dominance insofar as they can marginalize groups (e.g., novice teachers) and institutions (e.g., university-based teacher preparation) that do not fit what the “typical” story of that worldview figures as the way things ought to be.

**Figured worlds** were an analytic tool I used to uncover the language practices that were at work in the *Review* to construct a particular, simplified view of the world that appeared natural and neutral. Engaging in that critical analysis was a tool I used to understand how that text’s language practices function ideologically and politically, for example, how they discursively construct and position people, groups, and institutions in particular and asymmetrical ways to
maintain the status quo, to (re)produce power and dominance, and, perhaps also, to challenge that (re)production.

A critical analysis into the discursive (re)production of any figured world involves attending closely to both form (e.g., grammatical choices, lexical and stylistic choices, implicit and omitted content) and function (i.e., what those linguistic choices are doing, building, and designing in terms of situated meanings, subject positions, relationships, identities, and activities) of language. It follows that critical, close analysis of a text’s language choices and how those choices function to (re)produce or to challenge a particular, taken-for-granted view of the world that has unequal, material social effects is a robust approach to discourse analysis that bridges a long-standing “problem” in educational research: the gap between micro and macro levels of analysis (Luke, 1995/1996).

Gee’s (2011b) Figured Worlds Tool (p. 171) was a heuristic that offered me a set of questions that I adapted and asked of my data in the service of uncovering the storyline and language practices that constructed NCTQ’s figured world. In concert with the Figured Worlds Tool, I drew on Gee’s Integration Tool (p. 61), Topics and Themes Tool (p. 67), Politics Building Tool (p. 121), and Intertextuality Tool (p. 166) to ask these questions of the Review:

- What typical stories or figured worlds are the language choices assuming and inviting readers to assume?
- How are grammar structures (e.g., clauses) integrated and packaged into utterances or sentences? What was left out and what was included in terms of optional arguments? What was being assumed and what was being asserted by the way clauses were turned into phrases?
- How are language and grammar choices being used to build meaning, to construct and position, and to assume what counts as social goods and to distribute and/or withhold those goods from particular people, groups, and institutions?
- How are language and grammar choices being used to quote, refer to, allude to other “texts” or other styles of language?
Mining the data, I began by reviewing analytic memos I had written in June/July 2013, immediately after NCTQ’s public release of the *Review*, and reflected on the assumptions and values I brought as a university-based teacher educator engaged in a critical discourse analysis of the *Review*. Then, I created a line-numbered copy of the *Review*’s four-page Executive Summary (included as Appendix G). I used the questions above to focus my close reading and critical analysis of the Executive Summary. Using Excel, I created a spreadsheet with a column devoted to each question, and documented patterns among linguistic choices and discursive moves.

**Detecting and analyzing D/discourses on “quality” in interview and artifacts.** To detect the distinctive ways of being-doing that were associated with high-quality ELA teaching in the TEP, and to understand how those ways of being-doing, along with others, were negotiated by the primary participants in their sense-making of “quality” ELA teaching, I leveraged Gee’s big-D Discourse Tool as an analytic tool. Using that analytic tool, I asked these questions of data sources from the TEP and primary participants:

- What kind of teacher is this speaker seeking to promote, enact, or be recognized as through her use of language?
- What sorts of ways of acting, interacting, valuing, believing, and using objects, tools, and technologies are associated with being that kind of teacher?

To detect patterns and construct themes within and across interview and artifact analyses, I used interpretive approaches (e.g., case study with embedded units, which I discuss more below). An interpretive approach is keenly interested in the relation between the meanings participants attribute to social actions (in this context, high-quality ELA teaching), and the “ecological circumstances of action in which they find themselves. . . Patterns in that ecology are defined by implicit and explicit cultural understandings” (Erickson, 1986, p. 127). Interpretive approaches enabled me to examine the patterns and themes among local meanings of “quality,” as they were negotiated and defined from the point of view of faculty, instructors, and preservice
teachers in the ecology of the TEP. Those two complementary approaches—interpretive approaches and D/discourse as analytic tool—were necessary, because I was attending to D/discourse in artifacts and interviews and also discerning themes and patterns in the D/discourse within and across data sources. As I will discuss in more detail below, this entailed making three analytic passes through the data.

**First analytic pass.** My first pass entailed inductive analysis of artifacts from the levels of the institution (e.g., language of the School’s mission statement, website, and conceptual framework composed for accreditation) and the Secondary ELA licensure program (e.g., syllabi of core courses, transcripts from interviews with secondary participants). Beginning at the level of institutional discourse, I carefully reviewed each artifact, and then looked across those artifacts, taking note of themes and patterned ways of being-doing associated with preparing distinctive ‘kinds’ of teachers. That initial analysis informed my construction of three broad thematic codes: 1) shared commitment to democracy, diversity, and social justice; 2) preparing teachers to teach all students; 3) preparing teachers who excel in their knowledge of … (e.g., subject, pedagogy, learning, and learners). I noticed that the second and third codes were “process codes” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), meaning they point to observable and conceptual action in the data. In this context, they pointed to the actions involved in preparing certain kinds of teachers. I considered how those two process codes were related to the first code, which was descriptive and broader in nature. Put another way, the first code didn’t point directly to the action of preparing certain kinds of teachers. It appeared to me, though, that the institution’s shared commitment to democracy, diversity, and social justice was ‘lived’ through its preparation of distinctive kinds of teachers—that is, teachers who embrace democratic dispositions to teach all students and who excel in their knowledge of particular domains. Thus, I
collapsed the first and second codes into one. My revised codes from analysis of institutional discourse were: 1) preparing teachers to embrace democratic dispositions (i.e., to teach all students); 2) preparing teachers who excel in their knowledge of … (e.g., subject, pedagogy, learning, and learners).

Next, I examined artifacts from the program level. I closely reviewed syllabi of courses required of candidates pursuing secondary ELA licensure (8 courses total), looking within each syllabus and across syllabi, and making another list of patterns and themes in content and language use related to preparing distinctive ‘kinds’ of teachers. Then, I moved onto transcripts from interviews with secondary participants, repeated the same process described above, and honed my list of thematic codes. From that analysis, I constructed the following thematic codes that represented the distinctive ways of being-doing associated with quality ELA teaching and teachers that were foregrounded in the discourse of coursework, and in faculty and instructors’ talk: 1) sociocultural perspectives on learning, development, and literacy; 2) emphasizing diversity; 3) fostering professional dispositions; 4) emphasizing theory-practice; and 5) expansive notions of literacy and ELA teaching. I also detected another pattern in faculty’s talk, which wasn’t visible in course syllabi, about preparing effective ELA teachers in these times. I labeled that code “dichotomous characterizations of work and goals of UBTE and local schools.”

Second analytic pass. My second pass at analysis aimed to draw connections across both institutional and program-level discourse to discern if there was alignment, and to what degree, between the vision of the high-quality teacher discursively produced at the level of the institution and the vision of the high-quality teacher that coursework, faculty, and instructors discursively produced. I looked across data sources at the program level again to see if the institution’s broad commitments to preparing teachers who embrace democratic dispositions and excel in their
knowledge of particular domains were discernable. I looked for and noted where there was evidence, and disconfirming evidence, that coursework, faculty, and instructors sought\textsuperscript{13} to prepare candidates who fit the criteria of quality teaching outlined in the institutional discourse (e.g., teachers who display passionate commitments, ensure every student’s learning, etc.). As one example, I found a strong connection between the institutional discourse’s emphasis on preparing teachers to “teach all students” and coursework’s emphasis on diversity and particular ways of being-doing in the classroom (e.g., pedagogies and instructional methods that support teachers to teach across difference in affirming ways). I also looked at how well the domains of teachers’ knowledge (e.g., knowledge of subject, pedagogy, learning, learners, democratic contexts of education) articulated in the institution’s priority on preparing kinds of teachers fit the domains emphasized by coursework, faculty, and instructors, and marked points of connection and contrast between what the institutional discourse and program-level discourse foregrounded. For instance, I found another strong connection between the institutional discourse’s emphasis on preparing teachers who “excel in their knowledge of the socio-cultural worlds of learners” and sociocultural perspectives on learning, development, and literacy that coursework emphasized.

The analytic process I describe above allowed me to see relationships across the layers of program-level D/discourses of quality represented in my data, including consistencies and tensions, and in Chapter Six, I report these findings.

\textit{Third analytical pass.} My third pass at analysis examined the primary participants’ discourse to discern where there was evidence of their negotiation and uptake of the Discourse of \textsuperscript{13} Of note, my analysis was focused on the program discourse and not on the program’s enactments of those commitments. The TEP has recently engaged research on its practices examining both how its intended commitments around social justice, diversity, and democracy are not consistently enacted in ways that support students of color and LGBTQ students, and pursued initiatives (one of which I co-lead) to better strive toward those goals.
the TEP, as well as other competing Discourses on quality ELA teaching. Using the thematic
codes described above and constructed from my first two passes at analysis, I compiled a “start
list” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of codes—possible Discourses that I might find in the novices’
talk and writing. Drawing on my framework and my critical analysis of the Review’s competing
Discourse, I added to that start list of codes. For example, I anticipated Discourses of
accountability to emerge in the novices’ negotiations of what it takes to be effective ELA
teachers, as well as Discourses of classroom management. Next, using the interpretive method of
case study with embedded units (Baxter & Jack, 2008), I treated the individual preservice
teachers as subunits of a larger, single case analysis of the sense-making process surrounding
negotiations of “quality” and “effectiveness.” Baxter and Jack (2008) describe an approach of a
single case analysis with embedded units as “powerful when you consider that data can be
analyzed within the subunits separately (within case analysis), between the different subunits
(between case analysis), or across all of the subunits (cross-case analysis). The ability to engage
in such rich analysis only serves to better illuminate the case” (p. 550).

Guided by that method, first, I looked at the data for each individual preservice teacher,
or subunit, and I carefully reviewed interview transcripts, written reflections from the Methods
course, and archival data (e.g., fieldnotes, email correspondence), looking for and taking note of
themes and patterned ways of being-doing associated with their language about being distinctive
‘kinds’ of teachers. Because I was interested in understanding how their sense-making shifted (or
not) over time, I moved through data sources chronologically and applied my start list of
Discourse codes, revising and honing that list along the way. I created a spreadsheet in Excel to
construct a map of each preservice teacher’s negotiations of Discourses related to quality ELA
teaching, from the beginning of the fall term to the end, noting where the TEP’s Discourse was
invoked, and where other and competing Discourses (e.g., accountability) were invoked. I looked between and across subunits to discern themes and patterns not only within cases, but also between and across cases. For example, looking between and across, I found that all four preservice teachers talked about the ELA as a vast and ever-changing discipline. I also found that both Annie and Sam used the metaphor of “rocking the boat” in their talk about what it takes to be an “effective” ELA teacher in these times. Finally, I looked for other important dimensions of the preservice teachers’ language, such as emotion (e.g., fear), coherence, use of metaphors, and repetition, and applied critical discourse analytic methods to those segments of talk and writing. In Chapter Seven, I report these findings.

In the next chapter, I turn to my critical discourse analysis of the language practices of the Review—a key instantiation of large-scale Discourses of accountability.
Chapter Five

Denaturalizing Everyday Language, Uncovering Figured Worldviews: A Critical Discourse Analysis of NCTQ’s *Teacher Prep Review*

Heeding Luke’s (1995/1996) caution that discourse in institutional life can be understood as a means for the “naturalization and disguise of power relations” that are wrapped up in unequal access to and production and distribution of social goods, this chapter is grounded in the assumption that interrogating how authoritative discourses of high-stakes education reform use language to represent power relations as if they were “the product of organic, biological, and essential necessity” (p. 12). In the critical approach to discourse analysis I share below, I attempted to uncover the taken-for-granted nature of the figured world constructed by NCTQ’s *Teacher Prep Review* (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013), a policy document that I argue is a particularly relevant in the context of this study’s inquiry. One of the research questions that guided my inquiry asked what are some of the large-scale discourses that the preservice teachers had to negotiate as they made sense of quality ELA teaching. As an instantiation of the authoritative discourses of high-stakes education reform and accountability, NCTQ’s *Teacher Prep Review* is an exemplar of large-scale, accountability-related discourses that the preservice teachers were confronted with negotiating, assimilating, reproducing and/or resisting.

My inquiry into the *Review’s* language pursued three broad goals: First, I sought to denaturalize taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the text around what counts as social goods in relation to education, education reform, teaching, and teacher preparation (e.g., knowledge and skills for teaching, how teachers should be prepared, and what counts as “quality”), as well as how those goods should be distributed in society (Gee, 2011b). Second, I also analyzed how the authors of the *Review* constructed and positioned NCTQ, the larger
organization with which they are affiliated (and, as I will demonstrate below, an interest group in ideological alignment with the deregulation agenda), in relation to their construction and positioning of university-based teacher education (UBTE) and novice teachers prepared by institutions associated with that tradition.

As discussed in Chapter Two, a theoretical assumption guiding this work was Bakhtin’s (1986) notion of *heteroglossia*, or the idea that all texts are characterized by many more voices than just the writer or speaker’s. My analysis was also built on the assumption that any “text is part repetition, part creation” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 7). In other words, any text can be imagined as emerging from, entering into, and being importantly shaped by an ongoing conversation. In this way, texts carry the residue of others’ voices—that is, they reverberate particular D/discourses, genres, and voices that have previously weighed in that conversation. Texts, like the *Review*, that foreground issues related to “quality” teaching and teacher preparation can be imagined as emerging from and entering into that larger debate on education reform described in depth in chapter three. It follows, then, that I might expect the *Review* to demonstrate *intertextuality* (Kristeva, 1966), which refers to the text’s direct and/or indirect quoting of, reference, or allusion to D/discourses, genres, and voices that have weighed in previously on the education-reform debate. Gee (2011b) notes that a text can also display intertextuality by using the grammar or linguistic style of another, and when a text “incorporates or mixes two different ‘voices’ or styles in such a way that we cannot tell which text refers to which” (p. 166), we can describe that text as heteroglossic.

This theoretical argument about the heteroglossic nature of texts is important to consider in light of my analytical goal of denaturalizing the language practices that construct the *Review*’s typical story and figure a world in which certain assumptions, narratives, meanings, and courses
of action are taken for granted as normal and natural. As my close reading and critical analysis of the Review’s Executive Summary will show, the text’s authors employed language practices that disguised their ideological affiliations and constructed and positioned NCTQ as an authoritative, paternalistic agent acting on behalf of the nation’s, students’, and teachers’ best interests. In the simplified version of the world that the Review discursively figures, it is assumed that systems of accountability should be expanded rather than contracted. Public institutions like those affiliated with UBTE are mistrusted—framed as suspicious and, thus, deserving of external oversight, evaluation, and acute accountability. Novice teachers are cast as vulnerable, inept, passive learners, and also as consumers. “Market forces” are positioned as the abstract hero that will overhaul a system perceived to be broken, and that will restore the United States’ standing as a world leader in educational attainment. This is not necessarily a novel storyline; much of the Review’s language resonates with conservative and neoliberal perspectives that coalesce in discourses of high-stakes education reform, as discussed in Chapter Three. And yet, discourse functioned as a tool that enabled NCTQ to frame the Review as a politically neutral project—the product of “exhaustive and unprecedented examination” (p. 1) rather than a project with an ideologically motivated interest in dismantling UBTE. The third goal, then, of this critical discourse analysis was to develop an understanding of the patterned discursive moves Greenberg et al. make to construct a particular, simplified version of the world and pass it off to readers as “just common sense” (Greenberg et al., p. 1, 9). Readers will recall Gee’s (2011b) perspective that what is taken for granted in a figured world’s typical story is tied to a group’s affiliations. Using the lens of intertextuality to examine the patterned use of language at play in the Review—for example, how the Review might mirror or invoke language characteristic of discourses of accountability (Cohen, 2010), and to consider how future texts might draw on and mimic the
Review—is an important move toward understanding the discursive strategies that enable discourses of high-stakes education reform to (re)produce power and dominance.

How This Chapter is Organized

Below, I discuss the results of my critical discourse analysis. I begin by constructing and positioning myself as an actor in relation to NCTQ’s typical story; that is, I narrate my initial response to the Review, as I interacted with it a year ago from my position as a teacher educator and researcher. My initial readings of the Review were fraught, in part because of how it positioned me as a person with strong ties to university-based teacher education. My positioning in relation to the report, and the tensions and emotions that emerged from those initial readings, certainly informed my critical discourse analysis. Moreover, in my initial critique of the Review, I was concerned with NCTQ’s approach of examining and assessing teacher preparation through a lens of inputs and outputs. NCTQ’s inputs and outputs approach yields a vastly different story about what’s involved in learning to teach than of my own examination of and approaches to preservice teacher learning. Those contrasts impacted how I constructed my analysis, as I worked to foreground the complexity and richness that were so central in my data, yet seemed so absent from NCTQ’s. Thus, my initial discussion of responding to the Review establishes some of the important context of the study that I will further develop in chapters six and seven.

From there, I turn more directly toward the results of my critical discourse analysis of the Review, which centers on a close reading and line-by-line analysis of the document’s Executive Summary, which reflects the language practices of the longer report. Every compelling story needs a cast of characters, and the Review takes care to construct and position three: NCTQ, UBTE, and novice teachers. I organize my discussion around the text’s contrasting constructions and positioning of each of those three main characters, and the linguistic strategies that made
those constructions and positions possible. Throughout, I attend to the relationship between the Review’s linguistic choices and what is assumed and taken-for-granted as “typical” and natural in the narrative, and what gets left out. I conclude by considering the implications of this authoritative discourse for both UBTE and preservice teachers.

**Figuring the World of NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review**

_A brief synopsis of the Review._ On June 18, 2013, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), in partnership with _U.S. News & World Report_, publically released its findings from a two-year long evaluative study of the quality of undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs at 1,130 institutions nationwide. NCTQ titled its report _Teacher Prep Review: A Review of the nation’s teacher preparation programs_ (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013). In the opening lines of the Review’s Executive Summary, authors Greenberg et al. frame the problem that motivated their study in terms of the United States’ diminished global competitiveness where educational attainment was concerned. Soon thereafter, they establish their main claim, which asserts that their research “uncovered” a causal connection between university-based teacher education’s (UBTE) poor quality and America’s “educational decline” (p. 1). The authors report that schools of education are “churning out first-year teachers with classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity” (Greenberg et al., p. 1). In the rest of the document, the authors frame traditional teacher preparation as a costly investment and largely ineffective intervention. In the style of _U.S. News_’s popular best-of-issues, the text employs a four-star rating system to communicate writ large NCTQ’s assessment of each program’s overall quality. To give readers some context for how UBTE fared in those ratings, 78% of programs earned a rating of two or fewer stars, and 14% of programs earned a zero-star
rating. Programs that earned zero stars were brandished by this sign: 🔄—the universal warning symbol, which was designated as a “Consumer Alert” (p. 3) to programs’ low rating. Greenberg et al. report two main reasons for UBTE’s overall woeful showing in their findings: 1) a shared refusal among schools of education to “train” preservice teachers in specific skills, strategies, and practices deemed necessary to thrive in a 21st-century classroom; and 2) too much variability among programs—too few high-quality programs exist while poor-quality programs abound. What’s more, the authors reason that rewarding top-performing programs and “calling out [weak programs] by name” (p. 7) is an important move toward giving “consumers” (p. 7)—aspiring teachers and school districts—the information they need to make choices about which programs to select in the case of the former, and which teacher hires to select in the case of the latter.

**My Positioning in Relation to the Report as a Teacher Educator and Researcher.** As I made my initial pass through the 112-page report, anger, confusion, and defensiveness crept about in equal measure. Provoking me first was the four-star rating system. In a popular culture that finds gratification in ranking and sorting, in top-ten and best-of lists, the rating system seemed at best a misguided, too-simplistic approach better suited for assessing a hotel’s amenities; at worst, it seemed to me an egregious ploy for public appeal. Also feeding my unrest were the rhetorically ungenerous ways with which the authors framed the work and goals of university-based teacher education. The first arresting turn of phrase came in their accusation that schools of education had become “an industry of mediocrity” (p. 1). It felt like a poke in the eye. My sense was that the report profoundly demeaned the experiences I’ve had working with preservice teachers in English language arts (ELA) methods classes of the kind that the *Review* relegated to the status of inadequacy. Formerly a classroom teacher, and brought up by a
traditional teacher preparation program, I have spent the last six years transitioning back to teacher education. In the process, I have taught cohorts of preservice teachers and researched the experience, supervised student teachers, collaborated with colleagues and mentors in the ongoing process of program improvement, and thought deeply about the complexities involved in preparing high-quality teaching professionals who can navigate the increasing demands of accountability while nurturing disciplinary knowledge and the hearts and minds of youth. I understand the work of UBTE in terms of our shared obligation to prepare teachers and also to foster in them sustained commitments to diversity, equity, and social justice. But, these are complex goals not easily achieved. Troubling to me was how the four-star rating system disguised that complexity.

Once I got past the initial sting of NCTQ’s rhetorical jabs, I started to think more critically about the implications of the report’s results in the context of findings I was constructing from my own data. The report’s findings were gleaned from analysis and assessment of a very particular set of program inputs that NCTQ’s research team collected as data from each institution. Those data included lists of required courses and textbooks, course syllabi, student teaching handbooks, and criteria by which candidates were selected into programs for admission. Not included in their analysis were visits to the programs themselves, surveys or interviews with faculty and candidates who teach and learn within those programs, or member checks of any kind. NCTQ’s decision to focus so narrowly on a limited number of inputs garnered a volume of vociferous critique from professional organizations (e.g., American Educational Research Association, Literacy Research Association, National Council of Teachers
of English) and the educational research community. Rutgers’ Bruce Baker, for example, pointed to a contradiction in NCTQ’s emphasis on teacher quality as perhaps the single-most important factor in raising student achievement and its methodological failure to account for the quality of faculty teaching in the UBTE programs the Review assessed (e.g., the degree of faculty’s training, expertise, research contributions). Many others cited NCTQ’s failure to collect outcome data as the study’s tragic flaw. In an op-ed for the Washington Post, Linda Darling-Hammond cited the weakness of NCTQ’s rating system, pointing to how it “bore no relationship to the quality of [states’] training systems or to their outcomes as measured by student achievement” (Strauss, 2013). Darling-Hammond argued that efforts to improve teacher education will not advance until reliable data about outcomes are collected—that is, until we have data that can construct an accurate picture of what candidates actually do once they move into in-service teaching in relation to their students’ achievement data.

I agreed that NCTQ’s study design was flawed. Further, I would argue that it was irresponsible; to disseminate so publically findings that were based on scant analysis of only certain types of documents, yet implied they were comprehensive program reviews, seemed to violate the principles of rigorous evaluation research and exacerbate the misperception that teaching is something anyone with the right content preparation can learn to do well. More than that, though, I began to wonder what my dissertation would look like if I had designed my study, as NCTQ did, to look only at the syllabi of courses that my participants had taken in their teacher preparation, and at how academically competitive each candidate was upon entry into the program? What would such a lens make visible with regard to what these preservice teachers were taking away from their program’s preparation, and what would it not be able to capture?

14 For a comprehensive list of responses and critiques to the NCTQ report, visit the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education’s link: http://aacte.org/resources/nctq-usnwr-review/responses-to-2013-nctq-us-news-a-world-report-review.html
What reasonable claims might I be able to make about the degree to which the program effectively prepared them to teach? Given my theoretical assumption that learning is a socially organized activity that unfolds in cultural contexts, such a study design would be nonsensical. Moreover, because course texts and syllabi could not make visible how preservice teachers engage in the activity of learning and making sense of program inputs, I would only be able to report on the content of the preparation instantiated in coursework. I would not be able to make claims about how effectively (or not) those programs prepared candidates to teach. This was my principal concern with NCTQ’s study: I was concerned not that it inadequately attended to outputs, but rather that its focus on inputs failed by design to capture the nuances, richness, and complexity of learning to teach—complexity that I was finding to be quite salient in my own data. This concern raised for me serious questions about how Greenberg et al. were conceptualizing learning, and what the consequences of such a framework might be. In the critiques from the educational research community, the focus on outputs was similarly unsatisfying. It seemed to me a shortsighted approach to pushing back on a competing discourse on what matters in quality teacher preparation—a discourse that (re)produces a narrative in which teaching and learning to teach are assumed to be technical, mechanistic process, and that matters of “quality” should be the purview and oversight of systems of accountability. Indeed, that narrative does not work well to frame the story that Chapter Six and Chapter Seven of this dissertation tell—a story constructed from the findings of my analysis of one teacher education program’s Discourse on preparing high-quality ELA teachers and four novices’ processes of negotiating that Discourse, among others, in their sense-making of quality ELA teaching in these high-stakes times. In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I will return to these ideas to consider how much of that story gets left out by NCTQ’s lens of inputs/outputs, that is, to show
which components of the novices’ complex processes of negotiation and becoming are obscured when such a myopic lens is used to look at, assess, and understand a dynamic, human process of becoming that is learning to teach. Below, I turn more directly toward my in critical discourse analysis of the Review’s discursive naturalization and disguise of power and dominance.

**Denaturalizing the Taken-For-Granted Nature of the Review’s Figured World**

One aim of NCTQ’s project, no doubt supported by the organization’s choice to use *U.S. News & World Report* as the forum in which to distribute its discourse on a large scale for public consumption, was to “enlist the help of the *consumers* of teacher preparation” (Greenberg et al., p. 7, emphasis in original)—to encourage aspiring teachers, school districts, and policy makers to draw on the *Review’s* ratings of program quality in their decision making about where to seek out teacher preparation, whom to hire, and how to make policy decisions that will change the current system of how teachers are prepared. But, in order for NCTQ to successfully achieve that aim, the Review’s discourse must appear convincing and persuasive to readers. In other words, the *Review’s* view that UBTE amounts to little more than a poor-quality system and costly investment must appear to readers as natural, as common sense. While my critical analysis did not explore how the general public engages the consumptive function of the *Review’s* discourse, it is not unreasonable to assume that the implications of NCTQ’s discursive enactment of dominance has real and potentially serious implications for UBTE, and for the protection and preservation of public institutions from privatizing and marketizing interests. Therefore, it is crucial to attend more closely to the *Review’s* naturalizing language practices. As van Dijk (2001) argues, “If powerful speakers or groups enact or otherwise ‘exhibit’ their power in discourse, we need to know exactly *how* this is done. And if they thus are able to persuade or otherwise influence their audiences, we also want to know which discursive structures and
strategies are involved in that process” (p. 303). Uncovering the “how” is what I aim to do in the remainder of this chapter.

**Relevant Features of the Review’s Context**

**NCTQ’s history as politically motivated organization.** Before presenting the results of my critical analysis of the language practices at play in the Review’s discourse, I pause to establish NCTQ as a politically motivated organization with ideological affiliations—details that the Review strategically did not include. In 2000, the Fordham Foundation, a conservative education policy think tank, formed NCTQ. Historian Diane Ravitch, who sat on Fordham’s board when the idea for NCTQ was born, has written that the conservative agenda advanced by groups like Fordham had long opposed schools of education for their focus on social justice, learning theory, personal philosophies of teaching, and other content that conservatives deemed superfluous and as coming at the expense of adequate attention to basic skills and academics. According to Ravitch (2012), Fordham created NCTQ as “a new entity to promote alternative certification and to break the power of the hated [education] schools” (http://dianeravitch.net/2012/05/23/what-is-nctq/). According to NCTQ’s website, its founding was intended to “prov[b]e an alternative national voice to existing teacher organizations” that would effectively challenge current structures and regulatory systems that govern the profession of teaching (About NCTQ, 2013).

Initially, NCTQ struggled to survive financially, but in 2001, then Secretary of Education Rod Paige gave NCTQ a $5 million grant, with which it started an alternative certification program called the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (now a for-profit, online certification program). The organization has grown steadily in the last decade, backed by funding from private foundations like the Gates Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation
(Ravitch, 2012). Among those sitting on NCTQ’s advisory board are Eric Hanushek, Frederick Hess, and Michael Podgursky, all long-time critics of traditional teacher preparation who have called for deregulation of UBTE. Other individuals on the advisory board include Wendy Kopp, Teach for America founder; Senator Michael Johnston; E.D. Hirsch, founder of *Core Knowledge*; and controversial public figures like Michelle Rhee, former Chancellor of D.C. Public Schools and founder of StudentsFirst, a “grass roots” advocacy group with neoliberal leanings. What even a cursory review of the role that each of these individuals has played in the debate on education reform is a personal and political history of moving forward a neoliberal agenda, described in chapter three, that promotes the deregulation of UBTE, expansion of high-stakes accountability systems, opening of pathways toward alternative teacher certification, and privatization of public schools by funneling public funds to feed a growing network of charter schools.

**Access and context structures.** While the *Review* implicated thousands of programs affiliated with UBTE and many more novice teachers and teacher educators in its large-scale evaluation of program quality, those groups and institutions were largely excluded from participating in its discursive production and distribution. The question of from where NCTQ derived its authority to conduct such a study is a provoking one for the professional community affiliated with UBTE, because there is no satisfying answer (Thomas, 2012). NCTQ’s was not a collaborative effort, and UBTE was left largely uninvited to the metaphorical table where decisions that would shape the study’s methodology were made. Informing NCTQ’s rating system was a set of standards for program quality that the group created, but without much input or consensus from the professional communities it sought to evaluate. Greenberg et al. explained that NCTQ’s standards were devised from opinion of (undisclosed) outside experts and research,
the Common Core State Standards framework, standards of quality from international paragons of education excellence (e.g., Finland, South Korea, and Singapore), and “just common sense” (p. 1). The authors also reported that the research team applied these standards as it reviewed program artifacts (e.g., course syllabi, student teaching handbooks, information available on program websites) to assess overall quality. When NCTQ sent their requests to the institutions of higher education for program documents, however, they were met with much resistance and even outright refusal to participate; in fact, only 114 institutions (roughly 10%) solicited for participation actually consented by providing the documents that NCTQ sought to collect as data for evaluation. NCTQ eventually sued several programs in an effort to force compliance.

Van Dijk (2001) observes that power and dominance are often organized and institutionalized. In other words, social dominance is not just enacted by groups, but it can also be “supported or condoned by other group members, sanctioned by the courts, legitimated by laws, enforced by police, and ideologically sustained and reproduced by the media” (p. 303). Important to note given the present context are two instances of outside groups’ support of NCTQ’s enactment of dominance. First, there is the partnership, established in 2011, between NCTQ and U.S. News and World Report, which agreed to use its media outlet to publish a truncated version of the Review. Like most print newspapers and magazines, U.S. News and World Report has been afflicted in recent years by dwindling profit margins, advertisement revenue, and subscribership in response to the rise of the Internet and growth of digital media an ar(Peters, 2010). Formerly a print “newsweekly,” the magazine reduced its rate of publication in 2008 to once monthly, and printed its final issue in December 2010. Currently, the magazine prints eight single issues each year under the same moniker, though news is no longer its focus. Rather, according to The New York Times, these issues’ focus is on “profitable rankings guides
for institutions like colleges and hospitals” (Peters, 2010). In this way, the partnership between NCTQ and *U.S. News and World Report* is mutually beneficial: NCTQ gains a widely accessible, public forum in which to distribute its discourse, and *U.S. News and World Report*’s impoverished profit margin balloons. Second, as the *Review* boasts, “NCTQ has received [endorsements] from 23 state school chiefs and almost 100 district superintendents” (Greenberg et al., p. 101), as well as from organizations in the business and private sector. Each of those district leaders and organizations is indexed and listed by name at the end of the *Review*. While the nature of those “endorsements” is unclear, these alliances augment the impact of NCTQ’s social dominance, especially given that Greenberg et al. frame those endorsements as “perhaps the most salient evidence demonstrating the dissatisfaction of public educators with teacher preparation” (p. 101).

**The *Review*’s Discursive Construction of Characters and Assumptions**

In the Executive Summary (hereafter, the Summary), NCTQ, UBTE, and novice teachers figured as the text’s main characters or dominant agents, though each is constructed and positioned quite differently. There were 19 direct and indirect references to NCTQ (also included in this count were references to “the *Review*” and “the report,” as well as uses of the pronouns “we” and “our” when used to index NCTQ as an organization and entity; 26 references made to the collective enterprise of UBTE and to specific institutions and programs (also included were references to “leaders” of these institutions and programs, “traditional teacher preparation,” and the pronoun “they” when used to index subjects associated with UBTE); and 18 references to novice teachers (including the terms “teacher candidates,” “students of traditional teacher preparation,” and “first-year teachers”). In the sections below, I organize my critical discourse analysis of the report around three key areas. First, the language practices (e.g., syntactical
structures and lexical choices) that enabled the Review’s discursive positioning of NCTQ as authoritative agent. Second, UBTE as the object of NCTQ’s evaluation. And, third, positioning, and novice teachers as passive, vulnerable, and inept.

NCTQ as authoritative agent. Despite being the second most frequently indexed agent in the Summary, NCTQ is positioned, and overwhelmingly so, as the most authoritative and active agent in relation to the text’s contrasting positioning of UBTE and novice teachers. Analyzing the syntactical constructions, lexical choices for verbs, and descriptive language associated with references to NCTQ makes this pattern visible. The Review repeatedly positions itself as an authoritative agent acting ostensibly on behalf of the nation’s and public’s interests to restore the United States as a “world leader” (line 3) in educational attainment and with the authority to evaluate the quality of university-based teacher preparation on such a large scale. The first syntactical construction of NCTQ as subject appears in line 11 (readers can reference a line-by-line copy of the Summary’s text in Appendix A). The previous 10 lines frame the problem that motivated the Review: the United States’ loss of its former standing as “once the world leader in educational attainment” (line 3). Working from Gee’s (2011b) approach to language analysis, we can generalize that material presented in dependent, subordinate, and embedded clauses “is assumed and not asserted; material placed in a main clause is foregrounded and asserted” (p. 60). Noteworthy with regard to line 3 it presents the information to readers as a dependent clause and thus assumed to be true. It is certainly an arguable point that the United States was once the world leader in education, but, in this figured world, that point is taken for granted as true and as motivation for education reform.

From there, the authors give a quick nod to some of the “factors” responsible “for America’s educational decline” (line 7). Establishing America’s presumed educational decline
and factors responsible for that decline early in the report primes readers for the introduction of the next assertion: “NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review has uncovered another cause, one that few would suspect: the colleges and universities producing America’s traditionally prepared teachers” (line 11-12). Though “NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review” literally refers here to the text itself, this sentence constructs the Review as a human actor who “has uncovered” an unusual suspect at play in the problem of America’s educational decline, and who ostensibly has the authority to do that uncovering work and make causal claims about what’s to blame for the nation’s current educational state. In the Summary, the Review is consistently constructed and positioned in this way, as shown in Table 3 (see Appendix B), which displays all instances of the Summary’s syntactical construction of NCTQ.

Use of the pronoun “we” is another patterned linguistic strategy that the Review employs to bolster the construction of NCTQ as active, authoritative agent. Line 19 provides the first of seven instances in which “we” is used to index the Review as subject and active agent, though the meaning of “we” in those instances is ambiguous. On the one hand, readers might infer that “we” points to the Review’s authors Greenberg, McKee, and Walsh. On the other, because the text never explicitly clarifies to whom “we” refers, the deictic “we” functions here to reinforce the construction of the text’s speakers as a collective, authoritative, group of seemingly concerned, dedicated, and knowledgeable people acting in the service of uncovering the role UBTE in America’s educational decline, and holding those institutions accountable. Readers will notice that entirely left out of that construction are any explications of NCTQ’s ideological affiliation.

Also noteworthy is the nature of the verbs associated with NCTQ. In all but one case, those verbs convey a clear, direct sense of action, and NCTQ is syntactically constructed as the actor, reinforcing the broad construction of NCTQ as an authoritative group. For example, the
text constructs and positions NCTQ as having adequate knowledge and authority to “uncover” (line 11) the operations of UBTE, which are presumed to be suspicious; to “determine” (line 19) and “provide” (line 21) overall ratings of quality on 1,130 institutions; and even to “sue” (line 33) institutions and programs that were reluctant to comply with the project’s demands. The descriptive language associated with NCTQ complements this authoritative construction and positioning. For example, lines 14-15 introduce readers to NCTQ’s project and briefly describe the project’s scope. The dependent clause that begins line 14 constructs that project as “an exhaustive and unprecedented examination” into the quality of the nation’s traditional teacher preparation programs. Given the volume of critique from the educational research community regarding the Review’s flawed methodology, the point that the Review was the product of an “exhaustive” examination is debatable, at the least, if not highly questionable. However, this syntactical construction assumes the “exhaustive and unprecedented” nature of the Review, and the descriptive language in the report asserts that NCTQ’s project and process of evaluating program quality were both rigorous and groundbreaking. These language choices emphasize the Review’s authoritative positioning of both NCTQ and the results reported in the Review.

The last sentence of the Summary, which frames the “touchstone” of the Review in terms of NCTQ’s “profound belief that new teachers and our children deserve better from America’s preparation programs” (lines 93-94), further constructs NCTQ’s role as authoritative agent, but here there is an added quality of paternalism. NCTQ positions itself as standing up for vulnerable groups—new teachers and children—and as acting benevolently on behalf of students, teachers, and the nation’s best interests. However, when situated vis-à-vis NCTQ’s history as a politically motivated organization in ideological alignment with the deregulation agenda, NCTQ’s stance looks less benevolent and more pointedly self-interested—that is, it appears that NCTQ is acting
not on behalf of the public good, but on behalf of its own interests. This use of “our” in lines 93-94 also establishes a connection with readers, positioning them alongside NCTQ in the role of looking out for and protecting the nation’s youth. Analysis of that syntactical construction reveals another of the Review’s patterned discursive moves, to which I turn in detail below. In addition to asserting authority, the Review employs frequent negative construction and positioning of UBTE. In this case of, the Review’s last sentence, the authors presuppose that UBTE has let down the nation, its youth, and its new teachers.

**University-based teacher education as object of evaluation.** In contrast to the Review’s construction and positioning of itself as authoritative watchdog, the lexical choices of verbs and syntactical constructions associated with UBTE consistently position it as the object of NCTQ’s evaluation and project of accountability. In other words, UBTE is often positioned by the Review as the object of NCTQ’s evaluative actions, which suggests that expanding systems of accountability is an activity that is taken for granted in this figured world as valuable. Table 4 (see Appendix B) displays all instances of the Summary’s syntactical construction of UBTE. The first direct reference to UBTE, discussed above, squarely positions it, and the thousands of programs associated with what the Review calls “traditional teacher preparation,” as to blame for what is framed as US children’s deficient education. Early in the Executive Summary, UBTE is described as “another cause” (line 11) for America’s educational decline, on the same plane as “entrenched poverty” (line 7). That discursive move has the effect of warranting both NCTQ’s position as an authoritative agent and its project of large-scale evaluation of UBTE program quality. The next sentence introduces readers to that project and characterizes the Review as an “examination of how these schools operate” (line 14, emphasis added). In that syntactical construction, UBTE is positioned as the object of NCTQ’s examination and scrutiny; this is a
patterned construction of UBTE in the Review. The deictic “these” in “how these schools operate” is interesting, as it underscores NCTQ’s and UBTE’s contrasting subject positions. In this way, “these schools” creates an us-them dichotomy and also distances NCTQ from the object of its evaluation.

Also significant is how the verb “operate” suggests a mechanistic imaging of UBTE. The construction of UBTE as mechanized is twice reinforced in the next line via the metaphorical description of UBTE as “an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers” (line 15, emphasis added) with “inadequate” (line 16) knowledge and skills. Characterizing UBTE in this mechanistic way that invokes factories and automated production is an important discursive move that accomplishes three things. First, it signals a taken-for-granted assumption in this figured world that UBTE is engaged in the production of inadequate teachers rather than the preparation of quality teachers. Second, likening UBTE to an “industry of mediocrity” constructs an image of an unwieldy machine on automatic pilot—a mass-producer of ineffective teachers that presumably must be stopped and fixed. What’s more, that characterization reinforces UBTE’s position as the object of NCTQ’s external evaluation and oversight—even deserving of it—while also providing justification for the Review’s quality-control project. Third, the mechanistic, dehumanized, characterization of UBTE stands in stark contrast to the social “we” that characterizes and constructs NCTQ as an authoritative agent and social group, emboldened by a collective spirit and concern for the nation’s, teachers’, youths’, and ostensibly readers’ best interests.

The turn of phrase, “[schools of education] have become an industry of mediocrity,” (line 15) is also interesting for how it reflects intertextuality. That is, it mimics the style of an infamous line of another highly influential policy document, discussed in chapter three, A Nation...
at Risk (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983). In that report, the authors state, “The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (p. 1, emphasis added). The notion of mediocrity goes against a conservative value in global competitiveness that is foregrounded in each text’s figured world. The image of a “rising tide of mediocrity” threatening the nation effectively persuaded readers and policy makers in 1983 to initiate large-scale education reform; alluding to that phrase in 2013 seems a strategic discursive move made by NCTQ in the service of evoking a similar persuasive effect.

The constructing and positioning work in the Review’s language around UBTE in the lines I analyze above, is reinforced in the remainder of the Summary. UBTE is consistently positioned as failing to prepare teacher candidates for the demands of the classroom, and as justifiably the object of NCTQ’s evaluation. In my analysis of the verbs associated with references to UBTE, I found 26 direct and indirect references made to teacher education and, of those, UBTE is positioned 18 times as the object of necessary surveillance and justified targets of NCTQ’s evaluation. The authors assert that “the Review finds [institutions associated with UBTE] have become an industry of mediocrity” (line 15) and “As much attention as teacher quality has received in recent years, teacher preparation has stayed remarkably off the radar” (lines 74-75). They employ language throughout that positions NCTQ as the evaluator with presumed authority to assess the quality of UBTE.

The Review reinforces its positioning of UBTE in three significant discursive moves in lines 19-23. Each reference involves a quantification—a report of the exact numbers of institutions on which NCTQ determined (line 19) overall ratings of program quality, as well as the number of institutions on which the Review published those ratings (also included is precise
information on where readers will find those reports publically available). Perhaps the most striking examples of this positioning appear in lines 36-57, in which the Review summarizes the major finding of NCTQ’s evaluation—that “a vast majority of teacher preparation programs do not give aspiring teachers adequate return on their investment of time and tuition dollars” (line 36-38). The Review then highlights five of the most “alarming findings” (line 38). The first of those findings, for example, reports that “less than 10 percent of rated programs earn three stars or more” (line 39). In this section of the Summary, UBTE is positioned as the object of NCTQ’s evaluation no less than eight times. Additionally, the language choices used to report how UBTE fared in NCTQ’s assessment include frequent use of adjective phrases (e.g., “less than” (line 39); “just over” (lines 43, 46); “fewer than” (line 46)) and adverbs (e.g., “only one institution” (line 41, emphasis added)) that emphasize the low number of programs that received the highest ratings on NCTQ’s rubric.

Finally, the Review’s language choices in this section signal to readers how the reported findings should be interpreted. Noteworthy here is the discursive construction of crisis, indexed by the description of NCTQ’s findings as “alarming.” As policy scholars have noted, the use of crisis language is a patterned linguistic strategy among those harnessing discourses of accountability (Cohen, 2010) and pursuing conservative agendas (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Not only are readers to understand these findings as “alarming,” but they are also to take them at face value. The Review asserts, “For now, the evaluations provide clear and convincing evidence, based on a four-star rating system” (line 36) that UBTE is largely an unwise investment. This syntactical construction does not assert that the Review’s findings are valid, reliable, statistically significant, or otherwise trustworthy; rather, the assertion is that the four-star rating system communicates “clear and convincing evidence” of the low-quality of most UBTE programs,
ostensibly because it is a sign-system with which readers are likely familiar and can easily interpret. What is taken for granted is that, on par with service industries and consumer goods (e.g., restaurants, hotels, movies), the colleges and universities that prepare teachers should be positioned as the objects of a four-star rating system, and ranked and sorted into a hierarchy of quality. Moreover, it is assumed that aspiring teachers need such a simplistic system to govern their selection of teacher preparation programs.

Of note, in its assessment of teacher preparation program quality, NCTQ included only university-based institutional contexts—so-called traditional routes to teacher licensure—despite that in the past decade in particular, education reform policies have encouraged a proliferation of alternative routes to licensure. In fact, as Humphrey, Wechsler, and Hough (2008) point out, in some parts of the country, almost as many teachers enter the classroom through alternative routes as traditional. Notable, then, is that the Review omitted programs that offer alternative routes from its ratings, despite the fact that those programs, and especially online programs, constitute a burgeoning industry. A question worth raising concerns why those programs were excluded from NCTQ’s examination. The assumption constructed by NCTQ’s reflexive positioning as an authoritative group seems to be that readers should trust the assessment rubric and scoring criteria by which NCTQ generated its overall program ratings.

Finally, of the 12 sentences in which UBTE is placed in the subject position in the Summary, and thus in an active capacity, my analysis of the verbs associated with UBTE’s active capacity shows that none of those instances involve positive positioning. Rather, UBTE is consistently positioned in terms of the low proportion of programs that “earned” three or four stars on NCTQ’s rubric. As discussed above, the most active, authoritative agent in the text is NCTQ, and together, these contrasting positions suggest that within this typical story, UBTE is
assumed to have little regard for its responsibility to prepare high-quality teachers and is thus constructed and positioned as a system to be mistrusted and in need of oversight and accountability.

**Novice teachers as the object of UBTE’s poor training.** The *Review* generally constructs novices as a generic group indexed by the qualities they share in common: they are the products of UBTE’s poor-quality training and standards that are too low; they are in or approaching their first year of teaching; and they “deal with so much anxiety and exhaustion that many just crash and burn” (line 88). Constructing novices in these negative terms makes more plausible the taken-for-granted assumption in this figured world that novices are vulnerable and need to be protected by an authoritative group like NCTQ. What’s more, novice teachers are consistently positioned as passive actors, and as the objects of the actions of UBTE and NCTQ. That is, there are 10 instances in which novices are positioned as the objects of UBTE’s preparation, and two instances in which they are positioned as the objects of NCTQ’s discursive distribution. In the case of the latter, novices are also constructed as “consumers” (line 69) who stand to benefit from the information provided them by the *Review*.

In contrast to the Summary’s consistent positioning of novices in a passive capacity, there are only four syntactical constructions in which novices are active agents among 18 direct and indirect references to novice teachers. Of the four instances in which novices are constructed as subjects, two point to statistics related to first-year teachers’ impact (e.g., novice teachers teach 1.5 million students annually; novices currently make up a greater proportion of the teacher workforce than ever before); a third constructs first-year teachers as anxious and exhausted; and the fourth constructs them as “deserv[ing] better from America’s preparation programs” (line 93). While the fourth example is intended to evoke readers’ sympathy for novices who have been
on the receiving end of what is taken for granted as poor-quality training, noticeably absent here are positive constructions of novice teachers, even when they are positioned in an active capacity. Rhetorically, the Summary’s negative positioning of novice teachers works well to bolster a more convincing case for NCTQ’s argument that UBTE is a failing system that needs to be overhauled, and that overhauling that system is a move toward providing much needed support to struggling first-year teachers. But, that positioning comes at the novices’ expense. In this figured world, novices are assumed to be poorly qualified because they are positioned as the objects of UBTE’s preparation. Moreover, as suggested by the assertion that students taught by first-year teachers “lose far too much ground” (lines 87-88), novices’ impact on student learning is assumed to be more harmful than helpful.

A striking reference to first-year teachers comes in lines 15-17 of the Summary and on the heels of the construction of UBTE as an “industry of mediocrity.” As the object of UBTE’s mediocre preparation, that sentence constructs novices as having “classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity” (lines 15-17). Again, novices are described here from a deficit perspective, in terms of what they lack by way of skilled, high-quality preparation. This line also suggests the kinds of knowledge and skills that count in NCTQ’s figured world. What is of utmost importance is that novice teachers know their content and can “manage” student behavior in a classroom. That emphasis on content knowledge is consistent with NCLB’s definition of “highly qualified,” as well as with discourses of high-stakes education reform that advocate reducing teacher licensure requirements to successful passage of a state-approved content knowledge examination, two of the policy contexts I discussed in chapter three. Left out of that construction, however, are pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge,
sociocultural awareness, attention to equity, compassion for kids, dispositions toward reflective practice, and many more dimensions of learning to teach. This is curious, given that the Review distinguishes increasing diversity demands that characterize many 21st century classrooms (lines 7-9). Given the authors’ use of those demands in its rationale, I might expect them to foreground as valuable and meaningful novices’ commitments to equity, diversity, and to maintaining high expectations for all students, not to mention novices’ knowledge and understanding of the role of cultural mediation in learning and of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies.

In fact, NCTQ initially included equity among the standards included on the rubric it used to assess overall program quality, but Greenberg et al. reported that they ultimately “postponed analysis [of equity] due to the need both to standardize data” (p. 55) and fine tune their assessment methods. This points to a tension between the relative ease with which standardized methods, like those leveraged by NCTQ in the Review, might accurately assess a novice’s content knowledge and classroom management skills, and how much more challenging the task becomes when trying to use those methods to assess a novice’s commitment to and preparation for equity, which the Review defines as opportunities that a program provides novices to work with “students who have been traditionally underserved” (Greenberg et al., p. 8). The authors indicate that equity will be counted in the second iteration of the Review, which was released on June 17, 2014, but NCTQ moved forward with its release in spite of not having this criterion worked out, in addition to citing increasing ethnic and socio-economic diversity as a primary reason why we need to prepare teachers better. That move suggests an underlying assumption that in the question of what counts in preparing high-quality teachers, commitments to equity are important in name only.
Among NCTQ’s complaints about schools of education is that they “still are not teaching the methods of reading instruction that could substantially lower the number of children who never become proficient readers” (line 51). A major assumption at play here is that there exists a definitive set of methods that can guarantee increased proficiency rates in reading, regardless of who the student learners are and what the context for teaching and learning is. Instead of learning those methods, “the teacher candidate is all too often told to develop his or her ‘own unique approach’ to teaching reading” (line 53). Again, the novice is positioned not as an active agent, but as a passive recipient and object of UBTE’s instruction. The authors reason that in the absence of teaching the ‘right’ methods of reading instruction, candidates are left to figure out their own idiosyncratic approach and philosophy. This creates a false dichotomy between dispensing undisputed “best” methods of teaching reading to novices and leaving them to build curriculum and instructional strategies on their own. The Review’s assertion that students taught by novices “lose far too much ground” (lines 87-88) implies that candidates generally are left to flail and do not successfully devise their own instructional approaches, and would be better off positioned on the receiving end of strategies that ‘work’ for the teaching of reading. In this way, the language the authors employ suggests that NCTQ favors a transmission approach to teacher preparation in which the ‘right’ teaching methods, strategies, and practices are transmitted to the passive learner/teacher candidate, who in turn reproduces those strategies in classroom practice. In the figured world of NCTQ, teachers seem to be recognized as technicians concerned first and foremost with increasing proficiency rates, rather than as growth-minded professionals who are able to exercise professional judgment in the face of ambiguity and based on their knowledge of their students. In addition, there is no acknowledgement in the text that learning to teach is a conceptually challenging but also emotionally enriching endeavor. Indeed, the Summary points
only to the emotions of anxiety and exhaustion involved in being a first-year teacher. Finally, the assumptions figured in this world frame learning to teach as a process that can be adequately contained to teacher preparation. Contrary to significant bodies of research in teacher learning, as I discussed in Chapter Three, the Summary presumes novices who are expected to enter the field in their first year “ready” to teach and in need of little if any ongoing support, mentorship, or guidance.

**Market forces as saving grace.** The last character in the story of NCTQ’s figured world, “market forces,” is not positioned as a dominant actor *per se*, but is nonetheless an important agent to analyze in the *Review’s* discourse. As I discussed in Chapter Three, since *A Nation at Risk*’s release in 1983, the education reform debate has taken a “conservative turn” (Apple, 1997) in which conservative interests (e.g., privatization, marketization, standardization, deregulation) have been advanced writ large via education reform policy. Linking the conservative turn to the rise of a neoliberal agenda in UBTE, scholars have argued that at present, that agenda promotes deprofessionalization of teachers and dismantling of teacher education, and leverages market forces as a key tool for justifying and doing that dismantling work (Kumashiro, 2010; Sleeter, 2008b; Zeichner, 2010). Readers will recall that NCTQ was founded by the Fordham Foundation, which Hassard (2013) describes as an “ultra conservative organization,” and that the *Review*’s advisory board is comprised of, as Ravitch (2012) puts it, “a star-studded technical advisory committee of corporate reform leaders like Joel Klein and Michelle Rhee” (What is NCTQ?). NCTQ’s central position in the neoliberal agenda, as indexed by the founding organization and advisory board, is important for understanding the *Review’s* construction of “market forces” as a saving grace. In the Summary, there are two direct references made to “market forces” (lines 67 and 72). Both references employ nominalization—a
syntactical construction in which verbs are turned into nouns. Nominalizations have been taken up as a subject of interest among critical discourse analysts (e.g., Fairclough, 2003; Fowler et al., 1979; Langacker, 1999) because of the disguising functions they can enact. Billig (2008) notes that nominalizations can function in three significant ways: first, to delete agency, thus making it challenging for readers to make sense of who is responsible for particular actions; second, to reify the entities that have replaced processes as having a very real and necessary existence; and, third, to recast those reified entities as active agents of processes. In this way, nominalizations can function discursively to maintain unequal power relations. Below, I discuss instances of nominalizations in relation to “market forces” and how they functioned in the Summary.

In lines 65-72 of the Summary, the authors begin to address what actions they hope the Review will incite by way of transforming the system of “traditional” teacher preparation in the United States. Noting that NCTQ has created the “largest database on teacher preparation ever assembled” (line 65), the authors declare, “With this data, we are setting in place market forces that will spur underachieving programs to recognize their shortcomings and adopt methods used by the high scorers” (lines 67-69, emphasis added). In this first reference to “market forces,” the authors employ nominalization to reify an abstract concept (i.e., market forces) and position that concept as the thing that will incite “underachieving” programs, of which there are many in NCTQ’s figured world, to improve or ostensibly to shut down. In this construction, “market forces”—not human actors—are positioned as responsible for the potential overhauling, or dismantling, of UBTE. That idea is reinforced by the second reference to market forces in line 72 whereby the authors position readers of the Review as consumers who will “hasten the market forces that will overhaul the system.” Billig (2008) notes that official discourses tend to use nominalizations in this way to convey that “present social arrangements are objective,
unchangeable things” (p. 786). Indeed, market forces are presumed here to exist naturally and are valued in this figured world as part of a larger economic framework, and as an appropriate method of inciting change and transformation of public institutions. The use of nominalization to construct and position market forces as such is an important linguistic feature of NCTQ’s discourse, and of conservative and neoliberal discourses more broadly.

Conclusion

There is much at stake in the potentially powerful social effects of NCTQ’s authoritative discourse on the people, groups, and institutions affiliated with UBTE in these times. For preservice teachers learning to teach, what’s at stake is how they will position themselves and how they will be positioned by authoritative discourses—as being affiliated with high-quality or low-quality programs; as being recognized by states, districts, and schools as ‘acceptable’ (or not) teacher hires; as being recognized as competent professionals able to exercise professional judgment or as ill-equipped rookies who must stick closely to teaching scripts and strategies that ‘work’. For UBTE, the stakes are perhaps higher still. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) characterize the present historical moment in terms of a “changing policy landscape” that confronts teacher preparation; the description in the previous chapter of one state’s policy context exemplifies this well. As policies change the terms by which educator “effectiveness” and “quality” are defined and assessed, policy makers are increasingly turning toward teacher education to consider what counts as “quality” in that domain (e.g., the kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions teacher candidates should develop), and deliberating if teacher licensure requirements should be eliminated altogether—policy changes that NCTQ would likely support. It is not unreasonable to imagine that if NCTQ’s figured worldview proves persuasive to readers, and especially to policy makers, the move toward dismantling UBTE could be swift indeed.
In his book *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, George Lakoff (2010) led with this assertion: “Contemporary American politics is about worldview” (p. 3). In the text, Lakoff argues that conservatives and liberals approach politics in such radically different ways not because they stand on opposite sides of party lines, but because the conceptual structures and models that orient conservatives and liberals and that guide their “commonsense reasoning” (p. 4) are ordered by contrasting moral frameworks. Lakoff observes that over time, conservatives have brought a greater level of coherence to their ideologically motivated moral framework than liberals, and conservatives have done so more successfully. This is because, Conservatives know that politics is not just about policy and interest groups and issues-by-issues debate. They have learned that politics is about family and morality, about myth and metaphor and emotional identification. They have... managed to forge conceptual links in the voters’ minds between morality and public policy. They have done this by carefully working out their values, comprehending their myths, and designing a language to fit those values and myths so that they can evoke them with powerful slogans, repeated over and over again, that reinforce those family-morality-policy links, until the connections have come to seem natural to many Americans, including many in the media. (pp. 18-19, emphasis my own)

I am not arguing that the deeply contested nature of the debate on teacher “quality” and preparing high-quality teachers can be reduced to a matter of dichotomous perspectives or moral frameworks. However, in concert with this chapter’s report of the language practices that NCTQ used to disguise as common sense its ideological view on “quality” teacher preparation and the failures of UBTE, as well as the stakes and implications discussed above, Lakoff’s argument resonates with deeper timbre.

On June 17, 2014, NCTQ released the second edition of the *Review*, as it intends to do on an annual basis, and in April, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the Obama administration’s plan to develop its own system of ratings of teacher preparation programs to make them more accountable for the outcomes of their graduates. In an informal review of online
media sources that reported the story, I found that most also pointed to NCTQ’s project as part of the story’s larger context. The traction that NCTQ’s figured worldview is gaining warrants more critical analysis and explicit attention aimed not just at the faulty methods that guided the Review’s processes of data collection and analysis, but also at the relationship between the assumptions and values embedded in that worldview and the language practices that make it “seem natural to many Americans.” Given the constitutive functions of discourse and the ways in which the policy landscape that surrounds education continues to shift dramatically, I would argue the latter focus is even more crucial than the former.

In this chapter, I have provided a model of what such critical analysis and explicit attention might look like. With regard to this study’s goal of inquiring into the nature of the Discourses that novice teachers must negotiate in learning to teach, that critical analysis is key, because it develops an important part of the discursive map of the contexts surrounding “effective” teaching that the preservice teachers in this study were faced with navigating. In the next chapter, I continue to map those discursive contexts surrounding quality and effectiveness, and turn to analysis of the Discourse of the teacher education program—another major Discourse that the preservice teachers participants had to negotiate.

Chapter Six
Peeling Back the Layers: One Teacher Education Program’s Discursive Production of High-Quality ELA Teaching

My objective in this chapter is to report the ways of being and doing that constituted one Secondary ELA teacher education program’s (TEP) Discourse on high-quality ELA teacher preparation, as represented through faculty talk and program artifacts. Gee’s framework assumes that Discourses are about “being ‘kinds of people’” (p. 178), and in the context of this work, they are about being kinds of ELA teachers—teachers who have developed distinctive ways of being, doing, and thinking about the nature and purposes of their work.

As I explained in Chapter Four, my study was not focused on enactment, but on the language used to describe program goals and commitments. Even with that focus on interviews and multiple artifacts, I want to emphasize that the findings I report here are almost entirely unaccounted for by NCTQ’s Teacher Prep. Review. Let me be clear in saying that my project was not one of program evaluation, and assessing this TEP’s overall quality is well beyond the scope of this work. However, given the paucity of evidence on which NCTQ based its assessment, the striking contrast between my findings and NCTQ’s, and the potential impact of the Review’s authoritative discourse on what counts as “quality” teacher preparation in these times, my secondary aim in this chapter is to point to the gross inadequacy of narrowly focusing on limited program inputs—as NCTQ did—to assess a construct as complex and political as effective preparation for “quality” teaching.

My report of findings below toggles back and forth between my analysis of two layers of D/discourse: one, the larger institution, the School of Education, and, two, the Secondary ELA program (e.g., language of course syllabi, faculty and instructors’ talk about their work with candidates). As I described in Chapter Four, I drew on Gee’s (2011b) “big-D Discourse Tool,” to
look closely within each layer of discourse, but also across those layers. I also inquired into the relationship between the sociopolitical climate of acute accountability and discourses of high-stakes education reform and how this TEP figured in the larger recent cultural conversations about “quality” teachers and their preparation.

(Re)Presenting the TEP’s Discourse on High-Quality ELA Teacher Preparation

Institutional Discourse: Priorities and Commitments in Preparing Quality Teachers

To discern what sorts of “distinctive ways of being-doing” were associated with the broader institutional Discourse, I analyzed the discourse of the School’s mission statement, which articulated seven priorities (my analysis is focused on the version of the Mission Statement at the time of the study; faculty have recently revised it). As declarations of what the School was committed to advancing, analyzing the mission’s priorities was an important move toward situating the TEP’s discourse in specific institutional values, assumptions, and commitments. I focus my discussion below on three priorities that speak most directly to the institution’s commitments to preparing distinctive kinds of teachers.

**Prioritizing faculty contributions and a shared commitment.** As articulated in the School’s mission, the first two priorities were to,

- Promote the distinctive identity of the school by building on the already visible contributions of individual faculty members.
- Emphasize our shared commitment to evidence-based policy and practice and to democracy, diversity, and social justice. (“Mission,” n.d., para. 2)

Speaking directly to the School’s “distinctive identity” and to a “shared commitment” that was emphasized as meaningful in this context, these priorities yield several insights into distinctive ways of being and doing that were represented as key aims of this community. First, by constructing faculty members as making “already visible contributions” to the School, the first
priority’s discourse positions individual faculty as involved in work that offered value and their professional endeavors as shaping the distinctiveness of the School. That the School named as a priority to “promote” its “distinctive identity” and to “build[d] on” the valued contributions of faculty” suggests that from an institutional perspective, the collective work of its community’s members was something to showcase and further develop rather than something to conceal, fix, or change. Given that this is a research-intensive institution “visible contributions” also suggests that showcasing the School’s identity included prestige and prominence of faculty influence in scholarship and practice in their fields. And, on the whole, the School’s faculty was also distinguished in its professional accomplishments and contributions to the field. The School’s website reports that it was one of the top-ranked institutions for the proportion of faculty members named fellows of the American Educational Research Association, the nation’s largest professional organization dedicated to educational research, and *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the School at the top of its list for the percentage of faculty who have received national awards for research. Implicit in these aspects of the Mission is the assumption that faculty work, signaled as prestigious and impactful, already connects with and furthers the two priorities it foregrounds.

Thus, the second priority cited above signals an assumption made at the institutional level that evidence-based policy and practice and democracy, diversity, and social justice were understood as shared commitments and central charges of this community’s collective work. “Emphasizing” reinforces the taken-for-granted nature of that assumption. Consider how the meaning would shift if the priority’s language had employed instead a verb such as “announcing,” which would suggest that this commitment was something that the institution might be trying on in order to develop its “distinctive identity.” On the contrary, “emphasizing”
suggests that commitments to evidence-based policy and practice and to democracy, diversity, and social justice were already foregrounded in this context and socially recognized as meaningful. Third, the descriptive language of “our shared commitment” constructs a communal relationship among faculty participants in the School and also reinforces that “emphasizing” the School’s commitment to evidence-based policy and practice and to democracy, diversity, and social justice was collectively valued as a shared endeavor.

Finally, the School’s emphasis of these two commitments in particular is interesting, as evidence-based policy and practice and democracy, diversity, and social justice could be interpreted as invoking two competing Discourses, or, at least, as two contrasting values and goals that could potentially animate very different agendas for the preparation of high-quality teachers. Cochran-Smith (2005) argued that in these times of standardization and hyper accountability in education, a “new teacher education” has emerged that is outcome driven and has a “preoccupation” (p. 8) with evidence. That preoccupation manifests in state-level requirements that TEPs provide yearly evidence of their candidates’ qualifications, accrediting agencies’ requirements that programs provide “compelling evidence” of the quality of their candidates’ knowledge and professional skill, and the growing trend toward mandating programs to generate and report evidence of their efficacy by collecting data on the student achievement outcomes of their graduates. To be sure, the new demands placed on TEPs in these times make at least some preoccupation with evidence necessary in order for programs to survive, so placing these two commitments side-by-side and foregrounding them in the mission seems a strategic discursive move. Naming evidence-based policy and practice as a central commitment enabled the School to position itself as an evidence producer—an amenable position in the current context of acute accountability wherein evidence-based policy and practice is valued as a form of
capital, and the stakes of not satisfying the demands for evidence are high. Naming democracy, diversity, and social justice as the companion commitment signals this institution’s stance that demands of accountability and producing evidence will not foreclose its commitment to preparing teachers to advance democratic purposes of education in which all youth are afforded equal educational opportunities and access to the good life. The two parallel priorities could be read in multiple ways—as an indication that faculty work is situated in, sometimes, competing perspectives; as an institution wanting to “have it both ways”; or as a strategic move. Indeed, those readings are not mutually exclusive and all of those complexities may likely have been present.

To triangulate findings from the above analysis with other data sources representative of the School’s institutional discourse, I also analyzed the language of the conceptual framework that faculty created during the 2012-13 academic year in anticipation of the School’s upcoming National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) review. That text likewise constructed “two central commitments guiding the collective work of faculty and staff” in the School, but named them as evidence-informed policy and practice and democracy, diversity, and social justice (SOE Conceptual Framework, 2013, p. 1). Interesting here is the shift from “evidence-based” to “evidence-informed.” As Cochran-Smith (2005) asserted, in this era of a new teacher education, focusing on evidence itself is neither good nor bad. More focused, fervent efforts to collect evidence in teacher education could certainly be useful in moving the field toward resolving some longstanding puzzles related to questions about that elusive construct of “quality.” However, if those efforts are narrowly focused on collecting evidence of what ‘works’, the effect can be a privileging of causal and correlational research (i.e., randomized-control studies) over qualitative inquiry, and with that privileging comes a whole set
of political implications around what ‘counts’ as meaningful research. Cochran-Smith proposed an alternative to narrow emphases on evidence—a “teacher education based on evidence plus” (p. 15) in which research on teaching and learning to teach is informed not only by empirical inquiry, but also by critical and theoretical inquiry. One plausible interpretation, then, of the discursive shift in the School’s conceptual framework from “evidence-based” to “evidence-informed” policy and practice is that it reflects a subtle move to push back on authoritative discourses of the new, accountability- and outcome-driven teacher education in which the situated meaning of “evidence-based” too narrowly frames what counts as evidence. “Evidence-informed” policy and practice leaves a little more room for “evidence-plus” alternatives and for the critique of research evidence—an activity that the conceptual framework likewise constructed as valued in this context.

The framework further explains that while commitments to evidence-informed policy and practice and democracy, diversity, and social justice were initially articulated in 2004, they were reaffirmed by faculty through a series of discussions that unfolded in the 2012-13 academic year. The goal of those conversations was to come to “more widely shared understandings of the range of meanings and scholarly framings we each attach to the central concepts in our framework” (SOE Conceptual Framework, 2013, p. 1), a detail that suggests how those abstract concepts were interpreted and enacted in scholarly and teaching practice varied across individual participants. This is perhaps not surprising. As Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) observe, although social justice is a popular concept in teacher education, it is also ambiguous and undertheorized, and critics of the social justice agenda often point to the absence of a clear definition of the concept, even in the context of TEPs that claim social justice as a central and guiding principle. What seems significant with regard to the institutional discourse at play is how it clarifies what
was sought in those conversations—a “more widely shared understanding” of the range of meanings faculty brought to bear on these concepts, and not a resolution or single, agreed-upon meaning.

This is an important point I wish to underscore, as it raises a tension in my report of findings. The framework undergirding this study posits heteroglossia as necessarily characterizing any setting; as with any ideological world, heteroglossia, contradictions, and even divergent perspectives likewise characterized this TEP. In this report of patterned themes constructed from my analysis of institutional and program D/discourse, I do not mean to suggest that there was smooth and even consistency among participants with regard to how abstract concepts like democracy, diversity, and social justice were interpreted and enacted, nor that a Discourse can ever be wholly unified, agreed upon, or stable. Indeed, meaning is always contested and always a site of struggle, even within contexts and Discourses in which there are shared conventions for using and making sense of language, actions, and interactions. As Gee (2011b) says, “We can certainly innovate within these conventions—create new words, give new situated meanings to words, find new ways of saying things—but these innovations must be shared with others in order to be understood and to survive” (p. 176). Providing a careful description of the content and nature of those conventions shared is what I attempted here.

**Prioritizing the preparation of distinctive kinds of teachers.** Circling back to the School’s mission, the third institutional priority germane to this discussion was to, Prepare teachers who display a passionate commitment to ensuring every student learns, who embrace and demonstrate ethical behaviors and democratic dispositions, and who excel in their knowledge of subject matter, how people learn, the socio-cultural world of learners, standards-based curriculum design, learner-centered pedagogies and assessments, and the democratic context of schools. (“Mission,” n.d., para. 2)
Squarely taking up teacher preparation, this priority indicates first and foremost that preparing (particular kinds of) teachers was institutionally valued as a community endeavor. That might seem an obvious point, but is nevertheless an important one to make given NCTQ’s implication that as an “industry of mediocrity,” university-based teacher education generally holds in low regard the goal of preparing well-started novices. Also important is how the discourse of this priority begins to characterize the kind of teacher that was socially recognized and associated with good and high-quality teaching in this community. This teacher is passionately committed to every student’s learning, ethical, guided by democratic dispositions, and knowledgeable in several domains, including her subject matter, learning theory, content standards, pedagogy, and her students. In fact, this teacher is not only knowledgeable in these domains, but “excel[s]” in her knowledge of them. What is most striking with regard to this priority’s linguistic choices is how they construct novice teachers in terms of what they know and are able to do. The verbs associated with the kind of teacher the School was committed to preparing illustrate this well, as they position novices as active agents who “display,” “ensur[e],” “embrace,” “demonstrate,” and “excel.” This is quite a contrast to how novice teachers were constructed and positioned by the Review. My analysis of the qualities constructed in the priority above also yield clues to what counts in this context as knowledge, dispositions, and attitudes of high-quality teachers. What counts goes far beyond subject-specific knowledge or even pedagogical knowledge. The kind of teacher associated with quality in this context has a strong foundation in sociocultural theoretical perspectives on learning and development and the democratic purposes of education that undergirds her practice.

To summarize, my analysis of institutional discourse through some of the central public representation of the School reveals that shared commitments to evidence-informed policy and
practice and democracy, diversity, and social justice constituted a distinguishing feature of the School’s identity. Faculty and teacher candidates were positioned as valued participants and active agents, and the School’s mission discursively constructed a particular kind of teacher that the institution was committed to preparing. In the next section, I examine the relationship between those findings and features of the D/discourse of coursework, faculty, and program instructors.

**Situating Program-Level Discourse in Institutional Commitments and Priorities**

In this section, I share findings from my analysis of the language of coursework, instructors, and faculty teaching in the Secondary ELA teacher education program (TEP) by situating them in the institutional commitments and priorities analyzed above. I was curious to see how clear through-lines would be across these two layers of discourse. As discussed in Chapter Four, my analysis enabled the construction of three broad categories that point to the situated meaning of teacher “quality” in this discursive context. Put another way, each broad category indexes a distinctive way of being-doing that was associated with high-quality teachers and language arts teaching in this discourse community. In my discussion below, I explain the meaning of each category, or patterned distinctive way of being-doing, and situate it in findings constructed from my analysis of program-level discourse. I also provide illustrating examples for each category of how coursework, faculty, and instructors worked to foster those distinctive ways of being-doing in their work with candidates.

**Distinctive way of being-doing as a quality ELA teacher: Living a commitment to democracy, diversity, and social justice.** The School’s commitment to democracy, diversity, and social justice was constructed as a guiding principle in the preparation of a distinctive kind of teacher who, through his teaching practice, could advance the institution’s broad goal of
providing every child an “excellent, equitable education” (SOE Conceptual Framework, p. 7). Although a laudable goal, it is not one easily achieved. As discussed in Chapter Three, scholarship has documented the many challenges involved in preparing White teachers to embrace democracy and diversity, to teach across difference in ways that ensure every student’s learning, and to work in the service of social justice (e.g., Gutiérrez, 2000; Jones & Enriquez, 2009; McDonald & Zeichner, 2008; Sleeter, 2008). Namely, novices entering the teaching force tend to be part of the dominant group that has historically benefitted from the relationship between school and society, and the systemic advantages afforded them in a society in which power and access are exercised and (re)produced through normative assumptions that privilege bodies read as White, middle class, heterosexual, cisgender, native English-speaking, and able. The institution seemed to be sensitive to the documented challenges of preparing novices who tend to enroll in its teacher licensure programs to teach students unlike themselves—students whose social positions are not often figured by the same access to power and privilege, and whose experiences in schools tend to be characterized by very different kinds of struggle than many of the novices likely experienced. To confront those challenges, the School prioritized recruiting and supporting “candidates from historically underrepresented groups” (“Mission”) into the teaching profession, and conducted a small study on how students of color talked about their experiences in the TEPs in the School. In analyzing program-level discourse, I looked for evidence that the TEP was and was not preparing teachers to live commitments to democracy, diversity, and social justice. Below, I elaborate three themes constructed from that analysis and provide illustrating examples of each.

**Engaging candidates in critical examination of systemic inequities (re)produced by school and society.** The School’s conceptual framework asserted that enacting the values of
democracy, diversity, and social justice in teacher preparation “requires making the structures surrounding education visible, analyzing how those structures impact individuals and groups, and actively working toward more equitable systems and practices” (p. 2). My analysis of program discourse suggests that the scope and sequence of coursework in the secondary ELA TEP was, in fact, organized to do that work and engage candidates in recognizing and critically examining structures and systems of inequity that are (re)produced in school and society. The most prominent example, which I elaborate below, comes from School and Society, a course that candidates were required to take upon entry into the program (see Appendix I for a list of the required courses in the TEP, including an overview of each course and a sample of required readings and major assignments).

School & Society. The first required course in the program’s series, School & Society was designed to uncover the relationship between structural and systemic inequities and school and society. In this way, School & Society functioned in the TEP to lay a foundation of knowledge upon which subsequent coursework built; the course did not take up teaching methods, but as I will demonstrate, subsequent coursework introduced candidates to pedagogical approaches for ensuring every student’s learning. Organized around a common curriculum and course reader used by all section instructors, School & Society’s content engaged candidates in a critical exploration of “the purposes of schooling, traditions in educational thought, school finance and governance, issues of school reform, social contexts of education, and equality of educational opportunity” (School & Society course syllabus). The course tended to serve as many candidates’ introduction to big ideas such as the culture of power (Delpit, 1988) and White privilege (McIntosh, 1989), and was their entrée into examining issues of race, privilege, and systemic inequities as they relate to students’ unequal experiences in school. As I will develop in
Chapter Seven, School & Society seemed to have a profound impact on all four preservice teachers who participated in this study. The course also sought to engage candidates in developing a critical awareness of the relationship between their social positions, their trajectories in school, and their taken-for-granted assumptions about the purposes of schooling and frameworks for thinking about issues related to educational reform. The Expanded Educational Autobiography outlined in Table 6 exemplifies this well.

Coursework’s recursive emphasis on diversity. My analysis of program discourse likewise revealed that preparing candidates for “diversity” was a point of emphasis in seven of eight courses required of candidates seeking secondary ELA licensure. It seemed that coursework’s emphasis on diversity was a proxy for preparing teachers to teach “all” students. Recalling my discussion in Chapter Three of the friction in the field of English education around foregrounding social justice as a crucial disposition for teachers to develop—a move that, as Alsup & Miller (2014) described, is less politically comfortable than foregrounding a liberal discourse of diversity—this finding seems in tension with the institutional discourse’s emphasis on social justice. It’s possible that coursework’s emphasis on diversity as teaching “all students” did not go far enough in order to prepare candidates to teach for social justice. For my purposes, however, I coded this attention to diversity as preparing teachers to teach all students.

In those seven courses in which diversity was emphasized, preparing candidates for diversity was emphasized in one or more of the following ways: it was referenced in the course overview or in relation to a course objective; indexed in course readings and assignments; and/or indexed in the kinds of pedagogical approaches, methods, and strategies included as course content. As one brief example, Literature for Secondary Teachers was a course designed to help candidates develop a foundation of “background and experiences relevant to using reading,
writing, and a range of other social languages of the classroom in order to teach literature to a culturally and intellectually diverse population of students” (Literature for Secondary Teachers course syllabus). I expand on the role of this course in-depth later in the chapter, but related to developing that foundation, candidates explored the genre of young adult literature and read several titles that fit neatly within the category of culturally responsive, and recursively revisited the essential question, “How do we best engage all students, from both a pedagogical and an aesthetic perspective, with literature?” (Literature for Secondary Teachers course syllabus). Of note, that essential question seems clearly connected to the larger institution’s goal of preparing teachers who can ensure “every student learns.” However, given content’s attention to various ways of conceptualizing and taking up diversity and issues of equity across courses and the predominance of White students in the secondary TEP, it is plausible that coursework risked both making students of color and students who identify as LGBTQ feel spotlighted and too visible in unsupported ways, and invisible in both curriculum and pedagogy.

Important to note with regard to coursework’s emphasis on preparing candidates for diversity is that while “cultural,” “linguistic,” and “intellectual” diversity were discursively privileged, I found minimal attention across coursework to gender and sexual diversity. In School & Society, the topic of one week’s instruction centered on issues related to gender in educational contexts, and of another week, issues related to sexual orientation. Educational Psychology and Adolescent Development followed suit; one week’s topic of instruction was “gender and LGBTQ identity.” Beyond that, however, my analysis yielded scant evidence that threads of gender and sexual diversity were pulled through other required courses, and I wonder how this might have positioned candidates who identified as queer and/or outside the gender binary. I implicate myself here and the course I taught, Secondary ELA Methods, as a case and
point. During the semester in which this study unfolded, one of my goals was to extend the knowledgebase candidates had developed in School & Society, Differentiated Instruction, and Language Study for Educators—an education course several of my students had taken that explored the relationship between language practices and power, among other topics—and was intentional about weaving into my course content issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity in the ELA classroom. I look back with abashment on what I did not know how to do then by way of weaving gender and sexuality into my methods curriculum in meaningful ways, and on what I did know but failed to do by way of organizing a learning culture and classroom space in which my two queer-identified students could have felt the support of other allies in our class, and perhaps also more safe to be out in that space if they wanted to. My broader analysis of program discourse suggests that privileging certain ‘kinds’ of diversity at the expense of gender and sexuality was typical. That is, explicit attention to gender and sexual diversity tended to appear in syllabi as a topic covered in a particular week’s instruction.

Coursework’s emphasis on research-based methods for teaching every student.

Recursive attention to diversity in coursework seemed to coalesce to construct a democratic narrative of equal educational opportunity and inclusive practice that spiraled throughout the documents and descriptions of methods-related courses. By “inclusive practice,” I mean that methods courses emphasized that all students can learn when they are afforded appropriate learning opportunities, and that it is the teacher’s responsibility to make content accessible and learning environments affirming so that every student can learn. The most prominent course example comes from Differentiated Instruction in Diverse Secondary Classes, which was emphasized fostering candidates’ understandings of skilled practice in research-based methods,
approaches, and materials for teaching English learners and students with identified learning needs in the mainstream classroom.

**Distinctive way of being-doing as a quality ELA teacher: Excelling in one’s knowledge of Sociocultural Theories and Theory-Practice Relationship**

My analysis of course syllabi demonstrated that content was in alignment with the state department of education’s performance-based standards for teachers, which outlined eight standards that reflect the knowledge and skills deemed necessary by the state for beginning teachers. Those standards included knowledge of: literacy, mathematics, standards and assessment, content, classroom and instructional management, individualized instruction, technology, and democratic contexts of education. In this accountability- and outcome-driven era, states’ and accrediting agencies’ preoccupations with evidence made the stakes quite high for this TEP not to demonstrate that coursework was preparing candidates to excel in their knowledge of those standards-based domains. My focus here is not on how much coverage standards or domains of teachers’ knowledge got in each course; in fact, in this chapter’s conclusion I problematize a content-coverage approach, like the one employed by NCTQ, to examining teacher preparation program quality. My focus is on the relationship between the institutional discursive prioritization of preparing teachers who ensure “every student’s learning” and “excel” in their knowledge of “how people learn” and “the socio-cultural world of learners,” and two themes from my analysis of program-level discourse: coursework that developed a theoretical foundation of knowledge of how people learn, and, more specifically, of sociocultural perspectives on learning, development, and literacy, and coursework’s emphasis on theory and practice.
Theoretical foundations and sociocultural perspectives on learning, development, and literacy. Coursework in the TEP was broadly situated in sociocultural perspectives, and sociocultural theoretical perspectives undergirded assumptions on learning, development, and literacy that faculty and instructors brought to bear to varying degrees in coursework. As I discussed in Chapter Two, sociocultural perspectives complicate taken-for-granted notions that learning is a byproduct of passive receipt of knowledge or a process that occurs solely ‘in the head’, and (re)framed learning as a socially situated and culturally-organized phenomenon—an inherently social process that unfolds as individuals learn to participate in particular cultural contexts or “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Working within that framing in the context of teacher preparation, particular domains of teachers’ knowledge are foregrounded as meaningful, namely, knowledge of how people learn generally and knowledge of a specific group of students as learners, what’s within those students’ developmental reach, and what’s just beyond it, as well as their cultural backgrounds and personal histories. In the context of this TEP, the institutional and program-level discourse preparing candidates with theoretical foundations in sociocultural perspectives on learning and development were understood as crucial for positioning novices as able to design, adapt, and enact learner-based pedagogies and assessments, and instruction that meets students where they are and ensures every student’s learning. In other words, developing that foundation in teacher education was key to meeting the priority of preparing the distinctive kind of teacher produced by the institutional priority outlined above. Theoretical foundations in learning and development and sociocultural perspectives were formally introduced in Educational Psychology and Adolescent Development (Ed. Psych), which provided an introduction to various perspectives on learning (for example, constructivism, [e.g.,
Duckworth, 1996]; cultural ways of learning [e.g., Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003]; sociocultural learning theory [e.g., Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch & Toma, 1995]).

Just a few weeks into the semester, students were then introduced to sociocultural theories of learning, the primary focus of the course, and topics of language and discourse, culture, motivation and engagement, identity, design of learning environments, and intersectionality. In concert with developing knowledge of those theoretical concepts and perspectives, candidates visited out-of-school, community-based service-learning sites, which the course syllabus described as “culturally and linguistically diverse learning environments.” At site, candidates were positioned as participant observers, learning how to write fieldnotes, in which they documented processes of learning observed and applied theoretical constructs in the service of making deeper sense of how learning unfolds in its context of development.] and methods-related courses in the literacy block built on that foundation by creating opportunities for candidates to extend their theoretical knowledge by bringing those concepts to bear on instructional practice. As just one example, in Methods, I built on candidates’ knowledge of those perspectives, seeking to problematize taken-for-granted notions that classroom management is a proxy for controlling student behavior, restricting the learning environment, rewarding and punishing, and looking to the student for what’s ‘wrong’, and to reframe or “remediate” classroom management as “organizing for a learning culture” and challenge deficit-oriented gazes (Cole & Griffin, 1983; Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubiaga, 2009).

Coursework’s theory-practice emphasis. The second theme I discuss related to the broad category of preparing teachers to excel in their knowledge is a pattern of emphasis in coursework on both theory and practice. As I developed above, theoretical concepts and perspectives on learning and development informed the organization of coursework, but there was also attention
across courses to bringing those theoretical concepts to bear in instructional practice by affording candidates opportunities to try out what they were learning in both the university-based classroom and the field-based practicum classroom. That emphasis also tended to manifest in the language of course overviews and objectives. As I discuss in more detail in the next section, a prominent example of coursework’s theory-practice emphasis came from the discourse of the course, Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum, and its course instructor Lisa. Because Lisa was one of four faculty/instructors who taught a core course in the literacy block, I take up the theme of theory-practice relationship in the next section as I turn to a focus on the ELA courses in the TEP and the discourses of “quality” teaching that arose in my analysis of syllabi and interviews with each course instructor.

Being-Doing as a Quality ELA Teacher

From my analysis of program discourse, I found three primary emphases related to distinctive ways of being-doing as a quality ELA teacher that were promoted by faculty, instructors, and their course designs in courses required of candidates seeking ELA licensure. Those emphases informed my construction of three thematic codes: 1) emphasizing theory-practice; 2) positioning novices to assuming a professional role orientation; 3) positioning novices as “story teachers.” The courses and perspectives of each of the three core faculty/instructors teaching in the literacy block (i.e., Lisa, Nancy, and James) served as a telling example of each theme (even as themes traveled across syllabi and instructor talk). Thus, below, I first briefly situate the program’s sociocultural perspectives on literacy as context for my discussion of the ELA-specific discourse related to quality teaching. Then, I organize this section by introducing each faculty member in relation to the theme that their course and talk most prominently represented.
Perspectives on literacy. Sociocultural perspectives grounded the expansive conception of literacy that was (re)produced in the TEP; as one faculty member put it, “Literacy is one word that means many things.” So much more than decoding words on the page, literacy was framed in the program as socially situated practice—as something we practice differently given different contexts of and purposes for use. Moreover, literacy was understood not “as a context-neutral, content-free, skill-specific competence that can be imparted to children with almost scientific precision” (de Castell & Luke, 1986, p. 159), but as political and ideological in nature. From an expansive perspective, literacy evolves over time as an ever-shifting collection of practices. It accounts for the ways in which the nature of the digital age has shifted what it means to be “fully literate,” and so, too, has changed the nature of the literacy demands. That perspective aligns with NCTE’s (2008) professional discourse on 21st century literacies, which asserts, “As society and technology change, so does literacy.” As I will develop, this expansive conception of literacy informed how courses like the Nature of English and English Methods were organized to invite preservice teachers to conceive of literacy as dynamic, as integral to the success of 21st century learners, and as something that extends beyond classroom boundaries.

Distinctive way of being-doing as a quality ELA teacher: Theory-Practice Relationship

As I discussed above, the course Language and Literacy and the instructor, Lisa’s design of it, was the context in which the relationship between theory and practice was most dominant in the syllabi I reviewed and in the interviews with course instructors. Below, I introduce Lisa and discuss this theme of the TEP’s discourse.

Lisa. A National Board Certified high-school English teacher with 17 years of classroom experience teaching the ELA and reading, Lisa was an instructor most loved and respected by students. Exuberant, warm, and seemingly always smiling, Lisa’s passion for teaching young
people and future teachers was palpable from the moment I met her. Lisa taught the ELA and reading at a local high school, which also served as the field-based practicum site for Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum. Lisa had a Masters degree in K-12 literacy, and five years before participating in this study, she also received her Masters degree in linguistically diverse education; both advanced degrees were from programs in the same School documented in this study. Sharing with me why she went back for an advanced degree in linguistically diverse education, Lisa recalled how emergent bilingual students, whose first language was something other than English, began to be placed in her reading classes, despite her concerns that the school was misplacing those students and conflating “reading problems” with issues related to second language acquisition. Lisa began to explore how to support this new group of students in her classroom, but she quickly realized that she had “no capacity” to do so. So, she enrolled in the Master’s program. She had taken courses with James, the instructor of Literature for Secondary Teachers who was also program chair at the time, and when the program was undergoing a process of redesign, James asked Lisa if she wanted to sign on to teach Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum. She agreed, and after her first year, which she described as a “colossal failure” because she was still learning what teacher candidates needed and what was “covered” in other literacy-block coursework, she caught her stride.

Indeed, and as I will discuss below, Lisa’s talk about her own experiences as a teacher struggling to negotiate her ability to design supportive instruction for diverse students in the literacy classroom seemed an important influence on how she approached her course, and the theory-practice emphasis that characterized that approach. Below, I elaborate that emphasis in relation to how Lisa organized her course.
Lisa’s theory-practice emphasis. Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum was a required course of all Secondary Humanities candidates, and according to Lisa’s syllabus, it was designed to help them develop theoretical and practical understandings “of how native and non-native, adolescent speakers of English develop literacy.” Lisa shared that in her Master’s program in K-12 literacy, she was one of only four secondary teachers, and struggled with the program’s emphasis on students in the primary grades. She recalled being the one to always raise a hand and ask, “how does this apply to the secondary level?” only to be met with her instructors’ refrain, “You’re going to have to adapt that.” So, perhaps it is not surprising that Lisa’s course overview framed “one of the most challenging tasks for novice teachers” as “understand[ing] the link between what is taught in the university classroom and what they, as teachers, need to do in school-based classrooms. [Language and Literacy] is designed to bridge the theory / practice gap in several ways…” (course syllabus). That overview also framed the course as providing a “foundational knowledge of the theories and classroom practices in contemporary secondary reading instruction” and “knowledge of research-based classroom practices for teaching reading” (emphasis in original) in both the secondary ELA and social studies classrooms.

Contrasting Lisa’s perspective on the theory-practice divide, as she talked about experiencing it in her own teaching practice as she moved across contexts of UBTE and local schools and classrooms, with Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson’s (2003) perspective, which I discussed in Chapter Three, there is an important dichotomy to be underscored in Lisa’s approach. Smagorinsky et al. reject the theory-practice divide as a polarizing dichotomy that does little to help preservice teachers develop deep conceptual coherence—something for which both theory and practice are necessary. Lisa’s emphasis on bridging that divide, as she perceived
it, reinforces (albeit implicitly) that such a divide exists and must be overcome. It’s possible that Lisa’s emphasis on bringing theory and practice together actually exacerbated the divide. That is, some candidates might have inferred that where theory-practice was not explicitly “bridged” in other course contexts, there was an overemphasis on theory at the expense of practice. Also of significance is Lisa’s emphasis on “research-based classroom practices,” which invokes the institutional discourse and commitment to evidence-informed policy and practice. However, “research-based” is a loaded phrase in the current policy climate, and has been since NCLB, that implies a focus on “scientific notions of literacy.” Whether Lisa was aware of that history and intended to use the phase as such or not, her use of “research-based” in this way is inflected with that meaning.

To develop a foundation of knowledge related to “research-based practices that constitute comprehensive literacy instruction” (course syllabus), candidates explored through readings and in-class discussions what Lisa called “the 5 components of literacy instruction.” She said that attention was coupled with opportunities “to practice looking at teaching examples for each component,” as well “teaching [candidates] specific assessment measures that they can use” such as the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI). The course’s culminating assignment was “the case study”—an ongoing, performance-based assessment task that afforded candidates an opportunity to enact in practice all that they were learning called in the course. The case study was an assignment that all four preservice-teacher participants referenced in their interviews as being influential in shaping their understanding of what it means to teach literacy. Below, I describe what was involved in that assignment. I focus on this assignment in particular, because it was the most salient example of how Lisa organized her assignments to bring theory and practice together. It was also an assignment that all four preservice teachers invoked in their talk about
“stand out” experiences in the program, and described in terms of being their initiation into particular teaching practices related to supporting students’ growth as readers.

First, Lisa paired each preservice teacher with a high school student enrolled in her reading course. Lisa shared that most of her students had been identified by the school as “struggling” readers, and many of them also had “multiple designations”—that is, many were on Individual Learning Plans, Individualized Education Programs, and/or were identified English Language Learners. The case study unfolded over a span of several weeks. In week one, candidates met their students in the whole-class setting of the high school reading course, and they were charged with the task of “just getting to know one another.” In week two, candidates designed questionnaires that were intended, as Lisa put it, “to capture their students as readers, as learners, and as people.” In week three, candidates administered to their students the questionnaires and the QRI, and used data yielded by those assessments to develop targeted plans for strategic literacy instruction. To facilitate their collaborative design of such developmentally appropriate instruction, Lisa grouped candidates into “teaching pods” according to their students’ demonstrated needs. For six weeks thereafter, each teaching pod collaboratively implemented its strategic instructional plan with a small group of students, and as their students engaged in that literacy instruction, candidates collected “anecdotal records” of their development all along the way. Immediately following each week’s instruction, candidates also reflected with their teaching pods on how their targeted efforts actually functioned to scaffold students’ growth and development. In the final week of the case study, candidates administered a final questionnaire to elicit feedback from their students on what they had learned.

The case study seemed to serve two broad purposes, both of which reflect sociocultural perspectives on learning, development, and literacy, and coursework’s theory-practice emphasis.
First, it aimed to deepen candidates’ understanding of how students learn and develop literacy, as it engaged candidates in documenting and reflecting on those processes as they unfolded in the context of development. Second, it provided candidates an opportunity to develop skilled practice using a variety of assessment tools to elicit important information about who their students were as learners, to design targeted instruction that could meet those unique developmental needs, and to enact scaffolding practices and instructional strategies in the service of propelling students toward their potential development as readers. Lisa also required the teaching pods to submit to her each week a lesson plan, an analysis of student growth, and a reflection on their own growth as teachers. In this way, she modeled the process of providing targeted feedback and assistance as candidates were actively engaged in a complex task, and used reflection as a tool to mediate candidates’ sense-making, troubleshooting, and monitoring their own learning in the service of scaffolding their development as literacy teachers. Also important, Lisa explained that the case study also created a context in which to have what she called “important conversations” with candidates about creating “a caring and engaging community—how to create a classroom community and how to meet the needs of second language learners.” Lisa’s talk emphasized that, for her, it was important that candidates not only practice bringing theoretical perspectives and research-based methods to bear on their teaching of literacy, but also internalize the importance of organizing a “caring and engaging” community in which that learning and development can unfold. Lisa was known for her “dignity and respect” talk—an instantiation of those important conversations around creating a caring and engaging classroom community, and that seemed to stick with candidates. When I asked her about this talk, which I had heard invoked frequently by candidates in my own courses, she said it was grounded in “the idea that every classroom can be run with dignity and respect, and that
that can be in itself a really powerful learning opportunity for kids.” Lisa thought she was
“uniquely situated to teach” candidates about creating a caring and engaging classroom because
of how the students in her reading classes were positioned:

> [as] disenfranchised, marginalized kids that tend to sit in the very back. And they’re the
ones that we tend to close our minds to and if I can teach us that every student sitting in
that room wants to learn, they just display that differently, um, and that every student
sitting in that room is somebody’s child, and there’s somebody that is giving you the
most solemn and important obligation to take care of their kid while they’re in your care.
And if you ignore them or disregard them because of their behaviors, then you are not
fulfilling your obligation to another human being. (interview, 11/23/11)

Engaging candidates in thinking about their moral obligation to ‘see’ every student in their
classroom and to treat them with dignity and respect was Lisa’s approach to teaching classroom
management. As I will develop in the next chapter, these conversations left their mark on
candidates. They also represent another “through-line” across coursework and the institutional
priority of preparing teachers to ensure the learning of every student and to embrace democratic
dispositions.

**Distinctive way of being-doing as a quality ELA teacher: Novices who assume a**

**professional role orientation as ELA teachers.** This is perhaps the most interesting finding I
constructed from my analysis of program-level discourse. In addition to deepening candidates’
knowledge of how people learn and develop literacy, and of research-based methods and
approaches for teaching the ELA, faculty and instructors were working hard to position
candidates as members of the teaching profession, able to improve their practice from within, by
foregrounding particular dispositions in their courses and work with candidates. As I inquired
into the relationship between that work and the institutional discourse, I began to read the former
not just in terms of the distinctive ways of being-doing that were associated with high-quality
teachers and teaching in this context, but also as the ways of being-doing that faculty and
instructors interpreted as critical for achieving the goal of preparing novice teachers to “embrace” democratic dispositions and to ensure the learning of every student.

Carroll’s (2005) work on developing dispositions for teaching was helpful in drawing those connections. Drawing on Buchmann’s (1993) notion of assuming a “role orientation” as a crucial disposition for teaching, Carroll notes that,

Developing dispositions for supporting the learning of all students entails assuming a professional role that is, in many ways, unnatural (Goodlad, 1990; Buchmann, 1993). A teacher must be oriented beyond the dictates of personal preference or interest toward a kind of stewardship for the learning and well-being of students. Although rooted in an individual’s personal beliefs and attitudes, professional dispositions in teaching are also culturally constituted in the context of what could be called a moral community of practice (Buchmann, 1993). (p. 83)

As Carroll underscores, becoming a teacher who supports every student’s learning involves making a crucial shift from a personal orientation, or a focus on the self, toward a professional orientation and a focus on others unlike ourselves. Of significance, developing a professional role orientation is “in many ways, unnatural”—a point that echoes Ball & Forzani’s (2009) argument that learning the work of teaching involves developing an “unnatural orientation toward others and a simultaneous, unusual attention to the ‘what’ of that which they are helping others learn” (p. 499). Because developing a role orientation in learning to teach is unnatural, Carroll argues that novices must be socialized into professional dispositions through a sociocultural process of negotiation in which they examine in the presence of peers and more expert mentors and colleagues the meaning of their experiences learning to teach vis-à-vis the assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that they carried into teacher preparation. Framing university-based teacher education programs as “moral communities of practice” in which that negotiation is possible, Carroll further argues that TEPs bear responsibility for shaping the nature of the socialization processes that get enacted in their communities of practice. In other words, TEPs
are responsible for socializing novices into teaching as a profession and engaging them in that negotiating work by facilitating critical self-examination of their beliefs, modeling professional dispositions, and providing scaffolded that support novices’ learning of those dispositions.

My analysis uncovered a patterned theme among required courses in the literacy block, and Nature of English and Literature for Secondary Teachers in particular, related to preparing candidates to assume a professional role orientation. I coded that theme “positioning novices to assume a professional role orientation” and argue that positioning candidates as professionals was crucial to preparing candidates to live commitments to democracy, diversity, and social justice; ensure the learning of every student; and embrace democratic dispositions. In my report of findings below, I draw largely on the discourse of Nancy and James, two faculty members who were positioned as central figures in the Secondary ELA licensure program for the classes they taught and influence they seemed to have on their preservice teachers. Reporting on one faculty member at a time, I begin by sharing with readers some of these teacher educators’ backgrounds and then move onto a description of what they attempted to do in their courses by way of positioning novices to assume a professional role orientation.

Nancy. A veteran teacher educator with more than 20 years of experience in university-based classrooms, Nancy taught several courses in the TEP including Composition for Teachers, Nature of English, and Language Study for Educators. In the literacy studies program where she also played a prominent role, I came to know Nancy as both a doctoral student and mentee, and we developed a close, working relationship. I had opportunities to enroll in two of her advanced doctoral seminars, co-teach alongside her in Composition for Teachers, and act as a research assistant in a study of a writing partnership that Nancy had created between preservice teachers enrolled in a section of her writing methods course and a group of ninth graders and their two
English teachers at a culturally and linguistically diverse local high school. Her knowledge and expertise in the fields of English Education, rhetoric and composition, and literacy studies were truly inspiring, as were her nurturing and compassionate ways with candidates, patience, and capacity for holding the space for novices’ vulnerability, apprehension, and even reluctance in the face of approaching a process as challenging as becoming a teacher. Nancy had a long history of personal and professional involvement with one of the most prominent professional organizations dedicated to the teaching of English, and as I will demonstrate, she brought her knowledge of the history of the profession to bear in the organization of her courses.

Making the transition to Research University, Nancy joked that she had to learn how to teach teachers all over again. There was a learning curve involved in getting to know the context of this TEP, the students it tended to attract, and how to balance what their perceived needs were with her professional sense of what novices need by way of supportive, high-quality ELA teacher preparation, and at the end of each term, Nancy reflected on what seemed generative in her courses and what did not, and on how students responded, and revised the course curriculum to accommodate what she had learned. She also designed two new courses for the program: Nature of English and Language Study for Educators, an elective course that many candidates seeking secondary ELA licensure took, including three of the preservice-teacher participants in this study. I begin my narrative of Nancy’s role in fostering professional dispositions for teaching by opening up a description of her course Nature of English.

*Nature of English.* Nature of English was organized as an exploration of “historical and ongoing controversies concerning the nature of ‘English’ as an academic field of study and of ‘English language arts’ as a school subject” (Nature of English course syllabus). The quotations around “English” and “English language arts” mark Nancy’s leading assumption about the
contested nature of those terms—that their meanings have not been decided upon, once and for all. Constructing English and the ELA in terms of the “historical and ongoing controversies” that have long characterized them was Nancy’s entry-point for making “strange” the familiar school subject and discipline—that is, for bringing novices into an unnatural way of thinking in the service of recognizing the field as a contested site of struggle over meaning, and themselves as professionally situated in that field. In English/language arts classrooms, students generally are not extended invitations to ponder fundamental questions about what the ELA is and what it should be for, to be confronted with the ambiguous conclusion that those questions have no ‘right’ answers, and to positioned as professionals who belong to something “much bigger than them.” Extending such invitations was at the heart of Nancy’s work in Nature of English. As Nancy put it, “It’s issuing a series of invitations, kind of as an act of faith to think about themselves as emerging members of a profession. You know, not as technicians, but as very conscious learners who are in growth mode, who are absolutely committed to fostering the growth of young people.” For Nancy, the distinctive kinds of ELA teachers she hoped to foster positioned themselves in active capacities—as learners, always curious, “always wondering and always growing.” Those teachers likewise see themselves as “risk takers” and as capable of so much, including navigating ambiguous and uncertain terrain in the classroom; they do not see themselves as passive learners or as de-skilled “technicians.” In concert with their inquiry into the ELA’s historically contested terrain, Nancy encouraged candidates to frame their own questions. In this way, she positioned her students at once as both inquirers and as professionals who must decide for themselves what this school subject is all about, and what broad purposes it should be serving in the lives of students and democratic society. Moreover, by framing learning as an active process of inquiry, and engaging novices in inquiry into questions that have no easy
answers, Nature of English challenged novices to situate themselves and their emergent ideas about their work and goals for ELA teaching amid an array of competing conceptions about the nature and purpose of literacy instruction and about students’ learning processes, identities, and social futures.

*Positioning novices to assume a professional role orientation.* One of the most prominent themes from my analysis of Nancy’s discourse concerns how she positioned students to assume a professional role orientation, and to begin constructing a sense of themselves as members of the profession. Nancy organized the course around a series of inquiry-based questions with lead-ins such as “What’s involved in…”, “Who are we as…”, and “What can we learn from…” Each week posed a new question, the first of which took candidates on a journey of exploration into “How did ‘English’ become a school subject?” That week’s readings included excerpts of *Report of the Committee of Ten* (1894) and the Hosic Report (1914)—two historical texts that frame the ELA not as a natural and politically-neutral school subject, but instead in terms of competing conceptions that have been put forth over many decades with regard to the question “What is English?” (Elbow, 1990). The Hosic Report also constructed the profession of English educators as having a long history of organizing in response to competing conceptions on the nature and purpose of the ELA that have come from beyond the classroom, for example, from the policy arena and the academy, to direct what teachers do in their classroom practice. Of course, there are also contemporary parallels to be drawn across the debate that has been unfolding for more than a century regarding of what the ELA should consist, what it should be for, and how teachers should be prepared to teach it. In order to facilitate candidates’ connection making across past, present, and future contexts of literacy instruction, Nancy explored with candidates contemporary “hot topics” such as censorship, meeting the needs of emergent bilinguals, and
teaching to tests, alongside inquiry into the historical context of the ELA. Nancy said that she hoped to engender “a sense of being affiliated with this profession and with a whole range of people who have been working, living, struggling in this profession.”

Professional perspectives and voices figured prominently in the required reading list, which included NCTE-generated position papers on the teaching of English (1991), the definition of 21st century literacies (2008), and 21st century curriculum and assessment (2008), as well as perspectives of leaders in the field (e.g., Stock, 2010). Early in the term, candidates inquired into the question, “How can professional friends and organizations support us?” That week, Nancy invited as guest speakers a professor from a neighboring university and a few of her students—members of a student-run affiliate group of NCTE; Nancy organized the formation of a similar group in the TEP with which she was affiliated and encouraged elementary and secondary candidates to join. Throughout the term, Nancy extended invitations for her students to turn over who they were becoming as teachers of the ELA and to articulate their own positions on the nature and purpose of the subject. When asked what a good day in Nature of English looked like, Nancy said that some of the most beautiful moments for her involved students arriving at “these a-ha! moments that they were joining a profession that has a history, a history that’s marked by dynamic struggle, sometimes controversy, and that they do not stand alone.” Nancy pointed to the case of one student whom we had both shared, and recalled how she entered her class seeming very committed and thoughtful, but also as having those “perceptive self doubts” that you have when you realize you’re entering into something that’s “really vital and important and big.” Moving through the major assignments over the course of the term, this student took up Nancy’s invitations to assume a professional role orientation, and to beautiful effect. As a young reader, this student had an experience with Perks of Being a Wallflower
(Chbosky, 2012) that was so powerfully shaping, Nancy thought it was perhaps the reason why she wanted to become an ELA teacher. When she entered Nature of English, Nancy’s sense was that this student was searching for ways to engage students in “those kinds of vital experiences. And so [her course experience] went into having the courage to teach touchy texts.” Through course assignments, this student explored how the profession could be of support to her as a beginning teacher passionately committed to teaching “touchy texts” like *Perks*. Guided by that keen interest, she found and reviewed relevant pieces from the *English Journal* and corresponded with an author, critically reviewed a methods course text, practiced making instructional plans, and began integrating her background as an artist, reader, and writer into her developing teacher identity as she thought about ways to articulate her aspirations as an ELA teacher. Reflecting on this student’s end-of-term thoughts on her experience in the course, Nancy’s impression was that it was “just such a wonderfully nourishing thing to find kind of her path, her way of being in this profession, to kind of find her emerging identity and connecting with all these wonderful teachers. Just realizing that boy, there’s so much help out there.” Nancy noted that this student’s experience was perhaps the most vivid of its kind, but there were variations of that aha! moment that students found.

*Challenges and dilemmas.* Speaking to the challenges she’s navigated in teaching this course and positioning novices as professionals, Nancy pointed to how young many candidates in the program tend to be and how they “aren’t quite thinking of themselves yet as professionals,” and so it’s a “really tall order” to begin to invite them into seeing the process of becoming an ELA teacher as similar to the process of becoming a doctor, lawyer, or any other kind of professional. Nancy said,

Reading the report of the Committee of Ten, I’m sure some people saw that as dry as dust and what does this have to do with us, you know? So it’s that kind of presentist, radically
individualistic mentality that’s so pervasive in our society and I think especially for
young people. We’re really trying to invite them into a different way of thinking. So I
want them to think about their teaching in terms of activity and participation, I want them
to think about their emerging developing identities in that dance. And I want them to
think that they’re joining something that’s much bigger than them. (interview, 2/23/12)

This “different way of thinking” is evidence, I think, of the professional role orientation that
Nancy was positioning candidates to assume. It is also evidence of Nancy’s perspective on the
challenges of learning to teach and of preparing teacher professionals in these times of high-
stakes education reform and acute accountability. Her sense was that many of her students
grappled in teacher education with a deep “concern for doing something wrong,” a belief that
there’s a ‘right’ way to be a teacher, and outright fear when faced with uncertainties and
ambiguities that emerge in practice, but are part and parcel of learning professional work. In the
face of fear, Nancy sensed that some candidates defaulted to demands for certainty. She said,

You know, just all that fear in people’s minds, what if I don’t know enough to do this. You
know? Give me a rule book so I won’t make a mistake with somebody’s kid and so I
won’t get fired and never get a job. Or, my kids won’t score high enough on the exam
and I’ll be fired. You know, there’s just so much kind of fearful energy in the air and so I
think it’s really important to think in conscious ways together that our responsibilities as
educators that we are public servants, we are caring for a new generation. (interview,
2/23/12)

In other words, Nancy’s experience suggested that in the face of fear, some novices altogether
resist the professional role orientation she was working to model and foster, and gravitate instead
toward methods, strategies, and approaches that they so desperately hope will function as a sort-
of life preserver in the rough and tumble waters of learning to teach in these times. Nancy
attempted to insulate that fear by constructing the larger profession as a supportive community
that knows well these fears and struggles, and to position novices as welcome new members that
the profession would embrace wholeheartedly. But, that move was likewise tempered by the
pervasiveness of what Nancy thought of as a “radically individualistic mentality” in society.
Moreover, Nancy’s discourse points to a tension pulled taut by the demands that high-stakes accountability place on teachers in these times. While the TEP was preparing novices to assume inquiry stances, to engage in critical reflection, to leverage research, and to rely on their professional community in the face of practical dilemmas and ambiguity, Nancy sensed that the fear of getting fired, of not having high-enough test scores, and so on were so great that they drove some candidates to default to “rule books,” scripts, technocratic ways of being-doing in the classroom.

**Distinctive way of being-doing as a quality ELA teacher: Preparing novices to be “story teachers”**

*James.* Another veteran teacher educator with two decades’ experience, James’s required course Literature for Secondary Teachers was often indexed by ELA licensure candidates as one of the most shaping course experiences of their teacher preparation. A former high school English teacher, James left the classroom in pursuit of the “intellectual challenge” of a graduate degree. As a graduate student, he explored big ideas like narrative, critical literacy, writing, culture, and stories, and as I will develop, intellectual curiosity and a passion for ideas and creative thinking deeply influenced his work as a teacher educator. For example, James wrote and co-directed a dramatic poem that was performed by a group of local high school students at a nearby theatre. Over the years, James has also cultivated many school and community partnerships and community-based outreach programs, such as an after-school program in a local, urban community that supports young children to develop reading and writing skills while also growing an awareness of the important role that literacies play in our lives. At the heart of James’s work in teacher education lays a focus on the role of literature and the humanities in
education and public life. I begin my narrative of James’s role in positioning novices to assume a professional role orientation by opening up a description of Literature for Secondary Teachers.

*Literature for Secondary Teachers.* James’s course sought first and foremost to (re)shape candidates’ understanding of what it means to teach literature. As James put it in the course overview, “Literature, through an intense engagement with language, confronts us with ourselves, our deepest dilemmas, our towering heights, and our most humbling contradictions in a manner which is both personal and social.” The distinctive kind of ELA teacher whom James sought to prepare was guided by this perspective on literature, and approached the teaching of it in ways that afforded young people opportunities for such “intense engagement.” From James’s perspective, preparing novices to assume that stance toward teaching literature involved shifting their frames of reference away from their perspectives as students and in the direction of a professional role orientation toward “story teaching” that recognized and affirmed the importance of stories. Instilling in candidates that understanding was a central charge of the work James did in Literature for Secondary Teachers. James framed his overarching goal in the course as helping candidates begin to reflect on “what a story actually is and how everyday stories are a part of life,” and from there, to “try to get people to really reflect on what it means to be a story teacher once you understand the pervasiveness and power and importance of stories in our lives.”

From James’s perspective, stories compose the world and have tremendous potential for inviting new ways of seeing and being in the world. As literature and stories confront the reader with what’s possible, there emerges potential and possibility to change what is. Speaking to this point, James said:

So how do these stories change the world, you know? And there’s a clear answer to that. And that is, uh, if stories always present us with the expected in life, the canonical, and they often do. And then show us what we thought was real and true wasn’t by the time we’ve read the story, then we’re constantly getting practice in recognizing how what we
think is real is just one of many possibilities. And so they always point us toward the alternative ways of seeing. And that’s how they change the world. They change the world because they show us other ways of imagining the world and our own lives. (interview, 4/30/12)

When this approach to teaching literature is enacted in practice, there is opportunity for teacher and students to “read the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). That is, as they move back and forth between reading a text’s words, details, and structures to construct rich literary worlds of possibility, they are also concomitantly reading and re-reading their own dynamically lived worlds, and new “repertoires of experience,” as James called them, become available. In this way, literature becomes a tool for coauthoring new worlds of possibility—worlds more equitable and more just than we currently know. James engaged his students in talking and thinking about these ideas in class, and course assignments were generally framed as opportunities to creatively imagine, collaborate, and plan how to enact a story teacher’s stance in classroom practice. In class, James balanced modeling approaches to story teaching, and turning over class time for candidates to enact in practice their own instructional plans. He also offered candidates a plethora of teaching ideas, activities, and resources, which candidates often drew on and adapted for use in subsequent coursework.

*Positioning novices to assume a professional role orientation toward story teaching.*

Analyzing James’s discourse revealed his perspective that assuming an orientation toward story teaching involved a “shift,” or a necessary departure from familiar ways of knowing and being in the ELA classroom. Related to what was involved in helping candidates develop orientations toward story teaching, there seemed to be two key shifts at play. The first involved candidates shifting their beliefs about the nature and purpose of teaching literature, who their students would be, and what their roles as teachers of literature should be, as well as how those
taken-for-granted beliefs have been significantly shaped by their own personal histories in school. Speaking to how he worked toward that end in his course, James said:

In many ways, you know, I sometimes say to them, you know, I know you’re an English major, but you know most of the kids that you’re going to teach are not going to be, are going to be the kids that you never took class with in high school. Think about that. They’re not going to be the kids you were in class with in high school. But that’s the ones you’re going to be teaching. And then also, what do you do for those kids who aren’t going to become English majors? Why should they read? As well as the ones who are going to? And what small part can you do in terms of transforming, uh, what’s most important to take away from a literature education? (interview, 4/30/12)

This segment of James’s discourse demonstrates how he engaged candidates in critical self-reflection and inquiry into the fundamental purposes of schooling and literacy education for all students, not just for students with whom candidates most easily or readily identify. James sought to bring candidates into more self-conscious awareness of their taken-for-granted assumptions about who their future students would be—namely, that they would be learners positioned much the same as they were in high school, as lovers of reading and writing and as future “English majors”—why they should care about the ELA, and of significance, what novices’ roles and responsibilities were for serving all students, and especially students unlike themselves. Here, I see a clear through line running across the institution’s larger commitment to preparing teachers who are passionately committed to ensuring the learning of every student, and James’s invitations for candidates to shift their frames of reference from an orientation toward the self—what Nancy also described as a “student frame of reference”—to an orientation toward teaching students unlike them. Also important is the line of continuity that runs across James’s discourse and Nancy’s comment that in the TEP, “we’re really trying to invite [candidates] into a different way of thinking.” In Nature of English, Nancy posed similar questions related to candidates’ beliefs about the nature and purpose of their work and teaching all students,
Making the shift from a personal or student frame of reference to a professional frame of reference is central to assuming a professional role orientation. I would also argue that James and Nancy’s invitations to turn over fundamental questions like what the ELA is, what literacy instruction should be for, and what’s “most important to take away” from it were crucial components of the program’s discourse, given the School’s mission to prepare teachers for democracy, diversity, and social justice, and to teach all students. As I will show in the next chapter, three of the four preservice-teacher participants in this study cited their love of the content and of literature as chief influences on why they wanted to become ELA teachers, and two of those teachers-to-be were also English majors. Like many of their teacher-candidate peers, these folks were competent learners who had found great success in school, and even greater success in the ELA classroom. Engaging similarly positioned novices in critical self-reflection and inquiry into questions about how, why, and what for, and doing that work in teacher preparation is of utmost importance in preparing them to support students unlike themselves, to honor those students with dignity and respect, and to live democratic dispositions.

The second shift that James’s discourse emphasized related to developing a professional role orientation toward “story teaching” involved candidates shifting how they conceived of the work of teaching literature. In describing the nature of that “shift,” James said that it involves moving away from a focus on “textual features of a book, plot, theme, conflict… abstract themes that have no relation to what is actually happening in the world at all” and toward the primacy of everyday stories and their potential as agents for personal and social transformation. Making sense of the work in this way involved reframing traditional conceptions of literature teaching as
covering content or privileging the practice of mining texts for their formalist features. James described the work of story teaching was “imaginative” and “creative work”; instead of asking students what the theme of a literary piece is, James encouraged questions like “can you live it?” and “what do you want to do differently today after you read this?” For James, this shift was a crucial part of how he approached his work of preparing candidates to be story teachers who use literature as a tool for imagining new worlds of possibility and calling on students to enact those possible worlds. From James’s perspective, the role of the “story teacher” is not to squeeze from texts every last literary device or to remain frozen in the analytic space of dissecting plot, stylistic choices, figurative language, characterization, and the like. Rather, it is to “coauthor,” as he described it, stories alongside students. It is to weave together the narratives of experience rooted in students’ everyday lives with the worlds of possibility residing just beyond the boundaries of that experience, but made accessible by literature. It is to invite them to respond to questions about how the text might have changed the way they see and act in the world. It is to invite them to adopt an aesthetic stance as readers and to have a “lived-through” (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 124) experience with the text. To be sure, content and pedagogical content knowledge were still framed as necessary components of high-quality teaching, and assignments in James’s course provided candidates frequent opportunities to enact those conceptual ideas about the power of stories by way of instructional design and small-scale practice. But in the context of James’s discourse, what seemed of far more value than a candidate’s ability to design a standards-based lesson that engages students in analysis of literary devices in The Scarlet Letter was her ability to design creative and intellectually stimulating instruction that intensely engages students with literature. James’s discourse constructed high-quality ELA teachers as using literature not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end—as a tool for inviting students to
ponder, “Who am I? What might I become? How can I make the world a better place?” Those “basic, sort of humanizing questions” were to James that which distinguished “story teachers” from “reading and writing competency teachers.”

Challenges and dilemmas. James admitted that his perspective on teaching stories “is hard to get people behind” because, as he said, “the discipline of English has disciplined its students. And they’ve been socialized to read books in a particular way and think that’s valuable.” James understood the work of positioning his students to assume a professional role orientation and to embrace this new way of thinking about the teaching of literature as “hard,” because of traditional approaches and frameworks for teaching literature that have long-standing histories in the discipline of English studies (Applebee, 1993) and have socialized students into formalist understandings of what it means to teach the ELA. Moreover, James characterized the traditional ELA classroom as a setting that tended to stifle the creative spirit that he so fondly imagined fostering in preservice teachers. He said that bringing his students into these distinctive ways of being-doing in the ELA classroom was made more difficult, because “there’s a whole infrastructure, you know, a whole culture of teaching English that says study Macbeth and tap out iambic pentameter.” James’s metaphorical use of “infrastructure” here is interesting and conveys a sense that the challenge of preparing story teachers is deeply embedded in the structures and practices of traditional schooling, which are quite impervious to change. James’s discourse likewise constructs the challenges of getting novices behind his stance on story teaching as even greater in these times of high-stakes reforms and acute accountability, which have intensified the “pressure to focus on routines—those classroom teacher literacies that have tended to squeeze out some of the more interesting, kind of inspiring things that [novices] might try to do or think about doing.” James associated “effective” ELA teaching, or the distinctive
ways of being-doing that tend to be valued outside the realm of university-based teacher education by schools, policy makers, and society, with “knowledge of a lot of procedures” and the ability to “manage all sorts of procedural tools.” Elaborating further, James said that the pressure to “follow all these standards” and manage all the demands of teaching in these times has “squeezed out” all the rich possibilities that the discourse of story teaching engenders.

Pointing to a trend in literacy education research that has moved away from exploring “interesting ideas” and toward preparing novices for the routines and procedures of practice made more pressing by the stakes of accountability, James said, “It’s just, the translation problem is huge now, because the accountability schemes are just, are just, um, you know, gigantic. You know? They’re just huge. And that has tended to occupy the imaginations of teacher educators now.” He lamented, “I feel pushed to do that more and more myself.”

**Conclusion**

James’s construction of the distinctive ways of being-doing that he associated with “effective” teaching stand in opposition not just to the ways of being-doing as a story teacher, but also to the ways of being-doing that were more generally associated with quality ELA teaching in this TEP. This is an important finding constructed from my analysis of the relationship between the TEP’s Discourse on quality and discourses of high-stakes education reform. As both James and Nancy’s discourse suggests, faculty and instructors understood their work of positioning candidates to assume professional orientations by embracing unnatural ways of thinking about teaching, learning, the ELA, literature, and students was challenged by traditional ways of being-doing in the ELA classroom. Indeed, Nancy described that “different way of thinking” as “counter cultural.” I would argue, too, that there seemed to be shared understanding that realizing the goal of preparing the kinds of ELA teachers associated with
quality in this discourse community was jeopardized by dominant discourses of high-stakes education reform that promote deregulation and de-professionalization of teachers. In Nancy and James’ talk, I perceived a shared vision that the TEP was preparing candidates to see themselves as participating in something “much bigger than them,” and as working toward goals that transcend discourses and frameworks, such as the Common Core State Standards, which is largely informed by a formalist paradigm (Beach, 2011), that delineate what students should know and be able to do by the end of particular grade levels. That vision, however, was complex in Lisa’s discourse, as some of her talk and course design appeared, even if implicitly, to be grounded in the assumptions about achievement and successful learning and teaching in a formalist paradigm.

All three of these teacher educators fondly imagined preparing teachers who would understand ELA teaching as creative work, as squarely grounded in complex and contested disciplinary terrain, and as holding enormous potential to co-author lives and construct possible worlds that are more democratic and more just. Those teachers would position themselves as professionals and passionately pursue goals related to preparing young people for the literacy demands of 21st century democratic and civic participation—goals less quantifiable than fostering reading competencies. Ostensibly, these teachers would successfully negotiate competing Discourses on quality ELA teaching to live these distinctive ways of being-doing in the practice, and resist being positioned as “technicians” and as passive and inept by Discourses that measure teacher quality and “effectiveness” with the yardsticks of procedural knowhow and technocratic skill. In the next chapter, I turn to the cases of all four preservice teachers and report what their processes of negotiating competing Discourses and making sense of quality ELA teaching in their final semester of coursework were actually like.
Before ending this chapter, I want to return briefly to NCTQ’s approach to assessing program quality, which resulted in a two-and-a-half star rating (out of four) of the TEP I depict here, but not much substantive information generated about the program. I remind readers that NCTQ’s approach was to assess quality of program inputs by drawing on a very limited range of data sources, such as text from program websites and program-specific artifacts such as course syllabi and lists of required texts, and then scoring those inputs against fixed criteria outlined in a scoring methodology. That approach would not capture much of what I constructed here in terms of how “quality” was recognized and discursively produced in this TEP. As an example, on NCTQ’s rubric, “Standard 3: English language learners” (ELLS) was meant to evaluate how well programs prepare candidates to teach ELLs, but the scope of this standard is actually far narrower. In fact, Standard 3 evaluates whether required reading courses in a particular program “present strategies to address the specific needs of English language learners” (Standard 3, p. 3). Notable is that this standard applies only to elementary programs, and there is no equivalent standard that applies to secondary programs; it seems that secondary programs that prepare candidates to support ELLs’ literacy development were not credited for doing that work. In other words, the work of so many courses in the program that prepared candidates to support emergent bilinguals’ literacy development was not even recognized by NCTQ.

Regarding how NCTQ scored programs on this standard, the scoring methodology document\textsuperscript{16} for Standard 3 clarifies that data sources were limited to syllabi for required courses that addressed “literacy strategies” for ELLs. NCTQ takes care to note, however, that “literacy strategies” is \textit{not} meant to include “the broad spectrum of strategies that may be used with English language learners; rather, it is specifically focused on strategies relating to \textit{reading}

\footnote{NCTQ has made available a Scoring Methodology document for each of the 18 standards on its rubric. The document for Standard 3: English language learners, and that I drew on in the above discussion, can be retrieved from: \url{http://nctq.org/dmsView/Standard_Book_3}.}
In other words, the situated meaning of literacy in this context is quite narrow, insofar as “literacy strategies” are strictly limited to instructional strategies that foster students’ development of what NCTQ calls “the essential components of reading instruction” (Standard 3, p. 5)—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Explicitly excluded here are strategies that prepare teachers to relate to all students, to access relevant information about contexts for teaching and learning, or to cultivate and practice dispositions that affirm all students and honor democratic principles of equity. According to the scoring methodology, strategies that “address the specific needs” of language learners ‘count’ only if those specific needs are understood in terms of developing reading skills.

Similarly narrow is the scope of analysis for Standard 3 wherein analysts were instructed to score syllabi according to the proportion of “coverage” these literacy strategies get during in-class lectures and course assignments. To fully satisfy this standard, literacy strategies, as defined above, had to be the focus of two lectures, and there must have been some mechanism of accountability in place that required candidates to enact those strategies in practice (e.g., candidates were required to make accommodations for language learners in instructional plans). Astonishingly, NCTQ notes that its analysis “does not evaluate the utility of the strategies, only that they are cited as topics for instruction and/or practice” (Standard 3, p. 4). In other words, what counts in this context is that required reading courses cover literacy strategies for teaching language learners to read in English. What does not count is the degree to which strategies covered are supported by scholarly research, or the novice’s ability to exercise professional judgment with regard to selecting the most appropriate strategy given the resources and needs of a particular group of learners.
Ostensibly, then, NCTQ’s approach could have attributed “quality” to programs that prepare candidates to do more harm to ELLs than good. Scholars have demonstrated that the process by which a student develops a second language is influenced by a complex set of factors, including differences related to students’ proficiencies in their first language, their “uprooting experiences” (Guerrero, 2003), prior experiences with schooling, socioeconomic status, motivation, anxiety levels, and so on (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 1989; Gándara et al., 2000; García, 2000). In isolation of at least some theoretical understanding of how people learn, and of how second language acquisition works, the extent to which novice teachers are prepared to employ instructional strategies ‘covered’ in teacher preparation in ways that successfully meet the unique needs of their local contexts for teaching and learning is far more limited. Moreover, in isolation of a critical perspective on the politics of teaching non-native speakers of English, and of language and standard American English more broadly, as well as some understanding of the relationship between culture and learning and of culturally responsive pedagogies, I would argue that novice teachers are far more likely to bring deficit perspectives to bear on their instruction of ELLs and to enact potentially harmful literacy instruction. Focusing, then, on which strategies are covered and how often in a novice’s teacher preparation leaves out crucial information, such as how those strategies are taught, practiced, and mediated, for example, in isolation of or in concert with theoretical, philosophical, or dispositional foundations.

I draw on this example to point to the shortcomings and potentially deleterious effects of NCTQ’s approach to assessing quality by focusing so narrowly on select program inputs. Gee’s big-D Discourse tool oriented my analysis toward inquiring into what “quality” teaching meant to some of the participants involved in one local TEP context. Working within the parameters of NCTQ’s narrow approach, there was little room for examining and assessing the theoretical,
philosophical, or dispositional foundations. Further, the perspectives guiding the design of the TEP are grounded in very different and competing assumptions of what counts as learning as well as the crucial foundational knowledge for becoming a quality teacher. Given my analyses across Chapters Five and Six, it seems clear that within NCTQ’s Discourse on quality, those foundations that are key to visions of quality teaching expressed in the TEP’s discourse are of no real value.

Finally, I contend that close examination of local, situated meanings of “quality” should precede any large-scale evaluation and assessment of overall TEP quality. If one of the stated goals of reports like the Review is to produce information and resources to guide aspiring teachers in their selection of preparation programs, then it seems more generative to construct rich descriptions of what quality means to the participants involved in these local contexts, of the kinds of teachers that programs are committed to preparing, of faculty and instructors’ talk about how they approach their work with beginning teachers, and of the tensions, limitations, and self-defined areas for growth that those participants identify. For policy makers looking at university-based teacher education from an outsider’s perspective, rich descriptions of that kind would also be useful. The same argument can be made for districts and school officials considering which candidates to hire. Of course, constructing such in-depth representations of individual programs is demanding of resources than a more narrow, standardized approach. But, given the stakes and how much we still do not know about the “black box” (Cochran-Smith, 2005) of teacher quality, it seems absolutely necessary.

In this chapter, I critically analyzed one TEP’s Discourse on preparing high-quality ELA and underscored the distinctive ways of being and doing that were associated with “quality” and “effectiveness” in that discursive context. In the next chapter, I turn to an analysis of the
preservice teachers’ talk and writing to show their processes of negotiating the Discourse of their teacher preparation, Discourses of accountability, and other competing D/discourses they encountered as they moved across contexts in their final semester of coursework.
Chapter Seven

Negotiating “Quality”: Four Preservice Teachers’ Sense-Making Processes

In this dissertation, I set out to inquire into the nature of the Discourses that four preservice teachers encountered in their negotiations of “quality” ELA teaching in times of a changing policy landscape. In Chapter Five, I constructed a representation of one of those major Discourses, NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review, which I framed as an instantiation of large-scale Discourses of acute accountability. Through a critical analysis of the Review’s discursively figured world, I uncovered the assumptions about “quality” teaching and teacher preparation that were embedded therein, as well as how novice teachers and their preparation were positioned in that view. In Chapter Six, I explored another major Discourse, that of the novices’ university-based teacher education program, and inquired into the particular ways of being and doing that were recognized as and associated with quality ELA teaching in that discursive context. In this chapter, I concentrate on how the novices negotiated those competing Discourses, as well as their backgrounds, histories, and beliefs about good teaching, as they engaged processes of becoming ELA teachers and stood at the juncture between leaving coursework and entering student teaching.

The findings I share below construct each preservice teacher’s case as representing a particular stance and pattern of negotiation that was fundamentally shaped by those backgrounds, experiences, and their senses of self. As I will develop, because these novices brought a range of experiences to bear on their sense-making, they engaged four very different processes of negotiating quality teaching. Some, for example, spoke confidently about how they imagined enacting their visions of effective ELA teaching while others spoke, with various notes of fear inflected in their talk, of the challenge they anticipated with regard to being positioned in schools
as unable to enact with integrity their conceptions of effective teaching and as responsible for
shouldering the demands of accountability.

In what follows, I present portraits of each novice teacher to introduce them, their
trajectory into and within teacher education, and analysis of the language they used to discuss
their “journey,” as one participant called it, in learning to teach. I move chronologically across
that journey and map each preservice teacher’s discourse over time, attending to subtle yet
important shifts and points of growth in their thinking and conceptual understandings related to
effective ELA teaching. I share what each saw as the program’s shaping influences on their
emergent sense-making and identity formation as teachers. Then, I present the formative learning
opportunities that each talked about in terms of what they saw as setting in motion their journeys
of becoming teachers. Finally, I consider what was shifting for each participant from the
beginning of the fall semester to the end, what each named as hopes and fears for the upcoming
student teaching semester and beyond, and what “effective” ELA teaching meant to them as they
approached the next step of their journeys. I start my discussion with Emily—a teacher candidate
whom NCTQ’s discourse, and Discourses of accountability more broadly, and the Discourse of
the TEP likewise positioned as a most ideal novice teacher. From there, I discuss the remaining
three cases in order of descending participant age.

**Emily: Eyes Wide Open**

An accomplished cellist, Emily received a bachelor’s degree in music and English at a
selective, private university in the Southeast. While interning at a business magazine during her
senior year of college, Emily had aspirations of entering the publishing industry and becoming
an editor, but the economic collapse brought worries that finding that job so freshly out of
college would be unlikely. She thought she would find refuge from the economic storm in
graduate school, so she applied and was accepted to a Masters program in Literature at Research University. There, Emily was offered her first formal teaching gig as a graduate student instructor of freshman composition. Initially, she balked at the idea of stepping into the role of teacher without any preparation, but encouraged by positive feedback from her students and the joy she found in teaching “the nuts and bolts of writing,” along with a realization that she did not want to spend her career “writing papers that no one’s going to read,” she decided to try on teacher education to see how it fit.

In many ways, Emily was a best-case scenario for teacher education. She was an ambitious learner who had deep content knowledge, previous teaching experience, and the academic credentials of selectivity. An enthusiastic optimism seemed always to exude her, and she was the kind of learner who expressed appreciation for each opportunity she was afforded to learn, stretch, and grow. The best illustration of those dispositions that I can point to comes from the first interview in which Emily was asked to speak to her experience in the TEP. She said, “So I guess I would say that I had a fantastic experience in this program. Like, I really, um, enjoyed every single class that I’ve been in. . . And I just, I just loved every class I’ve taken here” (interview, 10/5/11). Indeed, that exuberance aptly captures Emily’s persona. When I learned that she received the highest score possible on the edTPA—the performance-based assessment our program had recently adopted and that candidates completed early in their student teaching semester—I was not at all surprised. Nor was I surprised that she received the TEP’s award for outstanding teacher candidate. The comments left by her teacher educators and university supervisor in support of her nomination for that award placed her in the top 1% of candidates and cited her ease and “natural presence” in the classroom, lived commitment to social justice and principles of equity, “strong content knowledge,” and “outstanding” performance (April 2012). I
was not surprised that so many others came to see Emily as exemplary, because that is, simply, what you came to expect from her.

**Thinking Historically about Influences on Emily’s Sense-Making of Quality**

Emily’s background as a strong student of the discipline of English and graduate student instructor of writing certainly influenced her sense-making of quality ELA teaching. As I will develop below, Emily’s process in learning to teach was characterized in large part by her negotiation of the competing Discourses of her disciplinary study and of teacher preparation.

**Strong disciplinary and content preparation.** Emily’s pool of content knowledge was the deepest of the four participants, and, as mentioned above, “strong content knowledge” was a quality oft cited by faculty and instructors in their talk about Emily. In fact, that was also the only source of confidence that Emily reported having early in the program. During the first week of the fall term, I gave the Methods students a questionnaire, the last item of which solicited feedback on what kinds of support they wanted from me. In response, Emily wrote, “I don’t really feel comfortable with a lot of the nuts and bolts of teaching—that is, I feel reasonably confident in content knowledge, but not much else” (questionnaire, 8/24/11). At that point, Emily had acquired two semesters of teaching experience in the university classroom, but she was only just beginning her education coursework and had not yet had a class that required her to spend time in a secondary ELA classroom. That fall, she enrolled in three practicum-linked education courses, and, as I will show, she experienced tremendous growth.

I attribute the depth of Emily’s content knowledge to her undergraduate and graduate study of English, and also to her background as a ‘good’ student who succeeded at doing school. In Emily’s own words, she was “a really well-behaved student, even in college and in graduate school,” who was easily bothered by chatter and “off-topic” conversations during instructional
time and preferred when the collective class attention was focused on the teacher (interview, 10/5/11). She enjoyed assuming the role of attentive listener and note taker in lecture-style classes, which dominated her undergraduate English study, though she acknowledged that those were not the classes in which she learned the most. In fact, Emily’s talk about her previous experiences in English classes suggests that she was well-versed in the Discourse of traditional, formalist English study, that is, in the ways of being-doing as an English teaching that the TEP, and James in particular, sought to disrupt. In her high school years, when her “Language Arts” classes became “English” classes, Emily said she was never afforded opportunities to practice the “arts” piece of the ELA. Of that background, she said, “I’m not much of a creative writer ((laughs)). Like, because we didn’t do it, you know? I feel like that was ignored at the expense of writing really terrible five-paragraph essays for a standardized test” (interview, 10/5/11). Emily was far more adept at academic writing—the same genre that was privileged in her trial-by-fire experience teaching freshman composition.

Entering teacher education and guided by a formalist frame of reference for thinking about quality in the ELA classroom, Emily was challenged to navigate the tension that emerged as she negotiated that Discourse with the TEP’s, and was pressed to think more deeply about how to motivate and engage adolescent learners. That tension was visible in a reflection she wrote early in the program in Composition for Teachers. The reflection was intended to provide an opportunity for candidates to take stock of their learning in the writing-methods course. In her response, Emily twice emphasized that despite the instructional methods the course was introducing her to, she remained uneasy about “how to help students write a quality academic essay” (reflection, 2/5/11, emphasis in original). She named a “tension” she saw in the teaching of writing that emerged “between the need to allow students to develop their own voice and the
need to prepare them for the real world of writing” (reflection, 2/15/11). What she meant by “the real world of writing” is not entirely clear, though in the next line of her response she raised this question: “How do we teach a student to analyze literature in a way that is for a more ‘real-world’ audience?” She went on to emphasize her belief in the importance of helping students “write essays that meet academic demands,” because, as she put it, those are the kinds of essays they will be “expected to do in college” (reflection, 2/15/11). She described those kinds of essays as “thesis-driven” and as demanding that students “close read and analyze text” and “draw conclusions and show evidence” (reflection, 2/5/11). It seems that at that point in her development, Emily understood quality writing instruction as that which prepares students for the “real world” of writing—a world that, in her view, was shaped primarily by the interests of academic institutions and demands of post-secondary coursework, similar to the expectations that shaped the composition course she was then teaching. The writing-based instructional sequence that Emily created for the final project in Composition for Teachers likewise reflected those beliefs. Designed for high school juniors and seniors, Emily’s sequence was focused on close reading and literary analysis of The Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald, 1995). When asked the following semester to reflect on what, if anything, she would change about that instructional plan, Emily said, “I don’t know how well my-- I, I think some of my lessons would work, but when I did this I hadn’t yet had a practicum. So I really didn’t know like, I’d taught a couple of classes here, so I knew that they could work with, you know, young, really young adults, but I don’t know if they would work with young kids” (interview, 10/5/11).

In that response, Emily starts by articulating her uncertainty and then quickly interrupts herself to restate her thought. She repeats “I don’t know” two more times in relation to her thinking about whether or not that instructional plan would work given new insights gleaned
after more negotiation of coursework and working with younger students in practica. Emily’s
talk here suggests that her sense-making of what constituted quality writing instruction was
shifting. I point to this example of Emily’s early sense-making of quality, because it provides a
useful baseline with which to contrast her sense-making as she articulated it at the end of the fall
semester, and as I will develop below.

**Previous experience teaching writing.** Emily was also the participant who had the most
teaching experience at the time of data collection. As discussed above, Emily’s entrée into the
profession came by way of her graduate-student appointment as an instructor of freshman
composition. Having had no formal pedagogical preparation at the time, her survival strategy
was to “mimic” a model of practice that came from a favorite English professor whom she had as
an undergraduate—one of the few professors in the department who didn’t rely steadily on
lecture-based teaching. She said this professor would often “force us into small groups and to
actually talk to each other,” and she associated that discussion-based pedagogy with how much
she learned in his class (interview, 12/14/11). So, in the absence of other models on which to
draw, Emily organized her class around that professor’s model. Looking back on the experience,
Emily said, “I was totally unprepared and it was kind of a mess, but I loved it. Sometimes I feel
like I was such a terrible teacher, because if I were to go in there again, I would do such a better
job” (interview, 12/14/11). Not only was that initial teaching experience influential because it
prompted Emily to explore English education, but it also provided her an important schematic
framework in which she could situate what she was learning in teacher preparation.

Emily’s previous teaching experience also included working with undergraduates in an
American literature course, and it was in that capacity that I met Emily. We were both enrolled
in a graduate course that explored critical theories of teaching literature; she was taking the class
as part of her Master’s coursework and I as part of my doctoral study. Taught by a professor in the English department who was dedicated to making pedagogy central in his work, the course had an experiential component in which the graduate students assumed active roles as teaching assistants to the lead professor in a section of undergraduate American literature. We worked with small groups of students, leading discussions, reading and responding to their weekly journal entries, and planning and lead-teaching the final four weeks of the semester. To self-consciously examine our praxis, we also met as a graduate seminar after each class session with the undergraduates to reflect on what we did and how it went, to situate our emergent pedagogical understandings in theory and research, and to collaboratively plan future class sessions. For some of our graduate student peers, the role of teacher seemed to fit awkwardly at first, but I recall Emily stepping into that role with confidence and approached her work with the undergraduates with a serious dedication. Describing that course as “a really incredible class” that taught her “a lot about teaching,” Emily said,

It forced us into this reflective practice because it was, like, do it, talk about it, right now, you know? Um, and it was helpful both in terms of learning how to lead a discussion and in terms of learning realizing for me that the best way to learn something is to do it and then talk about it. And think about it. So it was like a double learning experience for me because I figured out that’s how I learn. (interview, 10/5/11)

Of note is the nature of the a-ha! moment about the relationship between reflection and learning that Emily referenced in the excerpt above. Her realization that the “best way to learn something is to do it and then talk about it” suggests that her prior learning experiences were not aligned with sociocultural perspectives that posit learning as a social process and talk and reflection as important components of that process. The discussion-based pedagogy and reflective practice that were so centrally foregrounded in that graduate seminar complemented well the Discourse
of the TEP that Emily was simultaneously beginning to explore and likely aided her “transition,” as she called it, from thinking like a student of English to thinking like a teacher of the ELA.

**Emily’s Transition: From English to English Education**

Talking about her experience in the graduate course discussed above, Emily said that “at that time, I was starting my transition” (interview, 10/5/11), that is, she was finishing her Master’s degree and formal English study and situating herself more squarely in the terrain of English education. Indeed, the word “transition” captures the nature of Emily’s dynamic process of movement and change that, as I will show, accompanied her passage through teacher preparation. During that period of transition, Emily physically moved from the English building to the Education building—two symbolic points that, as Dilworth and McCracken (1997) argue, index the “ideological cross-currents” (p. 7) that tend to separate English departments and schools of education, and that make the process of navigating those worlds challenging for students, like Emily, who traverse both in their studies. In navigating those cross-currents, Emily experienced profound shifts in the way she thought about the nature and purpose of the ELA, how she saw her own position and role in that terrain, and even how she saw the world itself. Also shaping the nature of her transition was a formative experience, which I discuss below, that Emily had working as a tutor at Avance!, an after-school program for Latina/o youth who were identified by their teachers and positioned as ‘at risk’ for academic failure and dropping out. In the next section, I use Emily’s discourse of “transition” to frame my discussion of three shifts she experienced while negotiating competing D/discourses in the TEP.

**Assuming a professional role orientation: Stepping “outside of my box.”** My analysis of Emily’s talk about her experience in the program suggests that one important shift she made in

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17 The name of the after-school, academic support program has been changed to a pseudonym.
learning to teach involved assuming a different role and stance in the classroom than she was used to. In other words, as the TEP was nudging Emily to assume a professional role orientation, she was also being pressed to move from her comfortably familiar place as a successful student of English to an uncomfortably far less familiar place as a novice learning to teach the ELA.

Underscoring the difference between the two roles, Emily said,

> Being a teacher is not for the faint of heart, and it’s not the same thing as wanting to talk about books all the time. I know what it’s like to be in English classes. I’ve been doing that for a really long time. Um, but I’ve had that- the actual education thing is just so different. There’s been a really big emphasis on the students in the class carrying most of the weight in terms of the thinking and stuff, you know? My [education] classes have really forced me to, um, step outside of my box that I was in for so long where I would always- I loved to just sit in a class and just take notes on lecture. I love that. And that was so comfortable and I feel like I always, I’m always like pushing myself in my classes now. (interview, 10/5/11)

Emily’s metaphorical language in the excerpt above shows how, for her, and likely related to her strong disciplinary and content preparation, assuming a professional role orientation involved departing from familiar ways of being and doing in the English classroom. Indeed, being an ELA teacher was not equivalent to “wanting to talk about books all the time”; rather, learning that work was hard and involved some heavy lifting. As Emily put it, becoming a teacher meant “stepping outside my box,” that is, resisting the familiar role of student absorbing and silently interpreting instructional inputs and assuming instead an active and interactive role in negotiating those inputs, all the while “pushing” herself beyond what was comfortable and taken-for-granted in her English-student frame of reference.

Emily went on to say that in education coursework she was often stretched beyond her “comfort zone” to be more reflective and “cognitive of what we’re doing and why” (interview, 10/5/11). In this way, being an awake learner was at first a burden that brought discomfort. Emily’s observation that learning to teach the ELA is “so different” than being a student of
English challenges assumptions implicit in some current policy discourses, for example, the Great Teachers and Leaders Bill, that assert content preparation as the most important component of a teacher’s knowledge. There are few candidates whose content preparation is as strong as Emily’s was. Yet, of the four novice teachers in this study, it was in Emily’s discourse in which the contrast between being a student of the discipline and becoming a teacher of the school subject was most marked.

“*I just see so much more inequity in the system…*” The nature of Emily’s transition also involved developing a lens for seeing issues related to equity, social justice, language, and power in the literacy classroom. In my analysis of Emily’s discourse, I found a patterned use of the metaphor “eye opening” to describe how she was making sense of the effect of new ways of thinking and seeing as she negotiated the TEP’s Discourse. That turn of phrase appeared four times in interview transcripts: first, in Emily’s description of the graduate seminar in which she developed understanding of the relationship between talk, reflection, social interaction, and learning, and three more times to capture the impact of coursework that foregrounded the TEP’s commitment to democracy, diversity, and social justice. Of those three instances directly related to the TEP, Emily first used the metaphor to speak to the program’s recursive “emphasis on social justice,” which, she said, “has been present in every class I’ve taken in the ed. school” (interview, 10/5/11). She said,

> It has been really eye opening for me because I come from, I mean, I, I never thought of myself as wealthy growing up. I come from [the Southeast] and I never thought of myself as wealthy because compared to a lot of kids at my school, I wasn’t. They were getting, like, Lexuses on their sixteenth birthdays, and so I never thought of that. And then I came here and I took, um, School and Society and we talked about issues of equity and issues of racism and all this stuff and it was just, like, it was so eye opening. And then I started working at [local high school] and the kids in the Avance! program. I still work there and I just see so much more inequity in the system than I ever, you know, had any idea existed. So it’s been pretty amazing. (interview, 10/5/11)
From the excerpt above, Emily’s use of the metaphor “eye opening” in relation to her understanding of the effect that School and Society had on her worldview shows how the course initiated her into a new way of seeing the world, not only with regard to how inequities are (re)produced by the complex relationship between school and society, but also related to how she benefitted from that relationship herself as a white, middle-class woman. Before taking School and Society, she had never thought of herself as “wealthy” because she was not on the receiving end of luxury goods, as some of her peers were. Her words point to the nature of the taken-for-granted assumptions she brought into the program, including, for example, that the accumulations of material social goods determines privilege. As the course opened her eyes to structural and systemic inequities, and disrupted her assumptions about privilege and power in society, she began to recognize her own privilege as based on race in addition to socioeconomic status, and possibly other identity markers, too.

The semester after taking School and Society, Emily began working as a volunteer tutor at Avance! Emily consistently described the process of bringing new ways of seeing, introduced to her through that course, to bear as she navigated Avance! through language that suggests transformation in who she was becoming as a novice ELA teacher. Here, I turn to the important relationship between Emily’s participation in Avance!, her negotiation of the Discourse of the TEP, and the transformative impact of social justice-focused curriculum on her sense-making of quality and of who she wanted to be(come) as a teacher of the ELA.

**Avance!** Emily began volunteering as a tutor for Avance! to gain more experience working with and learning from English language learners (ELLs). When she had to find a community-based learning site to meet the service-learning component for Educational Psychology, she chose Avance! and increased her volunteer role to be at site after school
everyday for two hours. As discussed in Chapter Six, Educational Psychology required candidates to be participant observers at their sites, take field notes while observing learning unfold in-the-moment of interaction, and, as Emily put it, “then go home and try to reflect on what had happened and try to not make inferences, which was really a challenge” (interview, 10/5/11). Of that experience, Emily said, “It really shaped how I think about, whenever I work with kids. I always think now about teaching and then providing scaffolding and opportunities and not giving them the answers. There’s so much that I learned about how to work with kids from that experience” (interview, 10/5/11). In addition to deepening her theoretical understandings of sociocultural perspectives by applying them in practice and reflecting on the process, Emily said the experience was useful in that it kept her tutoring at Avance!. Eventually, the program hired her as a tutor, and the following summer she continued her tutoring duties in a pilot program that Avance! launched for rising, ninth-grade Latino students (though she said “tutor” did not adequately capture the breadth of responsibilities she took on there). Emily was critical of the timing of the four-week summer “enrichment” program that began the first week of June, because, as she said, “the kids have had one week off school” before being made to sit for four hours each morning through three block periods of ELA, math, and AVID. She was also critical of the program’s lead teacher—a white woman who, as Emily put it, had been working at the school “since the dawn of time” and was known for having consistently high Advanced Placement scores that she would “brag” about to Emily (interview, 12/14/11). Hearing Emily describe that lead teacher in our second interview, I said it seemed an interesting choice of teacher to lead this particular summer program. In response, Emily said, “It’s hard to say whether she really likes teaching that demographic. She was nice to the kids, but it was pretty clear she

18 AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) “is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to closing the achievement gap by preparing all students for college and other postsecondary opportunities” (What is Avid?, http://www.avid.org/what-is-avid.ashx).
didn’t want to be there” (interview, 12/4/11). Fridays, when the lead teacher was not there at all, were supposed to be “fun days,” but Emily said the students did not think they were much fun. “They hated being there,” she said.

Over the course of those four weeks, Emily taught her first-ever whole-block period lesson and tried to form relationships with the students. But, despite her efforts, she said, “Those kids did not like me in June. Some of them liked me okay by the end, but now they are so pissed that I’m leaving [to complete student teaching]” (interview, 12/14/11). As she continued tutoring when the school year resumed, and most students in the summer program continued on to the after-school program, Emily was moving forward on her journey toward connection and acceptance by students, in spite of that fact that most kids “did not” like her at the end of the summer pilot program. Emily recognized the connection between the faulty designing of the program (e.g., poor timing; incongruous assignment of an older, White lead teacher; forced “fun”) and the students’ reluctant-at-first reception of her as just another White teacher. Emily’s talk suggests that she was implicitly contrasting herself to the lead teacher who “pretty clearly didn’t want to be there,” seemed not to want to teach “that demographic,” and not able and also perhaps not willing to connect with students who were not her Advanced Placement students. Emily, on the other hand, showed up because she wanted to be there for her students, and she very much wanted to make those connections and pursued them as the following school year began. After spending several months in her position as a tutor, she succeeded in making those connections—the students “are so pissed” that she’s leaving to go onto student teaching. This example demonstrates how Emily seemed to be positioning herself in the role of a teacher who connects and makes a difference and assuming an opposing stance to that of the lead teacher who seemed distracted and uncaring, and especially so toward students of color.
In the second interview, I asked Emily to speak to what the experience of working in Avance! meant to her. She said that she feels like “so much of an ally” now for Latino students, and that she’s taking away from the experience,

that it takes time to build community with kids. It doesn’t happen in one day. It takes time for them to trust you, especially if they have had a history of not (.) feeling that connection with teachers or not (.) um, or with adults in general, not feeling like they can trust, or with white people in general. It, it really takes time. And that’s actually, to me, that’s almost the biggest reward is when the kid finally trusts you and there’s that relationship that wasn’t there. And I never yet, I mean I’m sure it will happen, but I never yet got in that kind of relationship with, um, any white child. It’s like, and I think part of it is just that especially with the kids at [local middle school], it’s like so many of them have grown up so privileged. And they anticipate that their teachers are just going to love them and so that, it’s no surprise to them that you care. You know, whereas it’s like my Avance! kids, the fact that I am so invested in them, once they’ve figured that out, that’s huge for them and they like, they really, um, latch on to that. And that’s what’s necessary for learning to happen, really. (interview, 12/14/11)

This excerpt is significant for a few reasons. First, it demonstrates Emily’s understanding of the deeply complex relationship between students’ “history of participation” (Rogers, 2003) in school, race, power, privilege, relationships, and learning. That is, when she says, “that’s what’s necessary for learning to happen, really,” she invokes the connection between how power and privilege operate in classroom contexts affects how students learn. Second, Emily’s discourse points to the nuances involved in “build[ing] community with kids” in diverse classroom contexts. As Emily observed, the nature of the relationship she perceived with many of the white students whom she got to know in the middle school practicum classroom where she worked during the fall semester was shaped by those students’ white privilege and a shared, successful history of participation in school. Importantly, she also recognized that building trusting relationships with students who do not enter school embodying the same privilege was a task of a different sort, as non-dominant students’ histories of marginalization in school profoundly shape

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19 During the fall semester, Emily was enrolled in three practicum-linked courses. She organized her practicum schedule to be in the same middle school classroom to meet field-experience requirements for both Methods and Literature for Secondary Teachers. Emily went on to student teach in the same classroom.
their interaction and participation in school contexts. Third, Emily did not engage deficit-oriented discourse by blaming students who have been historically disserved by school for their reluctance to trust white teachers like herself. Finally, Emily valued as “rewarding” the cultivation of trusting relationships with students of color and she understood that those relationships are central to organizing a learning environment that works for all kids. She positioned herself as a White teacher who will prove her care and investment to Latino students, again locating herself as a teacher different from many White teachers Latino students have encountered. While it’s not possible to make claims about what exactly was responsible for Emily arriving at these critical understandings, her language traces her commitments to the TEP’s Discourse, which promoted values of equity, diversity, and social justice, and which appeared to become real for her as she negotiated that Discourse in the context of real students’ lives and struggles.

“**That class changed the way I think about language in general.**” A final example of how Emily employed the “eye-opening” metaphor in describing her process of learning to teach appeared in Emily’s talk about the impact of the course Language Study for Educators, which she took with Nancy during the same semester in which she was enrolled in School and Society. Language Study was a course that Emily also described as profoundly (re)shaping the way Emily understood the relationship between language and power. As she put it, “**That class changed the way I think about language in general**” (interview, 10/5/11). To exemplify her point, Emily spoke to her shifting conception of grammar, and shared that in the past she had been known as “the grammar police” because of her propensity for calling out what might be perceived by some as ‘bad’ grammar. Describing grammar as a “game” that she was “really good at,” Emily had
internalized a prescriptive view of grammar in which ‘wrong’ grammatical choices warranted policing and correction. She explained that,

Growing up- I didn’t realize it at the time, but when I look back on it, I’m like, yeah. We equated bad grammar with stupid, you know? And [language study] totally, like, shook up my perception of that because it was, like, for one thing, like (1.8) does that even matter in this world? Like, really? Does that make a difference to, like, how awesome you are as a person? Whether or not you’re good at grammar? I’m thinking no. ((laughs)) And, you know, there was just, like, the way we talked about dialect and, um, language of power and like all these different things that I had never even thought about before, and now that I spend so much time working with ELL students, um, and realizing how much they get judged on the basis of the language that they speak, and um, even the ones who are quite proficient at English get judged because they have, you know, a little bit of an accent or something. That class really, like, changed my perception on all that, and I was taking that one at the same time as School and Society, so between the two of them, I was just, like, my world you know, was changing. (interview, 10/5/11)

This excerpt shows how Emily was negotiating the Discourse of the TEP and reformulating her assumptions about the grammar “game.” Indeed, she was coming to understand that in the context of the classroom, the relationship between language and power renders grammar policing harmful for students who challenge dominant conceptions of what counts as language proficiency. The meaning she was actively constructing from Language Study’s attention to dialects, “language of power,” Standard American English, and language stigma seemed to change her perception of the politics and implications of language in the ELA classroom. And, as she said, in concert with negotiating the D/discourse of School and Society, the shift she experienced changed her worldview. Importantly, admitting that she used to conflate “bad grammar” with “stupid” was a vulnerable move, and evidence of her willingness to critically reflect on her beliefs and personal history.

**Standing before student teaching.** As Emily stood at the juncture between leaving coursework and entering student teaching, she was grappling with how to negotiate these new understandings and ways of seeing with her newly constructed understandings about what
language arts education should be for. When I asked Emily to speak to what “effective ELA teaching” meant to her at the end of her coursework experience, she sat quietly for 30 seconds as she gathered her thoughts and then began to share that in James’s class they often talked about “how much we’re after turning [students] into better people.” She said that was “something I honestly wasn’t thinking about before.” She saw a tension with regard to that goal, given her graduate study’s attention to “all this postcolonialism stuff”—Emily’s abbreviation for the dimensions of power involved in teachers shaping students as a form of colonizing. “I get that,” she said, 

So I don’t say that without sort of worrying about it, but I see my kids being mean to each other on a daily basis, and I think that that’s actually one of the, the biggest things in my head right now, is that I want them to be nice. ((laughs)) You know? I want them to treat each other with respect and um they don’t so much of the time. And so that’s, that actually kind of in my mind trumps anything else that we do. And so um, and I think, but I think that you can teach language arts, and I don’t think that that’s- that’s actually one of the things I love about teaching language arts is that that can be part of it. (interview, 12/14/11)

In response to the question about effective ELA teaching, Emily turned toward the social world of middle school from the vantage point of an ELA teacher, and particularly to the cruelty that she described as prevalent. This focus on how students treat each other is different from her earlier focus on how students are treated and positioned by school and teachers. She addressed the question by explicitly invoking a focus she encountered in James’ course in TEP (i.e., ELA in schools as opportunity for fostering deeper humanity). Although her focus here on humanity and focus above on social justice and power are certainly related, when asked directly about effective ELA teaching, she drew on James’ framing of the purposes of ELA (as described in chapter 6). In her response, the moral component of teaching—that is, how her students “treat each other”—trumped “anything else that we do,” and she saw a clear place in the ELA curriculum to foster what she later called students’ “moral development.” Emily linked that
understanding to the unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1999) that she was in the process of designing and planning to teach the following semester. She said she did not organize her unit around “a content goal”; rather she picked *courage* as her organizing theme and “What does it mean to have courage? And how do you live that in your life?” as the unit’s essential questions. That, she said, “is what I really want the kids to get out of the book.” In contrast to Emily’s earlier discourse around preparing students for the “real world” of academic writing, this excerpt shows a shift in her thinking about what purposes ELA instruction should serve, shifts that appear to align with the goals and values faculty expressed for the program. However, Emily’s description of her *To Kill a Mockingbird* unit and essential questions still seems to invoke a dichotomy between academic skills and processes and the moral and justice-oriented purposes of ELA instruction.

Emily’s sense-making evoked her previous perspectives from her graduate English program, her teacher education courses, and her experiences with kids. The semester prior to student teaching, Emily logged over 130 field-experience hours in a diverse ELA classroom at a local middle school and continued tutoring in Avance! In the process, she built what felt to her like meaningful, trusting relationships with students (“my kids”)—something of which she was immensely proud. Demonstrating investment in students and the ELA’s significance in shaping students’ visions for how they might live their lives were key to how she was defining herself as teacher and what constituted quality ELA teaching. With regard to how she was negotiating quality in the present moment of acute accountability, Emily did not talk about her own negotiation of how schools position teachers as effective or ineffective, nor did she voice concerns, as some of the other novices did, and as I will discuss below, about her position as a novice teacher entering a high-stakes climate. However, her talk did attend closely to how
students are positioned differently in schools with regard to achievement and success, and specifically based on race and linguistic privilege. Implicit, then, in Emily’s sense-making is a critical focus on achievement—what that means and who gets to be someone who ‘achieves’ in school—and in her process of becoming an ELA teacher, she seemed to be positioning herself as an “ally” for students for whom ‘achiever’ is not an identity that school tends to make available.

Annie: Constantly Thinking, Thinking, Thinking, Thinking

In her late thirties, Annie was the oldest, most experienced, and most confident of the four preservice teachers I portray here. The first time I met Annie was in a discourse analysis class that she and I were each taking as part of our graduate coursework. This was a year before she enrolled in Methods, and our relationship was one of fellow graduate students surveying the breadth of the field of discourse analysis. I came to know Annie in that context as bright, kind, and critically minded. I had yet to learn of her aspirations of becoming a secondary ELA teacher, so when I discovered that she was enrolled in Composition for Teachers the following semester I was surprised, and quietly delighted, that she was pursuing teaching. By the time Annie entered teacher education, she had already earned a bachelor’s degree, spent several years in a successful first career as a journalist, completed a Master’s degree in Communications, and, like Emily, added to her repertoire of experience a few semesters of teaching freshman composition at the university. Indeed, Annie was a woman of many strengths and a highly selective candidate who would have earned our TEP a point or two on NCTQ’s rubric for her advanced degree, content knowledge, and academic record. Her status as a midcareer entrant into teaching also made her desirable recruit that deregulation discourses (e.g., Hess, 2009) have argued should be more heavily recruited into teacher education. My analysis suggests that Annie was willing and eager to step into the professional role of teacher long before the student teaching semester. Reviewing
my field notes from Methods, for example, I was reminded that on the first day of class, Annie was already asking questions about policies and procedures and actively “scouting” potential classrooms and cooperating teachers for the student teaching semester; as a point of contrast, my field notes also documented that most of her peers in the class had not yet begun thinking about where and with whom they might student teach. What’s more, Annie was considering a teacher at a local high school who had recently completed the PhD program in Literacy and was highly regarded as an outstanding teacher. Annie ended up selecting a different cooperating teacher, though that teacher, too, had a PhD and was well known for being among the best of the best. I point to these early examples to show that Annie brought a strategic approach to her navigation of teacher preparation.

As a student, Annie, like Emily, described herself as a student who sought to learn always and from every opportunity. She described herself as a “competent learner,” and cited as evidence her tendency to “keep everything,” which resulted in a collection of “folders that are just packed full” of lesson plans, activities, handouts, and other curricular materials accumulated in coursework (interview, 9/29/11). Annie, though, described the inputs of her coursework alone were not enough; she seemed to understand that it was through a process of intellectual kneading and shaping—that is, through an active process of negotiating those inputs—that they became meaningful. She thought her perspective was not valued by some of her colleagues, and specifically by those whom she perceived as desiring more and more strategies—more inputs—from their preparation rather than recursive attention and practice. Annie spoke to this in the first interview from the fall:

Annie: I’m constantly thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking. Like okay, how is this gonna work and what am I gonna do? And every class, like, there’s very little—you know, that’s the other complaint. Oh, this is so much like the other class with like reading the same kinds of things, you know? But that goes along with this
whole idea of recursivity and learning, which we’re supposed to be doing as teachers anyway. It’s not like you do it once and you get it.

Interviewer: Right, so when you make connections amongst lots of different things?
Annie: Yeah and you’re constantly kind of cycling back. And, you know, doing kind of that learning spiral. I really believe in that. (interview, 9/29/11)

Annie brought a “constantly thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking” disposition with her into teacher education, where I would argue it was nourished and valued, at least by faculty and instructors. Guided by that disposition, she understood the importance of a spiraling curriculum and of returning to complex concepts to develop deeper conceptual understanding—a pattern that she noticed coursework following and also something she thought many of her younger peers failed to appreciate. Later in this chapter, readers will note that the youngest participant, Hope, did, in fact, voice the “complaint” that Annie cited above and described some course content as a “repeat.” Annie’s discourse often marked that she thought of herself as different than her peers in the program, and she tended to attribute that to her age. She went on to joke that her appreciation of recursion and her tendency to take “a million notes” while no one else in the room was writing anything down was maybe because she “was getting old.” Annie’s orientation toward “constantly thinking,” recalling, questioning, and reconsidering in the service of learning exemplifies what researchers of teacher education have called a “growth mindset” (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).

I have spent more time setting up my introduction to Annie’s sense-making than I did for Emily above, and that I will do for the other participants below. That was a deliberate move. My analysis constructed Annie’s process of becoming and negotiation of quality in learning to teach as relatively smooth—that is, she experienced fewer profound shifts than Emily. In addition, and as I will develop, there was less emotional charge to Annie’s discourse than Sam’s, and fewer growing pangs associated with her process than Hope’s. Mapping Annie’s discourse over time,
there was consistency in her talk with regard to her sense-making of what constituted quality ELA teaching. What she said early in the term related to the goals she had for her students, how she imagined organizing her classroom, and what she valued largely did not shift and it seems that these ideas were well-formed when she entered the TEP. Related to that point, what I found most compelling from my analysis of Annie’s discourse were two things. First, Annie’s previous career in journalism provided her a framework for making sense of an effective learning environment, and that framework seemed to facilitate her negotiation and internalization of the TEP’s Discourse. Second, by the end of the term, she was grappling with important questions about how to find relevance in school for students who were struggling just to survive—questions engendered by the time she spent at a small charter high school that served students who had been pushed out of traditional school settings. Thus, I have organized my discussion of Annie’s sense-making in the following way. I begin by bringing a sociohistorical lens to bear on my discussion of the influence of her career as a journalist. Then, I share what Annie reported as important learning experiences she had in teacher preparation, focusing my discussion on her field experience at the small charter high school—a self-selected practicum site. I conclude by sharing how Annie answered the question of what it takes to be an “effective” ELA teacher in these times.

**Thinking Historically About Influences on Annie’s Sense-Making of Quality**

Ball and McDiarmid (1989) suggest that teachers’ subject matter knowledge—which they define as teachers’ substantive knowledge of a subject, knowledge about a subject, and dispositions toward a subject—gets shaped through their experiences both in and out of school,

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20 Ball & McDiarmid’s use of *subject matter knowledge* is related to Shulman’s (1986) three categories of content knowledge: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular content knowledge. Ball & McDiarmid situate their use of *subject matter knowledge* in the first of Shulman’s categories.
as well as through the practice of teaching. In other words, subject matter knowledge is not
developed solely in teacher preparation. This certainly seemed to be the case with Annie. Her
subject matter knowledge of writing was sculpted in larger part by her career as a journalist at a
metropolitan newspaper, and I elaborate that influence below.

“When I think about teaching, I think about the newsroom.” Reflecting on why she
wanted to become a teacher, Annie said unlike her peers, whom she thought tended to cull up
memories of favorite teachers, she thought about the newsroom. She said that growing up, she
went to “traditional Catholic schools” where there was “a lot of rote memorization” and “a
teacher in front of a classroom talking,” so she didn’t think much of those models when she
thought about who she wanted to be(come) in the classroom (interview, 9/29/11). Instead, she
thought about her experience after college moving from publishing into a career in journalism. In
a long stretch of discourse, Annie talked about the years she spent as a journalist learning the
ropes in a large newsroom in the Pacific Northwest. She shared a story of going into the field for
the first time, returning to the newsroom, and learning the process of writing the story, which
involved sitting with her notes, writing the piece, turning it in, and then waiting for the editor to
call her over. She described how she would sit “side by side” with the editor, who would ask her
questions as they reviewed and revised the piece collaboratively. “This was practice,” she said
(interview, 9/29/11). But, even as a novice, she was never made to feel “inadequate” or like
she’d “done a bad job.” She said,

So you know, I was at that newspaper for four years and that’s how I learned how to
write. I learned how to write, like, , side by side with another person and then often with
multiple people, always. And I sat, you know, our desks were all connected and there
were people sitting across from me. So I had these older reporters around me all the time
and we were always talking about what we were doing. And they would always be asking
me questions about, oh, well are you going to ask them this? Or are you going to consider
this... (interview, 9/29/11)
Learning and practicing writing in the buzzing newsroom and receiving guidance, constructive feedback, and what Annie also described as moment-by-moment “scaffolding” from her more expert colleagues, was a profoundly shaping experience—the significance of which is indexed by the length of Annie’s talk related to her newsroom experience, which stretched across 70 lines and was the longest stretch of any participant’s discourse related to a single topic or theme.

Striking is how well Annie’s description of learning to write in the newsroom reflects Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of communities of practice in which learning is a matter of competent participation and active engagement with others in the social practices of a particular community. That theory also has important implications for identity. Individuals, like Annie, construct identities in relation to the communities in which they are learning to participate and as they become recognized as members of those communities. As Wenger (1998) notes, “The learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice” (p. 6), and not necessarily in contexts or situations where learning itself is the object of focus. By learning to participate competently in the newsroom, Annie was recognized and recognized herself as a journalist—as a member of that community. Learning the Discourse of the newsroom and constructing an identity as a journalist, then, made that experience perhaps more transformative than any journalism or writing course she might have taken. Given the weight of that experience, it is not surprising that when Annie thought about teaching and learning in the classroom, she thought about the newsroom. She said,

Um, so really, like, when I think about teaching, I think about the newsroom. And every time in class, I feel like I’m constantly hearing things that remind me of things that I did in the newsroom. Like, always being provided a model. Like, I had models all around me and different ways of doing things, you know? Different examples that were always provided. And it felt like the perfect learning environment in so many ways because I was actually going out and trying. It was constant trying, trial and failure, you know? But able to get better and better and better through trying and failing. And with help. There was always scaffolding right there, you know? (interview 1, October 2011)
Importantly, Annie’s participation in the newsroom shaped her understanding of what counts as learning and of how to organize a classroom. As she said, the newsroom “felt like the perfect learning environment.” When she talked about organizing her future classroom around that familiar model, she talked about supporting students’ efforts to try and fail, to support each other, to collaborate, and to write in “a more authentic way” than formulaic procedures and structures like the five-paragraph essay allowed (interview, 12/14/11).

Annie’s discourse also demonstrates alignment with the TEP’s Discourse, specifically related to sociocultural perspectives on learning and development. As she participated in the TEP, which itself can be framed as a community of practice, and found example after example of things that resonated and made sense, for example, the concepts of scaffolding and modeling, the framework of effective learning environments that she developed through her participation in the newsroom acted like an anchor—that is, it provided a center of gravity that steadied her negotiation of the TEP’s Discourse. The program’s Discourse complemented that framework in many ways, and the harmony between the newsroom’s and the TEP’s Discourses seemed to characterize Annie’s smoother process of negotiating “quality” ELA teaching. For example, the preparation in the teaching of writing that Annie was afforded in coursework seemed to reinforce what she already understood to be good teaching where writing was concerned. She understood the nature of writing as a process involving what she called “recursive practices” like drafting, editing, and revising—practices that were also favored in the newsroom, and she resisted thinking about writing instruction in terms of teaching isolated skills. She said,

I kinda think of writing as riding a bike. You don’t just learn how to steer, and you don’t just learn how to pedal. You gotta put it all together. And you gotta try it and try it and try it and try it. And so to me, I think that, um, in order to become a stronger writer, you need to write a draft and then fill in the blanks and be questioned and too, you know, and in kind of a more authentic way than you need a topic sentence and you should have three
main points. Like, I hate this whole five paragraph essay, like every time I hear it, I’m like are you serious? This is not how people write and you don’t always have three supporting sentences. You just don’t. Like, sometimes you might just need one. Sometimes you might need eight. It drives me crazy. (interview, 12/14/11)

There is a clear through line between Annie’s talk about how she learned to write in the newsroom and how she intended to teach writing in her ELA classroom. Just as she was afforded authentic opportunities to “try it and try it and try it,” to draft, to be questioned, and to revise, she aimed to give her students the same opportunities to practice writing, to grow, and to recognize themselves as writers. Annie’s sense-making also complements the Discourse on quality writing instruction that she negotiated in Composition for Teachers. Of note, while all four participants rejected the competing discourse on writing instruction instantiated in the symbolic five-paragraph essay—a discourse that frames quality writing instruction as that which prepares students to write on-demand for standardized tests—Annie’s rejection was the most resounding.

A point to emphasize here concerns Annie’s content-intensive preparation, and her position as a candidate that accountability policies encourage and incentivize to recruit into teaching, and yet, her professional experience and knowledge of “how people write” are undermined by the criteria for effectiveness that NCTQ—a key example of Discourses of accountability—imposes. Put another way, Annie’s subject matter preparation fostered her valuing of engaging students in authentic practice of writing and the writing process, and her rejection of contrived and formulaic approaches, specifically related to preparing students to write on demand for standardized tests. At the same time, Annie’s professional judgment related to what counts as quality writing instruction was compromised by the cross-current of pressures and demands of acute accountability that urge teachers to privilege raising student achievement scores over authentic opportunities to learn and practice.

Annie’s Negotiation of TEP’s Discourse
Standout experiences in the program. Annie’s talk about her experiences in the program was similar to Emily’s in that she shared generally positive sentiments about her courses, instructors, and opportunities to learn. She appreciated, for example, how James modeled lessons and activities for engaging adolescents in literature. Though the discourse of “story teaching” did not explicitly surface in her talk, she cited several of James’s models and activities that she hoped to try out in her future teaching, and said the assignments that she most liked involved “learning about how to kind of get students really excited about starting a book or wanting to read it all the way through” (interview, 9/29/11). When asked to talk about stand-out experiences in the program, Annie spoke to her experience at the community-based learning site she visited to meet requirements in Educational Psychology. She said, “That was the first time I was, you know, I worked with a high school student who, I could see him struggle, you know? There were lots of students in that program, but I saw kind of like the struggles of here’s a super smart kid who’s having trouble transferring the stuff that he’s saying onto a page” (interview, 9/29/11). Learning how to support that student, she said, “really brought home some of the things that students face in learning.”

Language Study was another impactful course experience that, like Emily, brought Annie into awareness of how language and power function in society, and how she benefitted from that privilege as a person who grew up in a “working class setting” in the Midwest. She said, “The kind of English I grew up speaking is what is privileged in society, and to kind of think of, you know, how other people speak and write who don’t speak in standard American English or write in standard American English like kind of how they’re treated? We’ve had a lot of assignments around that” (interview, 9/29/11). Annie went on to describe an instructional sequence she was working on related to issues of language and power in the context of Nancy’s Language Study
course, and that she hoped to enact in student teaching the following semester. The context in which Annie would student teach was an alternative high school that afforded tremendous freedom to its faculty to design original course curricula, and that freedom was also extended to student teachers. Annie was designing an ELA course organized around the idea of reality television as a genre, and she named the course “The Cult of Reality.” She said, “I’m thinking about doing something about how youth, I want to do something with language and power and how youth are positioned in language” (interview, 9/29/11). She imagined leveraging the popularity and prevalence of reality shows that feature young adults and examining how those television personalities “talk about what it means to be young.” She said,

And then we could even juxtapose that with how these shows are talked about in the media. Um, and kind of cultural analysis pieces about young people and what these shows are saying about young people. Um, because it’s reality right? And so part of the idea is, you know, how real is the reality genre? How is it different from fiction? What does it say that these shows have become so popular? Or they’re not as popular right now but they kind of exploded in popularity at the turn of the 21st century and kind of looking at what was going on politically and culturally at that time and why this genre is kind of, you know, with memoir and blogging. . . (interview, 9/29/11).

Annie directly linked her ideas for the reality-as-genre instructional unit to her learning in Language Study, saying that class “really pushed” her thinking. She recognized that organizing an ELA curriculum around those ideas was in many ways untraditional, that is, challenging of traditional ways of being-doing in the literacy classroom. She said she had done some research online to see, as she put it, if “other high school teachers are doing this kind of stuff.” She said, “And they totally are. They’re doing it. So it’s not like it’ll be unheard of” (interview, 9/29/11). Finding encouragement in her distal professional community, Annie did, in fact, develop and enact an iteration of the reality genre curriculum the following semester in student teaching. But, her talk suggests that she was making sense of her approach to teaching the ELA, which was creative, critically oriented, and put “young people” at center, as towing the line of “unheard of.”
She seemed to be sensing that such an approach was out-of-step with dominant Discourses that she was accustomed to seeing being enacted in ELA classrooms and that pressured teachers to teach five-paragraph essays in lieu of exploring questions like “how real is the reality genre?” Her turn toward other teachers who “are doing this kind of” ELA teaching, that is, who are enacting the kind of teaching that Annie recognized as effective, points to her negotiation of competing D/discourses as she approached student teaching.

**Negotiating competing D/discourses in the context of real kids’ lives.** Throughout my analysis of Annie’s discourse, it seemed that she certainly had a well-formed vision of her future practice, and, as I have discussed, that vision was informed by influences that were well beyond the scope of her experience in teacher preparation. Where uncertainty was most salient in Annie’s discourse, however, was related to her understanding of and scant experience interacting with adolescents. As she said, “This whole teenager thing is kind of freaking me out a little bit” (interview, 12/14/11). In the fall semester, Annie logged her mandatory field experience hours for Methods at a self-selected practicum site; of note, most candidates were assigned to more traditional classrooms and schools. In an effort to gain more experience working with young people from diverse backgrounds unlike her own, Annie organized her placement at a small charter high school that began as an alternative school for adjudicated youth and grew to service students pushed out of traditional school settings. There, the range of students’ experiences was great, and her obligation to think deeply about the diversity of students’ needs became more pressing.

Reflecting on the sense she was making of her experience, Annie shared in the second interview that being at that school marked the first time she had actually seen how an often talked about topic in teacher education, that is, “the connection between socioeconomics, and,
you know, achievement” mapped onto the lives and futures of real kids. While some students came from affluent backgrounds, others, she said, were “living on the edge—their basic needs aren’t being met” (interview, 12/14/11). What stood out to her was her perception that all the students at that school were experiencing struggles, and Annie spoke of two students in particular. One was from a “well-to-do family,” had aspirations of being a lawyer, turned in her work, and was going to graduate; the other was “on the verge of living in his car.” The latter student weighed heavily on her mind and heart. He often wore the same clothes to school, and he moved a lot—the most recent move was because of a sewer main break that flooded his apartment. Despite the contrast in their lives outside of school, Annie was confronting a realization that these two students shared the same classroom, were held accountable to the same expectations, and received the same kinds of support at school. She said, “Like, these two kids could do the exact same thing but, then, I don’t know. It was interesting to see all these kids who struggled in school, from really different backgrounds, and then the kids who do finally pull it together seem like the kids who come from the more well to do backgrounds anyway” (interview, 12/14/11). She turned over the question of how “fair” this was and what role school should serve students whose primary struggle is survival rather than academics.

As Annie reflected on the “realness” and complexity of the different kinds of struggle she saw kids experiencing, she gave voice to more questions than answers. She said,

I saw the vocabulary quizzes and kids just bombing stuff and like being in, you know, academic decathlon class where every single—there’s one student who’s passing. How is that productive? And what’s the point? And I remember being a student always wondering how is this relevant? And that’s one thing I really liked about this program is everything’s kind of making things more transparent to students in what the, why are they doing this? Because a lot of times it’s not clear, and I think when you’re 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, like, you’re coming into your own and you’re trying to figure out what you’re supposed to do with yourself. And you want control over your life. And to empower students to you know, hey you’re going to be voting. You’re going to be working, you’re going to be, you know, kind of caring about other people in your community in a bigger
way than you do now. Like, you need to know stuff, and like, what to say, what to do, like form your own identity and opinions and be able to fight against the power, you know? (interview, 12/14/11)

In addition to seeing young people struggle to survive, Annie saw many others struggling to find themselves and their places in the world. Given the reality of those struggles, Annie questioned what she saw teachers engaging students in, and why. She sensed that many students weren’t “clear” on that question either, and that resonated as she reflected on her own experience holding similar questions about relevance in school. Her use of rhetorical questions (What’s the point? How is that productive? How is this relevant?) in relation to the practices she observed in ELA classrooms indicate her frustration with how that school, in her view, was not realizing rich possibilities to “empower” students to be full participants in a democratic society, to form their own “opinions” and to construct senses of who they were and wanted to be, and advocate for themselves and others by questioning authority—“fighting the power.” She constructed the school as engaging students in ‘doing’ school when it was neither working for them (“kids just bombing stuff” and “one student who’s passing”) nor connecting in relevant or meaningful ways to the context of their young lives. Annie’s talk suggests that she saw students at that school as being engaged in a game wherein they were not being positioned to win. She also seemed to understand the TEP as preparing her to make the purpose of school and connections between what she was teaching in the ELA classroom and students’ lives “more transparent.” Describing that component of her preparation as something she “really liked about this program” suggests that she endeavored to teach in ways that put students and their struggles to become at the center of what teaching the ELA should be for.

Standing at the end of coursework, Annie also grappled with how to bring together her ideas about those rich possibilities for school to fulfill democratic purposes of education. Annie’s
discourse framed quality teaching as that which foregrounds the relationship that human beings have with each another, our communities, and society. As she wrote early in the fall term, “I have enough life experience to know that passing a Shakespeare quiz won’t make or break you, but not being able to question the status quo in an informed manner or participate constructively in one’s community can be a serious detriment to not only oneself, but also to society at large” (Who do I want to be, 9/21/11). At the end of the fall semester, bringing those ideas to life in ELA classrooms seemed much more urgent.

**Standing before student teaching and making sense of effectiveness.** When asked in the final interview what “effective teaching” meant to her, Annie said,

> I mean effective, that word basically means that the students carry away important skills and knowledge. So to me, I mean that’s a judgment call, right? It’s what I think is important. And we’ve already talked about this a bit, I mean what I think is important is for those students to be able to question what’s going on around them in society and to feel like they can intelligently express themselves in writing and in, you know, speech and god knows what other medium, right? Um, to basically be productive, engaged, and I don’t mean productive as like little worker bees, but you know, be doing things that contribute to society and um, so I guess, you know, that means making sure that they can, that they can do those things. (interview, 12/14/11)

For Annie, enacting her vision of effectiveness involved recognizing that students are neither cogs in the machine, nor are they reducible to mere numbers that represent annual yearly progress; after all, she said, “these are human beings we’re talking about.” It meant using literacy instruction as a vehicle for preparing students for competent civic engagement—for “doing things that contribute to society.” Annie’s understanding of effectiveness did not abandon standards, content objectives, or student achievement goals; she understood those as constituent parts of the work. But, what she desired to do in her ELA classroom involved,

> raising an awareness that [my students] have a responsibility to being, like, human beings on this planet, to, um, be critical and to, you know, engage in what’s happening in their communities. And it’s not just about them and their, you know, kind of their, their friends and their family, that’s all they have to care about. But that the things they do affect other
people. And that if they see something they don’t like there are ways to, you know, like, something they can do. (interview, 12/14/11)

Central to this conception were modeling community in the classroom, establishing norms for safety and respect, practicing critical thinking, and using literacy as a means for meaningful engagement via inquiry into on-the-ground problems and issues that are “happening in their communities.” In her graduate study, Annie was so inspired by a faculty member’s work on service learning that she got involved with a campus organization dedicated to advancing civic engagement and education among students. Annie imagined some day incorporating a service-learning component into her pedagogy so that students would, in her words, “get a better sense of other, you know, other lives.”

Finally, there is an interesting contradiction between Annie’s talk about her hopes and fears for her first full-time teaching job. She said,

My hopes are that I end up in a school that’s just filled with cool people. I mean, my fear is I have to take a job because I have a mortgage to pay. My fear’s that I’m going to be in a situation that, you know, where I’m going have people who kind of control me in certain ways, and I’m not going to necessarily like some of the demands, but I’m going have to work with, and that’ll be fine. That’ll totally be- it’ll still be fine. Kids are great everywhere. Um but that’s kind of the fear because you want to get a job, and you’re not going to want to rock the boat too much. (interview, 12/14/11)

That excerpt demonstrates how, despite Annie’s confidence—earlier in the interview she said that at this point, “I’m just thinking of myself as teacher,” she still voiced concerns about being controlled and having to acquiesce to “demands” that, in the present context of acute accountability, were likely to challenge her understanding of what constituted effective teaching.

That attitude was surprising to me, given the confidence and clarity that characterized Annie’s discourse throughout the fall semester. Interesting, too, is her use of the metaphor of not wanting to “rock the boat too much.” As I will develop, Sam also employed this metaphor to speak to how he was thinking about negotiating the demands of accountability. In the excerpt above,
Annie was reassuring herself that even in the face of fears of what might be, “it’ll still be fine” because “kids are great everywhere,” but her talk suggests that she perceived her position as a novice teacher to be one of submission and obedience to the “control” of powers that be. Intriguing is that she does not explicitly speak to the strength, as she perceived it to be, of her preparation or her readiness to teach. She went on to say that one way she attempted to navigate that potential pitfall was by choosing her student teaching site at a school where most of the teachers and administrators were like-minded. But, her feeling that she will not be in a position to “rock the boat too much,” points to her anticipation of how she will have to navigate potentially rougher waters as an in-service teacher.

**Sam: Turning a “Critical Eye Toward the World”**

Having completed his undergraduate studies two years prior, Sam entered the TEP in his mid-twenties with a Bachelor’s degree in Humanities and emphases in Philosophy and Spanish. He said his undergraduate years were a time of “self exploration,” and upon graduation he followed his passion for food into the restaurant industry. Beginning as a cook, he quickly moved up the ranks to become general manager, and he described that experience in the “real world” as formative in shaping his pathway into teaching. Despite his success in management, Sam found the industry’s focus on profit making devoid of any intimate meaning that could sustain a career. After all, he said, “I wanted to work with people, not dollars.” Encouraged by his partner, who was working to earn an English as a Second Language endorsement from a different local teacher preparation program, Sam decided to pursue a move to teacher preparation, applied, and was accepted to the program. Reflecting on that path, Sam said, as an undergraduate, he never would have imagined his path would lead to Secondary English
Education, and when he decided to make the move to leave the restaurant industry and pursue ELA teacher licensure, he hadn’t taken a single English class in college.

**Thinking Historically about Influences on Sam’s Sense-Making of Quality**

Bringing a sociohistorical lens to bear on his own sense-making, Sam opened his “Who do I want to be as a teacher of the ELA?” response by writing, “As with any prospective teacher, my opinions of what consist of effective and valuable practice have been shaped by my own K-12 education, the social and economic conditions of my past, and my more recent experiences in university classrooms and in the restaurant industry” (9/21/11). He proceeded to organize the four-page response by elaborating each influence and its shaping role on his thinking about who he wanted to become as a future ELA teacher. Below, I discuss those influences.

**“Where I come from. . .”** Sam grew up a white, English-speaking kid living in a culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse suburban community that was a stone’s throw away from Research University, where he received both his undergraduate degree and teaching credential. Sam was the only preservice teacher to talk about growing up among diversity, and he wrote, “Where I come from had a profound impact on how I view multiculturalism and multilingualism in the classroom” (Who do I want to be, 9/21/11). Sam described his childhood neighborhood as a pocket of the community sandwiched between the affluent, predominantly white part of town nearest the country club and “the East side,” as he called it—a stretch of mostly lower-income neighborhoods that were rich with diversity. In elementary school, Sam recalled that many classes were taught in both English and Spanish. Looking back on his experience, he wrote, “I was perpetually exposed to bilingual students and my school experience was one of multiculturalism before I even knew what the word meant.” To these experiences, Sam attributed his development of an “inclusive view of the classroom,”
wherein he imagined creating a classroom community in which “difference is not just acknowledged and accepted, but valued and put to work.” He sought to leverage difference as a resource by taking advantage of the multiple perspectives of his students “to teach lessons about acceptance and point of view.” Sam aspired to return to his community and grow his teaching roots there.

**Humanities and philosophy coursework.** Sam’s experience as an undergraduate studying humanities and philosophy was also influential in his writing and talk about becoming a teacher of ELA. Tracing where and how his undergraduate experience appears in the data suggests that his major studies provided a framework for making sense of the TEP’s Discourse and of the ways of being-doing that he wanted to privilege in his ELA teaching. For example, he uses the words critical thinking, exploration, discussion, and creativity in his talk about the connections he was making between his own educational path and his goals as a teacher. For instance, Sam said that studying humanities and philosophy gave him a “firm grounding” in critical thinking, which he emphasized as the “most important skill I mastered in my own education” and, as I discuss below, what he aimed to foreground in his future ELA teaching practice.

When Sam talked about his experience studying those disciplines, he tended to situate them in a dichotomy in which the Discourse of the humanities, in contrast to Discourse of philosophy, became fodder for the vision he was constructing of the kind of ELA teacher he wanted to be(come). Sam described the humanities major as being about “interpretation” (What is English, 8/31/11), as humanities coursework privileged critically analyzing an idea, exploring that idea from different points of view “other than your own,” and “then resituating yourself and developing your own philosophy” in relation to those multiple perspectives (interview, 12/8/11).
In contrast, Sam said that his philosophy courses were practically useful in that they honed his ability to form an argument, but he perceived them to be “very cold” and rigid insofar as they stressed a “correct way of looking at things” (interview, 12/8/11). In his view, absent from the Discourse of philosophy were opportunities for students like him to locate themselves in that “correct” way of disciplinary thinking, and opportunities to ask, “What do I really think?” (interview, 12/8/11). Sam said,

Philosophy professors wanted you to learn philosophy but not learn what you believed in? And it was sort of strange to me that they’re teaching you all these different ways to think, but you’re not actually learning how to use them in order to form your own ideas about reality. And so I feel like that just like feeling really frustrated with that and thinking, you know, I want to teach people how to become better people more than I want them to become better readers or better writers. And I definitely want to do that, but (0.5) I want them to become better thinkers and be more critical of the world around them and to sort of open their eyes to the things that, you know, I opened my eyes to in my undergraduate experience and just being out in the working world and stuff. I think that having a critical eye towards the whole world is just what I really think is important about teaching. And that’s what I really sort of envision my teaching as being. (interview, 10/3/11)

I use this excerpt to illustrate the nature of the relationship among Sam’s sense-making of his experience as an undergraduate, of quality teaching, and of how he was envisioning his future practice. As a learner hungry to apply to his own life new ways of thinking that were unearthed in his philosophy courses, Sam desired space to wriggle around in the new conceptual terrain in the service of further developing his own “ideas about reality.” Yet, Sam’s perception was that philosophy afforded him few, if any, opportunities to make connections between content and his own life and emergent belief systems; humanities coursework, on the other hand, did afford those interpretive spaces in which to muck around. The contrast between what Sam perceived as humanities’ generative affordances and philosophy’s frustrating constraints was a frame for his future practice imaginings.
The words and phrases he employed in the excerpt above are telling in how he was using his experiences as a learner to construct his vision of being an effective ELA teacher. In the first part of the excerpt, Sam voiced what he “found strange” with regard to how his philosophy courses were organized, that is, around learning content but in isolation of helping students situate that learning in the context of their own lives. The word “strange” captures a frustration by contrasting what he experienced in philosophy to what he would expect as a learner of the discipline. What he interpreted as feeling strange at the time now seems situated in understandings about learning he encountered in the TEP. In the same sentence, he expressed a desire to be a particular kind of ELA teacher—a teacher who would use literacy instruction to foster students’ moral development as a primary goal of his teaching (as I discuss further below, the TEP Discourse is very present in Sam’s language, as he used the phrase “better people,” which Emily also used and attributed to James’s emphasis in his courses). Thus, Sam discursively links his frustration with the accepted ways of being-doing in the philosophy classroom to his desire to foster “better people” over “better readers or better writers” in his imagined future classroom, hence demonstrating how he was drawing on his student frame of reference to make sense of quality teaching and of the teacher he wanted to become. Like Annie and Emily, and as I continue to explore below, his words also construct a dichotomy, if subtle, between a focus on supporting “better readers and writers” and opportunities for students to be “better people.”

**Connecting to a strand of the TEP’s Discourse.** Indeed, Sam’s discourse above also reflects the TEP’s Discourse, and James’s D/discourse on story teaching in particular. In the previous chapter, I described how James’s perspective on preparing high-quality ELA teachers was shaped in large part by his view on the role that the humanities should play in literacy
education, and on using literature not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end—as a tool for inviting students to ponder what James called “basic, sort of humanizing questions” such as “Who am I?” “What might I become?” and “How can I make the world a better place?” I suspect those were the sorts of questions that Sam was hungry to take up in the context of his philosophy coursework. Moreover, as James explained, opening up those lines of inquiry and self-exploration to foster personal and social growth are what distinguished, in his view, high-quality, “story teachers” from “reading and writing competency teachers.” Another line of connection can be drawn across James’s discourse and Sam’s as Sam spoke to his understanding that “teach[ing] people how to become better people” was of greater value to him than teaching students to become better readers and writers. That through line becomes clearer when situated vis-à-vis Emily’s understanding that part of what James’s course was all about was “how much we’re after turning [students] into better people” (interview, 12/14/11). At the time of data collection, Sam was concurrently enrolled in James’s course, and it seems that the big ideas to which James and the TEP were introducing Sam in relation to teaching literature fit nicely within his negotiation of his student frame of reference developed as an undergraduate and the emergent teacher frame of reference he was constructing in relation to the profession. In what follows, I further explore these connections.

**Being a non-English major.** My analysis of Sam’s discourse showed that he repeatedly positioned himself as a “non-English major,” and thus different than most of his colleagues in the TEP. He thought of this as both an advantage and disadvantage. For instance, he saw his humanities studies as equipping him with a “strong background” in art history, music, and film— mediums that he thought were quite relevant to the ELA “but maybe aren’t explicitly taught in language arts classes” (interview, 12/8/11). On the other hand, Sam also worried about the depth
of his content knowledge in relation to his English-major colleagues who could rattle off literary
devices and terms that he hadn’t heard of. He said, “And that scares me a little. Um, just to like
not necessarily always feel like an expert in your field” (interview, 12/8/11). A point of
contradiction emerged when I compared that comment above, which came from the second
interview, to another he made in the first interview in relation to the same topic. In the same
stretch of talk I discussed above, wherein Sam expressed his desire to teach students to become
better people, he said,

Like I said I wasn’t an English major, I’m not, like (0.8) some of the books that I think
I’m gonna teach I probably haven’t even read before, you know? I mean, and- but a lot of
people would be frightened by that. And actually that makes me feel like I have a distinct
advantage because I’m going to be learning alongside my students and I feel like if
you’re not learning with your students, then you’re just sort of this disconnected expert in
the classroom. . . (interview, 10/3/11)

Earlier in the term, Sam’s talk suggested that he was more willing to assume the vulnerable
position that he saw before him as a non-English major and student teacher. In fact, as he said, “a
lot of people would be frightened by that,” but he saw that as a “distinct advantage.” And yet, by
the second interview, his willingness to position himself strategically as a learner alongside his
students was far less pronounced; he described himself as “scared” in contrast to the beginning
of the semester when he positioned himself as not “frightened” in the way “a lot of people would
be.” I explore that shift in more depth below.

**Sam’s Negotiation of Quality in the TEP: From Smooth to Uneasy**

Related to my discussion above, there was a discernable shift that characterized Sam’s
discourse as he moved through the fall semester. When I mapped his discourse over time and
looked for evidence of shifts in thinking, contradictions like the one above, and instances where
the discourse appeared muddy (e.g., incoherent, textured by uncertainty or questions), I noticed
that in the beginning of the term he was talking the talk of the TEP. In other words, Sam’s
language indicated smooth alignment with that of the TEP. However, at the end of the term, he was voicing far more uncertainty and even fear related to what was on the horizon. Moreover, that fear became exacerbated as he thought about negotiating the demands of accountability and effectiveness. In the next section, I explore the nature of that discursive shift as it appeared over time and as Sam negotiated competing D/discourses of accountability and effectiveness.

**Talking the talk of the TEP Discourse.** At the beginning and midpoint of the fall semester, Sam’s talk and writing about ELA teaching was generally confident and relatively consistent with the Discourse of the TEP (I use “talking the talk” here to refer to that consistency and alignment). In this section, I point to three examples of Sam talking the talk. First, speaking to the influence of his secondary education on the kind of ELA teacher he wanted to be(come), Sam wrote that he was put on the “honors track” for English—a “privileged position,” as he called it, that he recognized would be “difficult to set aside” as a future teacher and might influence his expectations and attitudes toward students unlike himself. He seemed to reconcile that tension by saying, “The fact that I am conscious of this bias helps me to overcome it and see my students as their potential rather than seeing them from a deficit model” (Who do I want to be, 9/21/11). Sam’s language takes up strands of the program’s Discourse related to sociocultural perspectives on learning and development, and his understanding of the roles that one’s prior history and lived experiences play in shaping one’s beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. His interest in seeing students for their “potential” and resisting “deficit models” aligns well with the D/discourse of program instructors and faculty related to understanding the sociocultural worlds of learners and the importance of teacher language and perspectives in positioning students in classrooms.
Second, when asked to speak to what stood out to him about his experiences in the TEP, Sam talked about some of the classrooms in which he had been placed to meet field-experience requirements. He was critical of one teacher in particular whom he perceived as not willing to take up a “mentoring” role and did not express much interest in discovering why he and his peers were pursuing teaching. Citing “philosophical differences,” Sam was also critical of the model of practice she provided. He said,

She just seemed to go by what she had already been doing over years and years and years, and it seemed a lot- it all seemed sort of contrived and just, you know? It almost seemed like a mass produced education like, they worked out of you know workbooks all the time where it was just like preplanned activities and discussions and it just- I didn’t feel like she was very creative. (interview, 10/3/11)

Sam’s description of that cooperating teacher’s pedagogy evokes a classroom scene that certainly defies what the program’s Discourse associated with effective teaching. In fact, that generic, workbook-focused, and uninspired way teaching the ELA seems the antithesis to the kind of ELA teaching that the TEP promoted. Pointing to models, as Sam did above, of classrooms and teachers that counter what participants in the TEP recognized as good teaching was a discursive move that likewise appeared in the context of Emily and Annie’s talk. Emily positioned herself in contrast to the lead teacher of the summer program who seemed not to care about the Latino students whom the program was intended to serve, and Annie was frustrated by the game of ‘doing’ school in which she perceived her practicum site to be engaging students.

Third, when Sam was asked to speak to what the TEP emphasized and offered its candidates, Sam contrasted his preparation with that of his partner’s and said that his was “grounded in specific kinds of theory, basically, you know, sociocultural, sociohistorical approaches to teaching.” His partner’s preparation, on the other hand, was “definitely more practice based” and “geared toward classroom management as opposed to, you know, a
sociocultural-like approach to teaching” (interview, 10/3/11). I point to this example of talking the talk because it shows a deeper, more nuanced understanding on Sam’s part than mere revoicing key words and phrases like “sociocultural” and “sociohistorical” might suggest. Sam went on to frame his preparation and his partner’s, which seem to represent two competing approaches to quality teacher preparation (interview, 10/3/11). Sam understood the sociocultural theoretical grounding of his TEP to mean in practical terms “establishing a culture in your classroom” and “taking into account culture when you’re teaching.” He explained this further as demanding an understanding of the social and cultural nature of learning, establishing norms and routines for participation, and not as using classroom management strategies to discipline students. As I develop below, that strand of the program’s Discourse resonated deeply with the vision Sam had of the future classroom he sought to organize.

Building a culture and “allowing young people to be young people.” When asked to imagine what a good day in his classroom would look like, Sam described a scene in which his students were engaged in “thoughtful discussion,” which he qualified as being organized around “not just sort of surface level, leading questions, but questions that are going to cause controversy” (interview, 10/3/11). Recalling that as a young learner himself, he often found himself being disciplined for talking to his classmates, even when he wasn’t necessarily “off topic,” Sam imagined allowing space for “tangents” and students “occasionally getting sidetracked by other things.” He framed that classroom space as “allowing young people to be young people” and as central to the kind of learning environment he sought to organize. Regarding what he understood as his role in making that successful learning happen, Sam cited the importance of getting to know his students and “establishing a classroom culture that allows for mistakes, um, allows for controversy, allows for disagreement, but in a very respectful
manner. Sort of explicitly saying I expect you to be a community of learners. I don’t expect you to be just be this class of individual people” (interview, 10/3/11). Sam imagined engaging his students in these kinds of critical, respectful discussions and not being concerned that things were “getting out of control” when the conversation meandered from the topic at hand.

Sam described the reaction he was often met with when describing his vision of the classroom as “like, Oh my god! You’re not going to manage your classroom at all, but no. I really want to strictly manage my classroom, but in a way that allows for that sort of conversation. So that’s a real challenge for me is sort of discovering what sorts of norms I want to set up” (interview, 10/3/11). At play in Sam’s discourse is a tension between “strictly” managing a classroom and organizing one that “allows” for “tangents and letting young people be young people.” His use of “manage” signals both others’ assumptions about disciplined classrooms, with which he disagreed, and an awareness of and investment in what “manage” means to others in terms of orchestrated routines and organization (“I really want to strictly manage my classroom.”). He turns to norms as a key tool for building the classroom community he envisions, naming as a “challenge” the task of figuring out what kinds of norms to establish in order to create that desired learning environment.

That tension came to life at his practicum site in the fall semester—a ninth-grade integrated ELA and social studies course that was co-taught by two teachers and in which 50 or so ninth graders were enrolled. Sam described the physical space of the classroom, which was made larger by pulling back an accordion-style, sliding divider wall, as “really challenging to negotiate, even to just show things, to project because not everyone can see everything the way the desks are arranged” (interview, 12/8/11). The challenge of engaging 50 fourteen year olds at
once was “overwhelming” at times and “a little chaotic.” It also created dissonance with regard to Sam’s earlier thinking about “letting young people be young people.” He said,

It’s a little difficult to keep an eye on students that way and it’s, and I just feel like with that many kids, you’re never going to know if you’re impacting everybody. I feel like I can’t ignore everything and I, I like I’m being a little bit more forceful in just trying to get them to get back to work and stuff. They won’t listen and it’s tough, but it’s helping me learn where my boundaries are as far as classroom management. (interview, 12/8/11)

Sam was beginning to realize that organizing the learning environment he desired was more difficult to enact in practice than he anticipated, but that was not necessarily a bad thing. It was, as he said, helping him determine where his “boundaries” were. Unclear, though, is what those boundaries looked like, and what was mediating Sam’s sense-making as he drew his boundary lines. He told a story of being in that classroom one day when both teachers were gone, and he and another practicum student took over teaching responsibilities while the substitute sat in the back of the room. Sam said the class quickly got “out of control,” so they “cracked down” by demanding that the students work silently. Reflecting on the experience, Sam said, “It was really puzzling to me. It was like, okay, you know, how do we turn this back around to I am the teacher, you are the students, you are going to listen to what I’m going to say. And you’re going to do what you need to do because this is just chaos . . .” (interview, 12/8/11).

I found this example particularly compelling because it confronted Sam with the limits of what he knew and was able to do in the face of a difficult situation and it challenged his sense-making of the ways of being-doing that he cultivated in the TEP, associated with quality teaching, and imagined enacting as a teacher. Sam’s default setting was to “crack down,” which might have been reasonable depending on how chaotic the scene actually was and how that message was delivered to students. I wonder, though, how Sam might navigate other kinds of
difficult situations that press him, and other teachers like him, to revert to a default setting and to resist the ways of being-doing that were cultivated in teacher preparation.

When asked at the end of the fall semester to speak to what “effective teaching” meant to him, Sam’s response was the most fraught of the four participants. He said,

Effective for me is teaching my kids how to criticize their world. Successful for me is being able to keep my job. Um, and maybe those two things might clash at certain times. Um, especially, like, clashing with standardized testing and sort of how do I teach to the tests. So balancing playing the game with not compromising my own values is the key to being an effective teacher for me. And I feel like I’m going to have to compromise my own values, um, a little bit. Um, just, just to get by and to get a job and to keep my job for three years and then once I’ve got my job for three years and they know that I’m an effective teacher then, I can sort of stretch things a little bit. And I can go out to where I want to be as a teacher. So I feel like the way that it’s set up, the system is set up is not really for you to rock the boat. You can’t do that in your first couple of years. Everything that I’ve ever heard is like don’t (.) ever do that, you know? And then the, just it runs contrary to my personality and it’s just something I’m going to have to reconcile. Um, I like rocking the boat. And so I’m just kinda going to have to draw a line and figure out where that is. (interview, 12/8/11)

In the excerpt above, Sam was clearly negotiating competing D/discourses, which he distinguished, on the one hand, as “effective” teaching that aligned with his own D/discourse, as well as the TEP’s Discourse and, on the other hand, “successful” teaching that would allow him to obtain and keep his job. Sam also seemed to understand, as his teacher educators did, too, that enacting a Discourse of effective, rather than successful, teaching in a sociopolitical climate of high-stakes accountability was not only challenging, but also a potentially perilous undertaking. Sam felt his job and livelihood were at stake. Like Annie, Sam used the metaphor of not being able to “rock the boat” to express his understanding about navigating the challenge he presumed he would face in public schools if he tried to enact his values and knowledge related to what effective teaching meant. Above, he connects rocking the boat to challenging the “system” and its Discourse of achievement that presses teachers with demands of teaching “to the tests.” Given his talk about “classroom management” and the need to control “chaos” in the classroom, he
connected the larger Discourses of accountability to the Discourses of management of classrooms and discipline of students that prevail in schools. All of those elements are part of very present, but undefined outside forces—the “system” that “everything” has suggested he must assent to in order to survive. He envisioned waiting to secure tenure and then “stretch things a little bit.” Sam’s use of “a little bit” is striking, as it suggests only a very gentle rocking of the boat. This is in contrast to the strongly committed, energetic language he was using at the start of the semester. His shifts suggest the impact of his practicum experience on his visions of quality teaching, where, seemingly, he was dropped into a sink or swim situation that would be difficult for most novices to navigate without deep support (an idea I will take up further in the concluding chapter). Also of note, Sam’s imagined strategy of waiting for tenure to “rock the boat” and enact his vision of effective teaching falls apart when situated in policy discourses, like the Great Teachers and Leaders Bill, that have stripped teachers of the professional benefit of tenure. I wonder, where does that leave Sam as he endeavored to push away from the dock of university-based teacher education and set sail in the rougher waters of student and first-year teaching, that is, equipped without the possibility of tenure, which in his view was the perhaps the ultimate life preserver?

**Hope: Embarking on a Journey of Becoming**

At 22, Hope was the youngest and most novice preservice teacher of the four, and still she would have been a competitive candidate in most programs. She fit the race/class/gender/sexuality/language categories that mark social power and privilege. Hope’s reputation among faculty and instructors was generally that of a bright and hardworking teacher-to-be with a sparkling academic record; her content and education GPAs were both within one-tenth of a point of a 4.0. When graduation loomed, faculty nominated her for the honor of outstanding
teacher candidate. Her supervisor in student teaching, who also supervised Emily, commented that Hope was among the top 1% of candidates, and she cited “content knowledge, work ethic, learner, self reflective” as Hope’s strengths, and “building relationships,” “strong sense of fairness,” and “belief that all students can learn and providing opportunities to succeed” as among her outstanding qualities (April 2012). I first met Hope in Composition for Teachers, and I saw her assume a quietly contemplative, observer’s role in that course as well as in Methods. By nature, she was soft spoken and introverted—Hope described herself as “reserved” and “a softy,” and she thought those qualities sometimes made it challenging for her to connect with some teachers and instructors whose “styles” were different than hers (personal communication, 10/18/11). My sense was that Hope’s experience in the TEP was focused on taking it all in—that is, trying to integrate as much of the material as she possibly could, and perhaps feeling overwhelmed at times because so much of it was new. For instance, when Hope was in Composition for Teachers, her “taking stock” reflection read much like a summary of important take-aways, such as “offering minimal, economic, and authentic criticism that focuses on a few recurring problems in student writing” instead of overwhelming students with copious amounts of feedback (reflection, 2/15/11). As a point of contrast, Emily’s taking-stock reflection was fraught with uncertainty and points of tension—evidence, as I discussed above, of her negotiation of competing discourses on quality writing instruction; Annie’s reflection was characterized by a tacking back and forth between what the course was bringing up for her in relation to the freshman writing course that she was teaching at the same time.

As I will develop, Hope’s “journey as a teacher,” as she put it, that unfolded in teacher education was marked by many firsts. Hope entered teacher preparation with no formal teaching experience, and guided by a strong student frame of reference, and her process of recognizing
herself as a teacher was at the heart of her process and struggle of becoming. My analysis showed that Hope’s history as a student was a crucial mediating factor in her negotiation of the TEP’s Discourse and her sense-making of who she wanted to be(come) as a teacher. That influence also oriented how I organized the rest of my discussion of Hope’s process of becoming. I elaborate that influence below, and then set up the remainder of my discussion.

**Thinking Historically About Influences on Hope’s Sense-Making of Quality**

Historically, school had been a place of ease that brought Hope a deep sense of comfort. As a child, she and her family moved frequently, so school, she said, “was kind of like my main home. And, I just grew up in a family centered around education with my mom’s mom and my mom both being really involved in schools” (interview, 10/19/11). On what motivated her to pursue teaching as a career, Hope wrote, “I have always known that I wanted to become a teacher. I love literature, I love writing, I love learning, and I love sharing these passions with other people” (questionnaire, 8/24/11). Reflecting on the teachers she had as a student, she said there was “one teacher in particular who stood out,” though she also said, “I didn’t really have a particular English teacher that stood out to me. It was more the content that got me into teaching” (interview, 10/19/11). Given the above, teaching the ELA was a profession that “just made sense” to Hope.

Hope’s discourse often marked her “love” of learning, and she found the activities of learning and thinking deeply gratifying. For instance, of the courses she took to satisfy requirements for her English degree, she pointed to Modern Literature and Science—an honors course—as her favorite, because it afforded her opportunities “to think deeply about really interesting metaphysical, spiritual, imaginative, and scientific understandings of the world” (Who do I want to be, 9/20/11). She later described that imparting “the desire, drive, and
determination to never stop learning” (Who do I want to be, 9/20/11) and helping her students “learn how to learn,” for example, knowing where to find information, “have always been a part of who I am and what I believe teaching to be” (interview, 12/14/11). Her exemplary academic record, desire to learn, and strong content preparation were strengths valued by policy discourses, like NCTQ’s, that would most certainly position someone like Hope as ready to step confidently into the role of professional teacher because of those strengths. But, in fact, Hope was the most hesitant of the four participants to step up and step into the role before her. A history of academic success had positioned her as a competitive candidate who could comfortably assume the role of successful teacher education student and engage effortlessly in literary discussions of the kind she imagined facilitating in her future classroom. It positioned her less so to step comfortably into the reverse of that role, that is, to stand before students with an air of confidence that she was, indeed, qualified to facilitate those discussions and to assume the role of the person in charge of their learning. Herein lies an important point about the nature of the challenge that Hope confronted in teacher preparation. As a student of teaching, Hope shone. Her consistently high marks in coursework were evidence of her successful student uptake of the inputs of the program. As I will show, Hope successfully negotiated the program’s curriculum, that is, she was able to practice backward design and instructional planning, administer the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) and use those data to inform instruction, and talk the talk of a teaching practice in which “scaffolding,” fostering “metacognition,” and “facilitating learning” were central. Indeed, Hope could do all that quite well. However, her struggles centered on developing a confident sense of herself as a professional and the person responsible for what students learn (or not) in a given year, in addition to developing a clear and coherent understanding of how to organize her instructional practice to meet the powerful philosophical
ideas she was developing about the nature and purpose of ELA instruction. These challenges were very present in her talk and writing as she negotiated the inputs of the TEP.

Because Hope’s process of recognizing herself as a competent professional became a salient theme in my analysis of her sense-making, and also one that stood out in relation to the experiences of the other participants, I draw on that theme to frame my discussion below. Thus, I organize my discussion of Hope’s sense-making by drawing on her metaphor of a “journey” to frame her process of development and becoming in the TEP.

**Hope’s “Journey” of Becoming in the TEP**

In talking about the nature of her experience in the TEP, Hope twice employed the metaphor of a journey, as in her “journey as a teacher” (interview, 10/19/11). Conceptually, the notion of journey evokes exploration, travel, and movement across space and time that culminates in an arrival at some new, sometimes transformative endpoint. In the context of her teacher preparation, Hope’s “journey” involved exploring the pathway of becoming a teacher, learning the practices central to a teacher’s work, and, ultimately, recognizing herself as part of a professional community. I use that metaphor to organize my discussion below.

**Standout influences from the TEP Discourse.** The first instance of Hope’s use of the “journey” metaphor appeared in the first interview transcript in response to being asked to describe what stood out to her with regard to her experience in the TEP and what the program emphasized. She began to recount which influential course experiences shaped her “journey,” and pointed to learning about “different schools of thought around education,” learning about “motivation and identity” in Educational Psychology, and being enrolled at the time in several methods courses, which in her view, seemed “to focus more on materials and actual ways that you can teach in your classroom” (interview, 10/19/11). Hope said, “I’ve noticed that there’s a
lot of overlap with things. And in one class that I took, I felt like everything, almost everything was a repeat. And, of course, like, there’s tons of things to be gained from our colleagues, especially. Um, but I did feel like a lot of- some of that information was a repeat” (interview, 10/19/11). Hope was the only participant to share this perspective, which, as I discussed above, Annie thought was generalizable to many of the younger candidates in the program. Also noteworthy, Hope did not speak much to the influence of School and Society on her sense-making. Although Hope did not share many details about her upbringing beyond what I already described, my hunch is that given what she did share, School and Society’s curriculum related to issues of power and systems of oppression was likely to be uncharted territory for Hope. In my analysis, I flagged this curiosity as an interesting absence, especially given that Hope understood education as “the backbone of all positive social change and human relations” (questionnaire, 8/24/11), and literacy as embedded in a complex set of power relations. For example, she said, “I agree with Paulo Freire that learning and teaching reading is a highly political act; it gives power to those who master it” (Who do I want to be, 9/20/11). As I will show, these ideas about language and power were likely fostered in Language Study, which Hope cited as an influential course experience, and fostered her desire to work in a diverse student-teaching setting.

**Shaping “my identity as a teacher.”** What most stood out to Hope as she negotiated her pathway in the TEP was the “community of support” with which she equated the school of education, despite the “huge university setting” in which she thought it to be situated (interview, 10/19/11). In particular, she named as influential four faculty and instructors who taught core courses in the literacy block, and to whom readers have already been introduced: Lisa, James, Nancy, and me. Hope said,

> [Those four instructors] really kind of shaped my identity as a teacher and what I really want to do. Like, I think, um, from James, I kind of adopted his philosophy toward
teaching and why it’s so important. Um, you know to teach stories especially. And then Lisa just has, she’s just one of the people who kind of has this vibrant energy and this passion for relationships with students. And then Sara and Nancy have this, like, kind of approach to students and the kind of personality and demeanor, and just, like, passionate, um, way of dealing with the material and with people in general. They’re both, like, really strong listeners and they really care about the subject matter and the way that they talk about writing and reading, I really connect with that idea and I think I share that. But they’ve really given me sort of all these different ideas and things to draw back on and just like ways to talk about what I believe in, I think. (interview, 10/19/11)

Hope’s discourse in the excerpt above marks her active engagement in a process of identity construction in relation to her negotiation of the program’s Discourse, and more specifically, to what she sought to emulate among the models of professionals that her teacher educators provided. In other words, the TEP’s Discourse extended invitations for her to assume a professional role orientation, and Hope accepted those invitations and actively constructed a sense of the teacher she wanted to be(come) by drawing on available models and considering which of her mentors’ qualities resonated with her sense of self.

James’s D/discourse on story teaching was perhaps most influential to Hope than any other participant; as she noted above, she “kind of adopted his philosophy” on story teaching. In her “Who do I want to be…” response, Hope wrote, “I feel that my goal as a teacher of the ELA is to encourage students to question their world and themselves and to give them the tools and skills necessary to do so. ELA is a vast, continuously evolving discipline that is defined by a central focus on discovering and understanding humanity” (9/20/11). When asked in the second interview where those ideas came from, Hope reiterated the influence of James’s D/discourse, saying, “The statement about understanding yourselves and your, as, like, in your position in the world. Just the way of phrasing that, I think I gained throughout my time in the- like, especially in James’s class and things like that. Like, the whole making novels and, and literature relevant to your life specifically and understanding your life better. . .” (interview, 12/14/11). Indeed, the
word “human” related to teaching often arose in Hope’s language about ELA teaching and is a thread in how she describes the influences of the four instructors she had experienced in the TEP. She drew on Lisa as her exemplar of the deep care with which she approached building relationships with students—something that Hope intensely valued. For example, she wrote, “I hope to have a real relationship with my students, their parents/guardians, and their community. I hope that my presence in my students’ lives will extend beyond the classroom” (Who do I want to be, 9/20/11). Reflecting on her practicum experience at the end of the fall semester, she spoke to the relationships she developed with some students who shared with her music they were creating; one student even sent her a short story he was writing outside of school. She captured that experience as the “human aspect of teaching,” and not “just about a test or passing the class or a grade” that was most important (interview, 12/14/11). Finally, and also related to the “human aspect” of teaching and learning, from me and Nancy, Hope seemed to find resonance in our ways of seeing and hearing students, our approaches to the content of “writing and reading,” and our passion for the work. For Hope, her teacher educators—the ways of being-doing that they embodied in relation to how they approached their content and their work with novices—appear in her language as embodiments of certain aspects of teaching she hoped to take into her practice. Her language about her instructors consistently centered on the underlying theme of the human-centered, relational aspects of teaching (a focus that, as I discussed in Chapter Six, was, indeed, a primary strand of the TEP’s Discourse). This focus influenced how she negotiated the curricular inputs that we offered by way of course curricula and some of the dissonance she felt when trying on the teacher role in her practica.

**A series of firsts.** Several important ‘firsts’ marked Hope’s journey of becoming in the program. These were first-ever opportunities to enact her emergent sense-making in practice and
to try on the role of an ELA teacher. For instance, in the program, she planned and executed her first lesson and her “own unit plan” in which she explored notions of identity in the young adult novel *Speak* (Anderson, 1999). Her experience in Language Study for Educators marked the first time she explored “hate language,” “language politics,” and dialects (interview, 10/21/11). For her final research project, Hope explored how practicing teachers support ELLs in their classrooms. She said, “That was the first time I had really gotten my feet wet in that subject matter, and that was really powerful for me” (interview, 10/21/11). Finally, the case study in Lisa’s class was another “powerful” first for Hope. It was the first time she worked side by side with an adolescent learner and identified “challenged reader” to teach him strategies that savvy readers employ to access text. This was an experience that seemed to shift her understanding of the nature of the work of ELA teaching. In a mid-semester interview, she said:

> For me that was really powerful because I’ve never really, um, had that kind of an experience before, and I wasn’t really, because I think when a lot of people come into teaching English they think that it’s going to be like book club. Like, we’re going to be talking about these books and having these great conversations, and I didn’t really ever picture myself, like, actually teaching someone how to be a better reader, but I loved it. Like, I loved going over these skills, like, um, sight words and word sorts and how you break words down, how you can like predict ahead in a text, visualize a text, use context clues to find out the meaning of words. Um, all these little things that we do subconsciously as read- as good readers, the tiny complexities that are so important… So it was kind of my own journey as a teacher to, to like start with this qualitative reading inventory to find out what level he was and then think of different lessons to move forward and then reassess him at the end. (interview, 10/21/11)

Importantly, opportunities to assume a professional role orientation and to enact her developing teacher’s identity were for Hope “powerful” initiations into the professional world of teaching that also shifted her student frame for thinking about quality ELA instruction. As Hope noted, a student’s frame of reference takes for granted that ELA teaching will “be like book club” and engage students in “great conversations” about literature. Hope’s talk emphasizes that far less familiar and more unnatural to a college-level English Literature student’s frame are the varied
pedagogical dimensions of teachers’ work, such as teaching students the skills and strategies of reading. She also points to her realizations about the reading process and her own use of skills and strategies that were implicit for her, and that would make opportunities for participation in the ELA classroom (certainly when it does, as it should, include discussions “like book club”) more possible for some students than for others. And, she points to the QRI as a tool she found very useful in determining a student’s “level,” a use of assessment that is, of course, important and, also of course, a use of language of leveling students that can become static and entrenched in its use to negatively position students in schools, particularly in the current high-stakes climate. The language of leveling is, too, a new Discourse for Hope that will play out over time in her teaching. Finally, Hope’s repetition of the metaphor of her “journey as a teacher” to describe what the effect of those experiences was like, in her view, suggests that as she was coming into these realizations about the nature of literacy teachers’ work, and taking up new Discourses of teaching, she was also beginning to recognize herself as a member of the profession.

**Hope’s sense-making of quality.** My analysis of Hope’s interview transcript from the midpoint of the fall semester uncovered two related patterns, though I will discuss them one at a time. First, there was incoherence at times in Hope’s language as she attempted to articulate specific details related to how she would organize her instructional practice to meet overarching literacy goals that she held for her students. The excerpt I introduce below illustrates this pattern well. When asked in the first interview to describe what a good day in her future classroom might look like, and what her role would be in organizing that success, Hope responded,

Mmm, okay. *(2.7)* I think I would imagine this as kind of, um, let’s say, maybe we just finished a book or are close to finishing a book. And all the students are kind of at the point where they can really grapple with the ideas of the text and, um, their understanding of it as a whole, and so I would imagine that they’re working on some sort of kind of like
a multimedia project maybe? Definitely in groups and I could see them just being, um, really enthusiastic and, you know, just talking with one another. Um, working on different things, bouncing ideas back and forth. I’d say my role would probably be everything leading up to this point when they’re kind of putting it all together themselves would just be, um, scaffolding it? So that they know, kind of, I don’t know. How do you explain, maybe, um, (4.5) having all the structure and support up to this point? (interview, 10/21/11)

Hope’s talk above indexes uncertainty and hesitation. For example, in the first line, she says, “Mmm, okay,” and then takes a long pause before continuing. Then, she says, “I think I would imagine this as kind of, um, let’s say, maybe…”, which suggests that she was working hard in the moment to make sense and to respond to the question. The same can be said for the last line in which she struggles to find a cogent explanation for conveying her thinking, takes an even longer pause, and ends the sentence, or idea unit, by raising her intonation. In discourse analysis, when a rise in intonation occurs at the end of idea, it is the speech equivalent of a question (Gee, 2011b). The question that marks the end of Hope’s discourse, then, further indexes the uncertainty that characterizes the excerpt overall. Also evident in the excerpt, Hope was able to visualize what her ideal classroom would look like—students working collaboratively, ready to “grapple with the ideas of the text,” and enthusiastically engaged, but her hesitancy and uncertainty suggest that she was less clear about the nature of the behind-the-scenes work that was involved in getting students to that point. She went on to emphasize that her role in organizing that scene would be “hands off and just, like, witnessing [the students] kind of taking over” (interview, 10/21/11). In contrast, when the other participants responded to this same question, their answers were more specific and coherent. In response to the same question, Emily, for example, used a metaphor of an “artist’s studio” to describe her ideal classroom and how students would participate in it.
In my initial analysis of this stretch of Hope’s discourse, I made an observer’s comment in which I recognized myself in Hope, that is, as an enthusiastic, first-year teacher telling my principal that for me, successful teaching was being a “facilitator” of learning. When he pressed me to talk about what that meant and how would I know that students were ‘getting it’, I remember being stumped. Had he asked me that question in my third year of teaching, I would have been able to provide a more cogent response. Indeed, organizing a learning community in which students are ready and willing to take on such self-directed roles, to “grapple” with text, and so on is a complex endeavor that takes practice and skill to enact successfully. Significant with regard to the excerpt above is that in concert with Hope’s muddied talk, there was also a relatively clear vision articulated of what she was working toward—the end goal she desired. Interestingly, it is a vision that connects to the “like book club” thinking she had mentioned and challenged in a different context as the ideal most prospective ELA teachers imagine. She knew what a good day in her classroom would look like when she saw it, and with a semester of student teaching under her belt, mentorship, and sustained reflective practice in her first year of teaching, Hope might return to this question equipped with a more concise and developed response.

The second pattern I discerned in relation to Hope’s discourse was another kind of hesitancy made visible by frequent check-ins with the interviewer that solicited feedback on whether or not she had answered the question. “I don’t know” was another recurring discourse marker that indexes her hesitancy. For instance, at the end of the response she gave above, she paused at the end and softly exhaled, “Um, maybe (2.8) I don’t know. Does it seem like I’m answering the question?” Those moves in a conversation, particularly something formal like an interview, are not uncommon for many people, and her hesitations could certainly be part of an
Standing before student teaching: Hope’s fears. As Hope stood before the student teaching experience, she had certainly made strides in her journey of personal and professional becoming and gained enough confidence to walk into a challenge. When deciding which student teaching placement would be the best fit, Hope turned over the possibility of teaching at a local middle school where she had spent part of her practica hours in the fall semester, or choosing a far less comfortable placement at a culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse high school. Earlier that fall, Hope solicited my advice on the matter, and I encouraged her to explore the option of high school, because my sense was that she would be successful and would serve her students well. She was committed to working in a diverse setting, but she shared reservations about the way she looked, that is, “as a high school student” herself, and so it “might be easier to pass as an adult at a middle school” (field notes, 10/12/11). She knew that she was “almost guaranteed a placement” at the middle school, but with my gentle nudging, she set up an interview with an ELA teacher at the high school to see how it went. In my fieldnotes, I documented the day she came to class, beaming, a bright smile on her face, and a student teaching contract in her hand. She decided to go for the challenge of the diverse, high school placement.

In the final interview, when I asked Hope what “effective ELA teaching” meant to her, she responded with a clear articulation. She said it would mean that students are “never confused
about what they’re learning. So, they can go home and say this is what I did today and this is what I accomplished today, this is what I learned. And then apply it to their lives and, um, you know, like, ground that learning in texts, relevant texts, like Monster” (interview, 12/14/11).

Interesting is that although Hope was the most novice and most reluctant to recognize her professional knowledge and skill and to see herself as a teacher, her talk did not suggest that she was actively negotiating policy discourses related to accountability and achievement, like Sam and Annie, or competing discourses on quality, like Emily. When I asked what she hoped and feared with regard to making the next step on her journey. She said,

I’ll be learning a lot and moving toward the teaching a lot by the end. By the end, I want to walk away and feel like I’m ready to be a teacher. I guess at this point it’s like I’m afraid, I’m nervous about student teaching and, um, but at the same time, I’m not, like, I know I’m going to do it. I’m going to do it the best that I can so there’s no really better time than now. And I know I have as many tools and skills as I could have at this point leaving the program, so I, I am prepared and it’s just whether or not I can put it all together in the moment. (interview, 12/14/11)

She hoped that, “by the end” of student teaching, she would “feel like I’m ready to be a teacher”; her fear was that she wouldn’t. There’s a certain bravery to be appreciated in Hope’s willingness to step into the unknown and lean into the fear. She recognized that her pedagogical toolbox and skill set were full enough to tackle the following semester, and yet the uncertainty remained.

Can I do it? NCTQ’s discourse asserts that TEPs must prepare teacher candidates who are “ready for the rigors of the classroom from day one” (Greenberg et al, 2013, p. 94). Prepared as best she thought she could be with the ‘right’ knowledge and skill, yet still uncertain about what the nature of the next set of challenges would be, I ask, where does Hope fit into such expectations?

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have constructed a representation of how four preservice teachers negotiated Discourses on quality in their processes of becoming teachers of the ELA, and
focused on their processes of negotiating two major Discourses—that of their TEP and competing Discourses of accountability. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I return to some salient themes constructed from my analysis, and I draw connections across the four preservice teachers’ processes of negotiating “quality” and navigating a high-stakes policy context. I also consider how this work might inform generative directions for future research and practice in the field of teacher education.
Chapter Eight
The Frame’s the Thing: Toward a More Human Reframing of the Discourse on Teacher Quality

In the opening chapter, I grounded this dissertation in a curiosity about the degree to which the present historical moment of acute accountability has re-shaped the nature of the sense-making challenge of learning to teach—a challenge indexed by a three decades-old metaphor the “two-worlds pitfall” (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). I wondered what new pitfalls I might unearth through close examination of four preservice teachers’ negotiations of competing Discourses as they made sense of high-quality ELA teaching. The research question that framed my inquiry asked: How do preservice teachers negotiate competing Discourses on “quality” and “effectiveness” that they encounter as they move across contexts in their final semester of coursework in university-based teacher education?

Endeavoring to answer that question, my first task involved discerning which Discourses confronted my participants as they navigated contexts surrounding “quality” and “effectiveness” in learning to teach. As this study unfolded, NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review, a highly anticipated policy report and key instantiation of accountability Discourses, was released, and as I wrote the final chapters of this dissertation the second edition of that report rolled out, too. In Chapter Five, I looked closely and critically at the Review’s discourse, and I uncovered the language practices by which it, as a proxy for discourses of high-stakes accountability, was able to disguise ideological views as common sense. In Chapter Six, I turned toward another major Discourse that the preservice teachers negotiated in their teacher preparation: the Discourse of the TEP. In Chapter Seven, I analyzed the preservice teachers’ talk and writing to understand their processes of negotiating those two major Discourses, among others, on “quality” and “effectiveness.”
I have divided this final chapter into four parts. First, I return to the previous chapter’s findings to draw connections across cases and lay the framework for an argument in favor of re-imagining the sense-making challenge of learning to teach in an era of acute accountability. Second, I address the limitations of this study and generalizability of its findings. I also map how future research might begin a conversation with the conclusions I present in this work. Third, I return to the inputs/outputs frame that was implicit in NCTQ’s Discourse on high-quality teacher preparation, and that the educational research community likewise engaged in its critique of NCTQ. Drawing on the human dimensions that characterized all four preservice teachers’ negotiations of “quality” and processes of becoming in this study, I argue for the gross inadequacy of the mechanistic metaphor that currently frames much of the public and political discourse on “quality” teaching and teacher preparation. Finally, I argue for a more dynamic, humanizing framing that captures what we claim to know, and what this dissertation provided evidence in support of, about the process of becoming a teacher.

**Looking Across Cases: Patterns and Dichotomies in Negotiations of “Quality”**

In Chapter Seven, I showed how Emily, Annie, Sam, and Hope were differently positioned in their teacher preparation as a result of their backgrounds and experiences, and thus, how each assumed a particular stance in relation to the varied and competing Discourses they negotiated in their final semester of coursework. Looking across all four of their journeys, however, there are some important similarities to be noted. In this section, I discuss three key themes that those journeys shared in common, situating each in the novices’ talk about negotiating the demands of accountability.

**Talking the talk of the TEP.** In Chapter Seven, I showed how Sam “talked the talk” of the program Discourse to show his uptake of particular themes and how that uptake shifted and
became messier and more dissonant over time. There were, of course, more examples of each participant’s talking the talk, and looking across cases, my analysis yielded patterned ways in which all four teachers took up particular themes of the program Discourse. For instance, in their “Who do I want to be. . .” and “What is English?” responses, and related to their sense-making of the nature and purpose of the ELA, all four novices described English as a vast and ever-changing discipline, and the ELA as a generative site for creative and open-ended exploration of the self in relation to community and diverse ‘others’. Additionally, all four defined literacy in expansive ways, for example, as inextricably linked to issues of power, privilege, and access. What’s more, they also seemed to understand the implications of that relationship for students who are positioned outside norms of “standard” English.

In describing what a “good day” would look like in their future classrooms, another pattern surfaced in which all four novices imagined a discussion-rich classroom scene wherein students were engaged in “respectful” back and forth talk related to literature and complex social issues and questions. The novices imagined themselves as “facilitators” of learning, and all four talked of engaging their students in critical thinking and questioning of their worlds. Finally, all four evoked descriptions of ELA teaching as human and humanizing work. Resisting competing Discourses that constructed students in terms of achievement data and outcomes, the preservice teachers’ talk constructed students in terms of their development as young people struggling to locate themselves in the world, and all four privileged foregrounding in ELA instruction opportunities for students to draw meaningful connections and relevance to their lives. James’s Discourse on “story teaching” and the role of the humanities in public education seemed especially influential to these preservice teachers’ sense-making of quality ELA teaching as
humanizing and relational work. Their sense-making evoked James’s Discourse to varying degrees, but the thread of James’s influence was visible across all four novices’ talk.

**Negotiating commitments to equity, diversity, and justice.** Describing the kinds of teachers they wanted to be(come), all four novices foremost emphasized a deep care for kids and building community in the classroom, so that their students would feel safe, respected, and seen, and they often talked with eager anticipation about cultivating trusting relationships with students and reaping the fruits of that labor. Indeed, all four preservice teachers positioned themselves in the program as advocates for students, and for students of color in particular, and moving into student teaching, Emily and Hope selected culturally and linguistically diverse schools in which to complete their semester-long internships. In Chapter Six, I established the TEP’s discursive emphasis on democracy, diversity, and social justice, and my analysis of the novices’ language suggests that they aspired not just to ‘talk the talk’ of that strand of the program’s Discourse, but also to ‘walk the walk’ of equity- and justice-oriented teaching.

Readers will recall that all four primary participants identified as White and fit the dominant class/language/gender/sexuality categories that reflect the majority of preservice teachers who currently enter into UBTE programs. As presented in Chapter Three, the challenges of preparing teachers like these to teach across differences and to embrace equity-oriented pedagogies have been well documented for at least the past two decades, so the finding that these four novices assumed, in their talk and writing about their visions for ELA teaching, equity-oriented stances is encouraging. However, in order to make any substantive claims about which novices, if any, maintained equity-oriented stances after this study’s conclusion, and if their understandings of what it means to assume an equity stance in the classroom shifted over time, more longitudinal data on these teachers would need to be collected. Of significance, and as I will discuss later in
this chapter, some of the potential fault-lines in those commitments were already present in some of the novices’ talk by the end of the semester. This was particularly striking in Sam’s language related to the Discourses of high-stakes accountability and surveillance that he imagined might await him as a first-year, change-oriented teacher.

**Dichotomous constructions in negotiations of quality.** A third pattern in the language the preservice teachers used to talk concerns the dichotomies that sometimes characterized their negotiations of competing Discourses. Below, I point to three salient examples of dichotomous constructions. First, related to the discussion above about the influence of James’s Discourse on the novices’ sense-making, it seems that as the TEP’s Discourse engaged candidates in internalizing the moral component of ELA teaching, it also contributed to their construction of dichotomous understandings of more traditional ways of being and doing in the ELA classroom. Those dichotomies were indexed in the novices’ language surrounding goals of fostering academic knowledge and skills, and in contrast to more progressive, creative, critical, and humanizing ways of being a quality ELA teacher that were promoted in the TEP. Emily’s talk illustrates this pattern well. Standing before the next step of her journey of becoming a teacher and reflecting on the lack of kindness that she noticed students demonstrating toward one another at her practicum site, Emily integrated a Discourse of moral development into her sense-making of what ELA instruction should be for. However, bringing that Discourse to bear on her talk about an instructional unit that she was planning around *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Emily constructed a false dichotomy between what might otherwise be considered companion goals of ELA instruction. That is, she said that her aim was to design instruction that would engage her students in thinking about the question, “What does it mean to have courage, and basically, how do you live that in your life?” (interview, 12/8/11), but she distinguished that goal as different
from choosing a “content goal” as the unit’s organizing concept. Emily’s talk distinguished these instructional centers of gravity as separate, suggesting that she understood fostering academic knowledge and skills and fostering the moral development of her students as two distinct and independent goals. Similarly, Sam’s talk marked a subtle dichotomy between fostering “better readers and writers” through ELA instruction and fostering opportunities for students to become “better people.” Though his talk signaled an understanding that supporting students’ growth in reading and writing was certainly part of a quality English teacher’s work, it also prioritized the latter goal as that which Sam most valued.

Second, when the novices’ talked about experiences had in classrooms and practica settings, they tended to cast those experiences in dichotomous terms. In other words, their talk sometimes constructed the teachers and classrooms foregrounded in those experiences as clear models of ways not to be and do in the ELA classroom, and they positioned themselves in the idea of “effective” ELA teacher in relation to those constructions. For example, Emily positioned herself as a committed teacher and “ally” for Latina/o students vis-à-vis her construction of the lead teacher of the summer “enrichment” program as less caring and committed than she aspired to be. Annie constructed the small, charter high school of her practicum as a setting that engaged students in a game of doing school but positioned most as unable to win. In opposition to that model, Annie positioned herself as a teacher who would be transparent with students about her instructional goals and purposes, and would work to foster students’ awareness of each other and their location in a larger community. Likewise, Sam rejected the models of practice to which practica introduced him, and his talk early in the fall term focused on one teacher in particular whom he assessed as being uninspired, traditional, and philosophically misaligned with his vision of effective teaching.
Finally, these examples of dichotomous constructions evident in the novices’ language around what counts as good teaching can be mapped onto the TEP’s D/discourse, too. At times, faculty and instructors’ talk constructed an us-them dichotomy that seemed to capture, from their vantage point, the difference between what “we” aimed to do in teacher education, and what “they” do “out there,” as James put it, in public schools. James, for example, invoked the us-them dichotomy in his talk about preparing “story teachers” as opposed to “reading and writing competency teachers.” Nancy’s talk about the “counter cultural” ways of thinking about quality ELA teaching that were promoted in the TEP also signaled the us-them dichotomy. In the next section, I consider the implications of this pattern of dichotomous constructions.

Implications for (Re)Imagining the Two-Worlds Pitfall in an Era of Acute Accountability

Returning to Feiman-Nemser & Buchman’s metaphor of the “two-worlds pitfall,” the presence of dichotomies in the preservice teachers’ and teacher educators’ talk related to their constructions of “quality” is perhaps not surprising. Tracing the influence of that metaphor, since its inception in 1985, across the literature on learning to teach reveals a well documented record of how Discourses of teacher education, which tend to privilege constructivist, critical, democratic, and justice-oriented ways of being and doing in classrooms, stand in contrast to more traditional Discourses promoted in local schools (e.g., Grossman, 1989; Smith, Anagnostopoulos, & Basmadjian, 2007; Smagorinsky et al., 2004; Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore, 2013; Spangler, 2013; Zeichner & McDonald, 2011). In other words, we have long known of the challenge that characterizes preservice teachers’ task of bringing their ideas and understandings cultivated in teacher education to bear on their instructional practice in local schools in conceptually coherent ways. At the outset of this dissertation, however, I surmised that in the present historical moment, Discourses of high-stakes education reform, accountability,
and achievement have exacerbated that sense-making challenge. In this section, I marshal a few of this study’s findings as evidence in support of that presupposition.

Two prominent voices in the Secondary ELA licensure program, James and Nancy both talked about the demands of accountability as encroaching on the vision of high-quality ELA teaching that coursework, faculty, and instructors in the TEP promoted, and as making more challenging their task of shepherding novices into those new ways of thinking, being, and doing in the ELA classroom (as discussed in Chapter Six). More specifically, Nancy’s talk cast the effects of the demands of accountability in terms of a freshly cultivated climate of fear that she sensed was provoking many of her students to resist embracing the complex, ambiguous terrain that constitutes the work of professional ELA teaching, and to desire instead “rule books” and strategies that promise to deliver ‘what works’. James talked about the demands of accountability as intensifying the “pressure to focus on routines” and “squeezing out” the more creative and inspired pedagogies that he advocated in his courses. Sharing that, ultimately, his students would have to decide for themselves how they would teach literacy when they “go out there” into the world of public school teaching, James admitted that the dissonance between what he offered by way of a Discourse of “story teaching” and what the novices might encounter in schools “could maybe contribute to some kind of a schizophrenic professional life, because, you know, they don’t think that way in public schools often” (interview, 4/30/14).

Two points are significant here. First, the examples above from these teacher educators’ talk suggest that they understood as consequential the increased demands of accountability placed on teachers in these times (as James put it above, that consequence is, potentially, a “schizophrenic professional life”), and the intensified nature of the sense-making challenge of negotiating competing Discourses on “quality” and “effectiveness.” Second, as discussed in
Chapter Seven, Annie and Sam’s use of “rocking the boat,” which they invoked to speak to what it takes to be an “effective” ELA teacher, seemed to represent their anxious anticipation of being positioned as first-year teachers, unable to challenge dominant Discourses in their schools related to accountability and achievement. Their use of the rocking-the-boat metaphor also seemed to point to a shared understanding, which aligns well with their teacher educators’ view discussed above, that the visions of high-quality ELA teaching they cultivated in the program would clash with what they expected to encounter as in-service teachers. These points provide at least some evidence that, from the perspectives of these teacher educators and preservice teachers, Discourses of high-stakes accountability have multiplied the potential pitfalls of learning to teach in these times—making them more cavernous and more consequential. But, what of this study’s broader implications? In the next section, I take care to situate my consideration of that question, first, in a discussion of this study’s limitations, and followed by a discussion of the delicate matter of generalizing from qualitative inquiry.

**Limitations.** There were, of course, limitations to this study. First, because this study examined the sense-making processes of only four teachers who were learning to teach in a single context of UBTE, the findings cannot be broadly generalized. Moreover, although I attempted to select participants who represented a range of meaning perspectives, experiences, and histories, the four novices portrayed here were, in many ways, ideal teacher candidates. This raises questions about how these findings would pertain to novices learning to teach in the same TEP who were perhaps less willing to position themselves as learners, or who might have assumed different stances in relation to the program’s commitments to equity and social justice. Also uncertain is how these findings might be relevant for preservice teachers of color and novices whose identities challenge dominant norms, for example, of gender and sexuality.
Second, my analysis of primary and secondary participants’ negotiations of “quality” focused on language and text. That is, this study’s analytic focus was on participants’ talk and writing, and other written artifacts, and certainly, the lens of D/discourses I used to look at and make sense of the data obscured some dimensions of these participants’ processes of negotiation while bringing others into clearer focus. Third, though I observed three of the four primary participants teach a lesson in their practica classrooms, I excluded those data from the analysis included here, because I realized that not much can be extrapolated from a single lesson observed. If I were to design this study again, I would have been a more frequent observer in these novices’ practica settings. Similarly, I would have observed the secondary participants’ enactments of “quality” teacher preparation as they came to life in their own courses, via their teaching practice. Finally, Jones & Enriquez (2009) caution that teacher education pedagogy is “merely a point of contact and a point of departure” (p. 145) for novices. Put another way, novice teachers’ processes of negotiating Discourses of equity and justice are complicated by myriad factors, their prior histories and experiences chief among them. Jones & Enriquez call for more longitudinal studies that document the long-term processes by which teachers become committed to social justice-oriented and critical ways of being and doing in the literacy classroom. Indeed, I recognize the limitations engendered by the short-term nature of my study, and acknowledge that as these four teacher candidates moved beyond UBTE, they continued to engage processes of negotiation and becoming, and almost certainly repositioned themselves in relation to the values of democracy, diversity, and social justice that were so centrally foregrounded in the Discourse of their teacher preparation and the competing Discourses they encountered in schools.

In the context of this study’s limitations, I want to attend to an important elision in my construction of findings related to how democracy, diversity, and justice were privileged in the
TEP Discourse and negotiated by the preservice teachers. In Chapter Three, I foot-noted the silence around gender and sexual diversity that has historically pervaded UBTE (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003; Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2013; Quinn & Meiners, 2013), and I bring that footnote to the foreground here by pointing to the general absence of gender and sexual diversity in my data and report of findings. While gender and sexuality seemed to be topics ‘covered’ here and there in School and Society, Educational Psychology, and perhaps in another pocket or two of coursework, I found a dearth of attention to gender and sexuality in my critical analysis of the major Discourses that the preservice teachers negotiated, as well as among the talk and writing of the preservice teachers themselves. The general absence of gender and sexuality is an important indicator of the work we must still do to “strengthen teacher knowledge of LGBT issues” (NCTE, 2009); to prepare teachers in ways that position them as able to assume supportive, affirming, and advocate stances for queer youth; and to live our own commitments, at least in the context of the TEP in which I and my colleagues participate, to preparing teachers who are well positioned to ensure the learning of every student.

On generalizability. As several scholars of methodology have argued, generalization from qualitative inquiry is unreasonable and even impossible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 2005). Because qualitative studies (and the present study is no exception) are often small-scale, rely on samples of convenience, and explore in great detail a single context of research, the question of generalizability is often not translatable from larger-scale research contexts. In this study, I used a case study approach to examine the sense-making processes of four, purposefully selected preservice teachers in the Secondary ELA licensure program. Because those participants were not randomly selected, I cannot generalize to the rest of the group (i.e., the larger cohort of preservice teachers of which these novices were a part) conclusions about their commitments, for
example, to ‘walk the walk’ of teaching for equity and social-justice. However, Eisenhart (2009) argues that there are, in fact, means by which qualitative research can make warranted generalizations. She points to theoretical generalization as case and point, noting that generalizability from qualitative inquiry “is more often based on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases or refined in light of them” (p. 59). When seeking theoretical generalization, a researcher selects new sites or groups to study for their potential to uncover something new in the service of refining or refuting a theory, rather than to achieve criteria for random or representative sampling.

One of the goals of this project’s inquiry was to assess how well Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann’s (1985) theory of the two-worlds pitfall continued to capture the nature of the sense-making challenge of learning to teach in these times of acute accountability. In this chapter, I have discussed one of this study’s conclusions: In the setting of the Secondary ELA licensure program, and from the perspectives of participating preservice teachers and teacher educators, the stakes and demands of Discourses of accountability were perceived as exacerbating the challenge of negotiating progressive, critical, and equity-oriented visions of high-quality ELA teaching, such as the vision promoted in the TEP, with competing perspectives that frame “quality” narrowly (e.g., SB-191’s conception of teacher “effectiveness”). In turn, Discourses of accountability made more precarious the line that primary and secondary participants likewise imagined must be walked if novices secured and desired to keep a job in local schools. In the context of this research, then, it seems plausible to conclude that the theory of two-worlds pitfall, as it was conceived in 1985, needs to be reimagined a bit if it is to stand as an adequate representation of the nature of the sense-making challenge that confronted these four novices.
While it is implausible to extrapolate that conclusion to other settings and contexts of UBTE, this study’s findings might be useful to other researchers seeking to understand the same phenomenon in different contexts. What is generalizable from this study is the way in which the institution of UBTE is currently constructed and positioned as suspect by Discourses of accountability, as was demonstrated by Chapter Five’s critical analysis of the discourse of NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review. Also generalizable in the present historical moment is a significant degree of contrast that stands between Discourses of UBTE—for example, Discourses of teaching for social justice and ways of being-doing that reflect the version of “quality” that was promoted in the TEP under study—and competing Discourses of achievement and accountability. Following the aims of theoretical generalizability, future research might initiate a conversation with this study’s findings to determine the extent to which they hold up in new and different contexts. For example, researchers might ask, do teacher educators in those new contexts invoke dichotomies (e.g., us-them language) to distinguish the work and goals of UBTE from the work and goals of local schools? Under what circumstances, if any, do preservice teachers struggle to overcome dichotomous thinking in their negotiations of competing perspectives on “quality” and “effectiveness”? To what extent, if any, is there a hesitancy among novices to “rock the boat” as first-year teachers? Exploring these questions in new and different contexts of university-based teacher education is one generative direction that can be pursued from this study’s inquiry.

This study’s findings constructed one instance of how high-stakes accountability Discourses were powerfully at work in the contexts in which four novices were making sense of high-quality ELA teaching. In relation to his fearful talk about not being able to “rock the boat” too much by bringing his vision of quality to bear fully on his instructional practice, the
demands, and ostensibly also the consequences, of Discourses of accountability loomed large for Sam in particular. In new and different contexts, it is likely that the enterprise of UBTE; Discourses on “quality” promoted therein; and novices, like Sam, who are prepared by teacher education programs, will be positioned in an asymmetrical power relation alongside Discourses of achievement and accountability, as was the case in this study’s context, In Chapter Two, I discussed Foucault’s (1988) notion of “technologies of the self,” or the ways and means by which the individual subject negotiates her capacity for self-control amid powerful technologies of domination. A generative question to raise, then, with regard to this study’s implications concerns what the field of teacher education could provide novices by way of technologies of the self. Put another way, what sense-making tools might teacher education afford novices to support their constructive negotiation across dissonance, to foster their capacities for self-control, and to position themselves as able to “rock the boat”? I imagine these technologies of the self as intentionally structured and well-mediated opportunities to negotiate competing D/discourses as they unfold in-the-moment of classroom life.

Currently, there is a thriving, “practice-based” trend in research on teacher preparation that focuses on preparing novices for the work of teaching—that is, the core practices that novice teachers must learn to enact competently in order to organize instruction aimed at “ambitious” learning goals (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009, 2010; Ball, Sleep, Boerst, & Bass, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Grossman, Compton, Igra, Ronfeldt, Shahan, & Williamson, 2009; Harste, 2002; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013; Windschitl, Thompson, Braaten, Stroupe, Chew, & Wright, 2010; Zeichner, 2012; Zeichner & McDonald, 2011). A practice-based approach organizes opportunities to learn in which teacher educators, novices, and classroom teachers work closely together, co-navigating the tensions, uncertainties, ambiguities, and contradictions
as they emerge in classroom settings. I see this direction of scholarly work a generative place in which to explore the question raised above. As teacher education continues to move toward practice, there are important opportunities to be seized to study how novices negotiate their stances toward equity, critical ways of being-doing in the classroom, and advocating for kids, as well as dichotomies between academic emphases and the relational, human work of teaching.

How teacher education might better support novices’ on-the-ground negotiations is an important question that warrants more scholarly inquiry, because Discourses of accountability are here to stay—at least for the near future. I opened this dissertation with a quote from Secretary of Education Duncan from 2009. In the spirit of coming full circle, and demonstrating how Discourses of accountability have maintained their traction with high-ranking policy makers, I point to an excerpt from Duncan’s address at a town-hall meeting at a local high school in Washington on April 25, 2014. There, he announced the Obama administration’s plan to assess the quality of “teacher training programs.” Duncan said,

> We have about 1,400 schools of education and hundreds and hundreds of alternative certification paths, and nobody in this country can tell anybody which one is more effective than the other. . . . when I talk to teachers, and have very candid conversations, they feel they weren’t well prepared.

Perhaps a silver lining to be found in Duncan’s excerpt is that he does not credit NCTQ as an authoritative ‘somebody’ that can tell which programs are “more effective than the other.” Nonetheless, Duncan’s assumption that teachers generally “feel they weren’t well prepared,” because there is no system of accountability in place to assess UBTE’s effectiveness certainly reflects NCTQ’s discursive assumptions. Furthermore, NCTQ has made good on its promise to publish on an annual basis its updated Teacher Prep Review. The continued prevalence of NCTQ’s Discourse, as a key instantiation of Discourses of accountability, is now a feature of the sociopolitical and sociohistorical backdrop of learning to teach. As a major competing Discourse
that novice teachers must learn to negotiate in these times, it further dichotomizes by placing
currency on outputs like achievement and devaluing equity and sociocultural perspectives on
learning, as I discuss further below.

An Argument for Reframing the Discourse on Preparing “Quality” Teachers

In Chapter Five, I argued that NCTQ’s methodological focus on inputs at the expense of
meaningfully inquiring into the complexity of the meaning perspectives and experiences of
participants invested in UBTE was not an oversight; rather, the study’s design, which was the
subject of voluminous critique by the educational research community, was intentional and
congruous with a framework in which learning to teach is conceived of as a mechanical process
of receiving the “right” inputs, and teaching, as technical work. Drawing on Bartolomé’s (1994)
definition, technical “refers to the positivist tradition in education that presents teaching as a
precise and scientific undertaking and teachers as technicians responsible for carrying out
(preselected) instructional programs and strategies” (p. 173). Framed in this way, the
complicated question of what’s involved in learning to teach gets reduced to a matter of inputs—
those “preselected” methods for teaching that are framed as strategies that ‘work’ regardless of
context. “Quality” teacher preparation becomes a matter of depositing into candidates the ‘right’
inputs. What matters is neither how the learners take up the inputs of teacher preparation, nor
how those inputs get shaped and re-shaped in the process of making sense.

The trouble with mechanistic and technical frames. There are at least two significant
problems with leveraging the mechanistic and technical to frame the contested matter of
“quality” teaching and teacher preparation. I’ll start by troubling the technical. Conceiving of
teaching as technical—not professional—work compromises our ability to prepare teachers who
embrace democratic, equity, and justice-oriented principles, and are well positioned to organize
learning environments that nurture and support the learning of all students. Bartolomé (1994) maintains that when teachers are prepared as technicians, they tend to view complex problems that emerge in their practice through a lens of finding and applying the ‘right’ teaching techniques rather than critically attending to the sociocultural, sociohistorical, and political contexts that crucially shape how those complexities come into being. Bartolomé cautions that when teaching is decontextualized as such, novices in particular are more likely to approach the complexities that manifest in their practice with a desire for “easy answers in the form of specific instructional methods” (1994, p. 174). Preparing teachers to look for the solution to complexities related to, say, the “achievement gap” (and I use that complex problem here deliberately, as an issue that a range of competing Discourses, including NCTQ’s, have embraced as evidence of the inequalities manifested in schooling and of the pressing need for education reform) in the methodological terrain of instructional strategies does little to help them understand how their own beliefs and practices might be contributing to the problem, as well as how schooling itself is organized to perpetuate underachievement (e.g., Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006; McDermott, 1993).

Second, the mechanistic metaphor that NCTQ’s Discourse employs to frame learning to teach as an efficient process of receiving inputs and producing outputs defies decades of research, discussed in Chapter Three and also supported by the findings of this dissertation, on teaching and teacher education that posits teaching as a cognitively, morally, and emotionally complex and challenging endeavor. That knowledgebase has generated a range of metaphors that signify the complexities of the challenges involved. For example, the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975); the process of “composing a teaching life” (Vinz, 1996); “praxis shock” (Smagorinsky, Gibson, Bickmore, Moore, & Cook, 2004); “the two worlds pitfall”
(Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985); and the “twisting path of concept development” (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003) are just a few. Each of these metaphors is a vibrant reminder of what we’ve long known to be central to the process of becoming a teacher; for example, that as teachers construct understandings of what constitutes good teaching, they also negotiate a range of influences that extend far beyond what they encounter in teacher preparation; that the process is not linear, but meandering and full of contradiction; that enacting theoretical knowledge and understanding in practice is a complex undertaking; and that the settings of schools and classrooms, which often have conflicting goals and traditions in relation to those of university-based teacher education, can mediate novices’ emergent understandings in hard-to-predict ways.

Though there is much we still have yet to understand about how teachers learn and develop, those of us who study teaching and teacher education are generally in agreement that teaching is hard, and learning to teach, harder still. A question that concerns me, then, regards what the implications are for our field when those metaphors that represent what we claim to know about how young people learn and develop get left behind, and what the consequences are of lapsing into metaphors that fail to account for the human dimension of learning.

**Toward a More Dynamic and Human (Re)Framing of Becoming a Quality Teacher**

In the perspectives that ground this study, metaphors deeply matter, as language constructs and feeds assumptions and ideas and those assumptions and ideas, likewise, shape practices. In their classic text *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Lakoff and Johnson made the case for the fundamental role that metaphors play in our daily lives; functioning as so much more than rhetorical finesse, metaphors structure the conceptual systems that inform our thought, speech, and actions—our very perceptions of the world. If metaphors matter to the extent that they shape
the sense we make of things, then it seems important to critically inquire into the nature of the metaphor governing the way “quality” teaching and teacher preparation are being framed in public and political discourse. What, for example, does the inputs/outputs metaphor assume about the nature of learning? What does it fail to capture, and how does that compare to findings from research on the nature of preservice teachers’ sense-making in teacher preparation? What are the implications of such a mechanistic metaphor for novices learning that complex work? I contend that these are important questions for us to hold in UBTE.

Indeed, sitting awhile in the metaphorical space of inputs and outputs to self-consciously examine the use of such a mechanistic way with words to frame the dynamic process of becoming a teacher renders it woefully inadequate. Learning teaching is learning professional work. Teaching is highly complex and requires a vast knowledgebase, but is never decidedly “known” (Shulman, 2005). It unfolds in local contexts of uncertainty that are rife with ambiguity and it demands exercise of moral judgment. Perhaps most importantly, it is also human work. In addition to teaching content and meeting standards-based learning objectives, teachers bolster the minds, hearts, and spirits of our youth every single day. Their professional lives intersect not just with the lives of students, but also with families and communities. The implications of teachers’ work bear on the futures of young people, shaping their chances for opportunity, for social mobility, and for being recognized and affirmed as valued individuals. In the context of this study, it was the human and relational dimensions of teaching that the novices seemed to hold so dearly. This, however, is precisely what gets left out by a lens that views learning teaching as a mechanistic process of receiving inputs and teaching as technical work. The vulnerability, the uncertainty, the process of becoming, the deep care for kids and their lives—all components that were so salient in the data reported here—is likewise obscured by the metaphor of
inputs/outputs. What of the process of personal and professional becoming? The process of stepping up and stepping into the professional practice? The process of continuously learning and developing in the service of improving? The metaphor fails on that front, too.

Essentially, in these times of radical reforms and policy discourses that are deciding what counts as “effectiveness” and “quality” with regard to teaching and teacher preparation, what’s at stake is a framing of what matters in teacher preparation—of what’s worth privileging in public and political discourse around the always-contested question of how to prepare the best teachers. Instead of conceding to the terms of the debate as they have been set by powerful Discourses of accountability, neoliberalism, deregulation, and so on, UBTE must challenge those terms from the onset. One way to do this is to reframe the public and political discourse.

Calling for a reframing that might challenge the neoliberal agenda’s attempt to frame UBTE as irrelevant, Kumashiro (2010) argued,

Reframing teacher education requires seeing the bigger picture, that is, seeing how attacks on teacher education often coincide with initiatives to maintain the stratification functions of public schooling, be it along lines of religion, gender, race, culture, social class, and/or other markers. Reframing teacher education requires redefining what we often take to be “common sense” in education reform. (p. 65)

Through a critical analysis of the discourse of NCTQ’s Review, as a key instantiation of policy Discourses that are, as Kumashiro described above, advancing “attacks on teacher education,” in this dissertation, I have attempted to take stock of “the bigger picture” in relation to the more micro lens on one TEP and four novice teachers within that program. In this concluding chapter, I have argued for “redefining” what we take to be “common sense” in the public and political discourse on education reform by reframing the metaphors we use to capture the complex and dynamic processes involved in learning to teach and becoming a member of the teaching
profession. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the limitations of this work, and conclude with final thoughts on the hopeful reframing of *becoming*.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Drawing on decades of experience engaging with teachers in collaborative research on practitioner inquiry, Susan Lytle (2008) points to teachers’ sustained commitments to improving their practice, that is, to teaching “better.” She also points to some teachers’ active political and pedagogical commitments to children, equity, and access as hopeful rays of light refracted through a public discourse that forecasts education’s bleak future. She contends that teaching must be understood as professional practice with the capacity to improve itself from *within*, but what she finds troublesome is how teaching and teachers are so often publicly (mis)understood. Teaching gets interpreted publically not as professional practice, but as work that needs to be managed from beyond, for example, by outsiders who legislate mandates that determine what constitutes “effectiveness” in teachers’ own practice, and by initiatives that promise to provide teachers with “what works”\(^{21}\) in their unique, local classroom contexts. Lytle observes two important consequences of that (mis)understanding. First, public representations of teachers tend to be void of tenacity and resilience—qualities she has long found to characterize teachers’ work and inquiry; and second, there is a “disturbing” absence in that public discourse of “knowledge of how the practice of teaching involves complex struggles teachers engage on behalf of…‘improving the life chances of students’” (p. 373).

As I made sense of my participants’ processes of negotiation and becoming, this notion of the “complex struggle” resonated deeply. The findings I reported in Chapter Seven did not

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\(^{21}\) A salient example of this comes from What Works Clearinghouse—an initiative established by the US Department of Education that promises itself to educators as a “resource for informed education decision making” by providing “credible and reliable [scientific] evidence of the effectiveness of a given practice, program, or policy” ([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/aboutus.aspx](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/aboutus.aspx)).
piece together storylines of four young people quietly and cleanly receiving the inputs that faculty, instructors, and coursework transmitted in the TEP, as NCTQ’s D/discourse and Discourses of accountability insinuate the process might entail. Rather, those findings constructed four novices who were actively engaged in their own meaning making of what counts as “effectiveness,” and constantly negotiating the inputs of their teacher preparation alongside their own complex histories and competing conceptions of what it means to be a good teacher. All the while, they were constructing emergent professional identities and positioning themselves in particular ways in relation to the idea of becoming an effective ELA teacher. Inputs were surely important and shaped their sense-making in meaningful ways, but these novices’ processes of making sense were messy in the uptake, dissonant at times, and far from an efficient receipt of mere inputs.

Indeed, as they left the Methods course at the end of the fall semester, they were far from having it all ‘figured out’. To the contrary, all four novices’ sense-making became muddier as they navigated the theory-practice nexus that became animated in the classroom, and as they situated their emergent understandings of quality ELA teaching in the context of real human lives and struggles of the students whom they got to know. Guided by Bakhtinian ideas of heteroglossia and ideological becoming, my theoretical framework posited dissonance, messiness, and competing perspectives as necessary parts of the negotiation processes in which these novices were engaged, but I was struck by the salience in the data of the cognitively, emotionally, and morally complex dimensions of their talk about their processes of becoming ELA teacher professionals.

In the last findings chapter, I showed how those novices’ commitments to students and to their own growth figured prominently in their sense-making. As I continue to reflect on the
implications of those commitments and how these novices were engaging their processes of becoming, Lytle’s observations resonate still. I continue to be struck by how generally absent meaningful attention to teachers’ commitments and to the processes that cultivate them is from public and political discourses weighing in on the question of what constitutes “effectiveness” and “quality”—discourses that figured so prominently in this work. In this dissertation, I aimed to construct portraits that capture how four novices were grappling with questions that have no easy answers, and with how to step up and step into the oversized, awkwardly-fitting shoes of teacher professionals. Thus, I close this chapter with a few short lines from a favorite poem of mine, and one that I think captures in creative strokes what it might mean to position novice teachers not as passive, vulnerable, or inept, but, rather, as deeply caring, developing human beings and urgent learners in the throes of becoming—a process that is by its very nature full of uncertainty, possibility, and growing pangs that enable the reaching toward new heights.

_I said to the sun, “Tell me about the Big Bang.”_

_The sun said, “It hurts to become.”_

_I carry that hurt on the tip of my tongue,_

_and whisper “Bless your heart” every chance I get._

– Andrea Gibson, “I Sing the Body Electric; Even When My Power Is Out”
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Questionnaire for Primary Participant Selection

Name:

1. Where do you plan to student teach (provide the name of the school, cooperating teacher with whom you will work, and names and/or brief descriptions of classes you’ll be teaching)? Why did you pick this school/teacher/class?

2. What has been your favorite course taken in the School of Education? Why?

3. What courses are you currently taking in the English department?

4. What has been your favorite course taken in the English department? Why?

5. When and with whom did you take the following courses? Please fill out the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Semester &amp; Year Taken</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary general methods (EDUC 4411)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**If you did not take this course, please indicate that.

Were you placed in a practicum classroom?

If so, where?

Differentiating Instruction in Diverse Secondary Classrooms

Were you placed in a practicum classroom?

If so, where?

Composition for Teachers
6. Describe any previous teaching experience (outside the School of Education) you have had.

7. Describe any previous career or professional experience you have had.

8. Why do you want to become a teacher of English language arts?

9. Where do you see yourself in 5 years with regard to teaching? Describe the type of school you would most like to be working in, the kinds of students, the kinds of classes you want to be teaching, etc.
Interview Protocol: Interview #1 with primary participants

1. I want you to imagine for a moment that you have a friend who wants to become a teacher of the English language arts and is interested in entering a university-based teacher education program like the one you’ve been participating in here in the School of Education at CU. Your friend is curious to know about the experiences you’ve had in the secondary English education program at CU. She wants to know what the program emphasizes and what it offers to students. If you were to tell your friend the story of your experience, in addition to what it emphasizes and offers students, what would you say?

2. You’ve learned a lot about teaching through your participation in the English education program, and from your own experiences as a student, too. I want you to think back to all the different influences you’ve had in learning to teach the English language arts. Describe some of these influences for me. What stands out? What influenced you to enter teaching?

3. Imagine you’re in your own classroom. It’s mid-way through the year, and it’s a good day in your classroom. You’re seeing learning unfolding and what you’re seeing is really good for kids.
   a. So describe for me what this looks like. What are you imagining?
   b. What’s your role in making this success happen? How did you build or design for this?
   c. What about the English language arts piece? What are your students learning in terms of literacy? What are their emerging understandings with regard to the ELA?

4. I’m going to ask you to recall what you learned in the other English methods courses you’ve taken here in the School of Education. I want to be clear here that I’m not looking for feedback on the course instructor, but what I’m really after is how you think about your own learning and sense-making. I’ll show you a syllabus that went with the course at the time that you took it, or very close to when you took it. Take a moment to review it, and when you’re ready, talk through with me what stands out to you? Why are these “stand-out” moments or assignments? How did they help you think about teaching and learning the ELA?

5. Describe for me the instructional sequence you completed for Composition for Teachers at the end of the semester. Tell me a little about what you put together.
   a. What were your intentions—what was your rationale—for designing your sequence?
   b. What were you after in terms of learning goals? What did you hope students learned about English through this sequence?
   c. Tell me about the students you had in mind as you were planning this sequence. Who were they? What were their needs
   d. Thinking about this sequence you designed 4 or 5 months ago, is there anything you would change about what you had originally sketched out? Why/not?
6. Let’s say you finish up the program and land a job as a teacher of English at a high school in Longmont. You teach a regular section of freshman English language arts and your students are diverse: you have a mix of monolingual students as well as English language learners, about half of your students are Anglo, and the other half is mostly black and Latino/a. Working in conjunction with the administration team at your school, the English department is working to support all ninth graders as they transition from middle to high school and to feel welcomed into the school community, but the department is also dedicated to helping the ninth graders find academic success.

Part of your curriculum involves teaching writing, and you have some freedom as to how you want to approach your writing instruction. Describe for me how you would think about teaching a writing unit with this group of ninth graders, and with these goals in mind? What do you want them to be able to come to understand about writing and what do you want them to be able to do with writing through your instruction? (If student is stuck, probe: you might think about what you’ve experienced as a student of the ELA or how you’ve observed other teachers, perhaps cooperating teachers, approach such writing instruction. What comes to mind?)

7. What does it take to be an effective English teacher at the high school or middle school level in 2011? What do you think are the demands placed on English teachers in these times?

8. Imagine you have finished the program, received your teaching license, and gotten your first full-time teaching job teaching the ELA at a secondary school. What are your hopes and dreams for this next phase of your teaching career? What fears do you have?

Interview Protocol: Interview #2 with primary participants

1. You’ve completed more than 70 hours of practicum experience in the English methods class alone, and in that time you’ve observed lots of issues related to the teaching of the ELA, you’ve interacted with students and teachers, and you’ve taught some. I want to know what the experience was like for you.
   a. So first, tell me what stands out for you about this experience. What went well?
   b. Now I want you to think about a dilemma, a puzzling moment, a time when you felt confused or uncertain about teaching and learning in the ELA classroom, or maybe you experienced something in this practicum assignment that raised questions for you. Tell me about that dilemma—that puzzling moment. Set the scene for me. How did you deal with that uncertainty?
   c. Did you learn from that puzzling moment? What did you learn?

2. In the first interview, I asked you to imagine you’re in your own classroom, it’s mid-way through the year, and it’s a good day. You’re seeing learning unfolding and what you’re
seeing is really good for kids. When I asked you to describe the scene for me, you said XXXX (remind student what he/she said). When I asked you to describe your role in making this success happen, you said XXX. What would you add to that answer now? Is there anything you’d change or revise?

3. I want you to talk me through the instructional sequence you’re putting together for English methods.
   a. Tell me about your plan so far. Describe for me the choices you made all along the way as you designed this instructional sequence, starting from when you first got the assignment. Where did you start? How did you decide where you would focus?
   b. Describe the students you had in mind as you were planning this sequence. What are you hoping the students would learn? In other words, why did this instructional sequence matter? What were your goals for what students would learn about the English language arts?

4. In the first interview, I asked you to reflect on your learning in other English-related methods courses. Now, I’m going to ask you to recall what you’ve learned this semester in English methods. I’ll show you the syllabus that you’ve been following in that course. Take a moment to review it, and when you’re ready, talk through with me what stands out to you? Why are these “stand-out” moments or assignments? How did they help you think about teaching and learning the ELA?

5. In the first interview, I asked you to imagine that you’ve finished up the program and landed a job as a teacher of English at a high school in Longmont. You teach a regular section of freshman English language arts and your students are diverse: you have a mix of monolingual students as well as English language learners, about half of your students are Anglo, and the other half is mostly black and Latino/a. Working in conjunction with the administration team at your school, the English department is working to support all ninth graders as they transition from middle to high school and to feel welcomed into the school community, but the department is also dedicated to helping the ninth graders find academic success.

   I asked you to describe for me how you would think about teaching a writing unit with this group of ninth graders, and with these goals in mind. What do you want them to be able to come to understand about writing and what do you want them to be able to do with writing through your instruction? You said XXXX (remind student of their response). What would you add to that response now? How would you approach such a plan for this particular group of students now?

6. You are preparing for a really big moment in your teaching career. You’re moving from being positioned primarily as a student to being the one “in charge.” In medicine, they call novices studying the profession “interns.” I’ve heard of novices studying the teaching
profession being called interns, well-mannered guests, apprentices, and student teachers. I’m wondering about how you think about your own role as a student teacher. What does that mean to you? Is there a word or phrase that would describe how you’re thinking of your role?
Secondary Participant Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about how the path of your experiences and preparation that led you to become a teacher educator. How did you get here? What kinds of mentoring and support did you have? Why did you choose to work with preservice teachers?

2. Imagine you’re in your XXXX (name the appropriate course) class. It’s mid-way through the year, and it’s a good day in your classroom. You’re seeing learning unfolding and what you’re seeing is really good for your preservice teachers.
   a. So describe for me what this looks like. What are you imagining?
   b. What’s your role in making this success happen? How did you build or design for this?
   c. What about the English language arts piece? What are your students learning or what are their emerging understandings with regard to teaching the ELA?

3. When you think about “what our candidates in the English ed. program need to know and be able to do,” what comes to mind? What gets left out of that phrase?

4. I have here a copy of your course syllabus that you provided me. Can you walk me through the design of the syllabus?
   a. What informed how you constructed it? How did you approach the design of this course?
   b. Why did you include these particular elements? Assignments? What were your hopes for what students would learn about teaching and learning generally, and teaching and learning the ELA specifically?

5. Tell me a little bit about what it’s been like to teach this particular course. How long have you taught it? What was that first semester teaching the course like? What kinds of challenges have you experienced? What have you learned from teaching the course and working with preservice teachers?

6. What does it take to be an effective English teacher at the secondary level in 2011? What do you think are the demands placed on English teachers in these times?
“Taking Stock” Reflection Guidelines

“Taking Stock” memo #1

Sometime before the end of February, set aside a leisurely stretch of time to review your writing and our readings to date. Take some notes on recurrent issues, themes, or preferences, and then compose a one-to-two page reflective memo that brings together your reflections on your work in the course. What’s stood out for you so far this term? What kinds of approaches to teaching writing are appealing to you—and why do you think this is? What worries, concerns, or questions are you holding concerning the teaching of writing? Are there any particular requests or suggestions you’d like to make concerning our work together? Other comments regarding our class thus far?

Upload your memo to the “Taking Stock #1” dropbox any time before Thursday, March 1.
“What is English?” Reflection Guidelines

Written Assignment for week 1: What is English?

“What is English?” The title is not intended as a question I can answer with my book, not a slow lob that I can try to hit for a home run. The title is my answer, my summing up, my picture of the profession. This book is trying to paint a picture of a profession that cannot define what it is. I don’t mean this as a scandal, and I don’t take our not knowing as the most important news from the English Coalition Conference (if it was news). Yes, it might be more comfortable and convenient if we knew just what English studies is, but this very absence of comfort and convenience in the profession is probably a good thing. English is percolating at various levels, and I don’t think anyone can know where it’s going to end up. On good days I even say, ‘It’s about time we finally don’t know where we are.’”

– Peter Elbow’s opening to What is English?

For next week, consider Elbow’s description of the ELA as a contested field, one in which even the professionals who are steeped in the work of teaching English each and every day do not hold a shared definition of what English is. As you craft your response to the question, What is English?, consider:

1. Why is English the most studied subject?
2. What does English study entail?
3. How are our conceptions of what English shaped? What informs them?
4. What should English language arts instruction be for?
5. Do you agree with Elbow that not knowing exactly what it is “probably a good thing”?

Bring a written response to share and turn in on Wednesday, August 31. Narrative writing is what we’re after here. Feel free to also draw on your own experiences as a learner of English. Suggested length: about 2-3 pages, double-spaced.
“Who do I want to be as a teacher of the ELA” Reflection Guidelines

Written Assignment for Week 3: Who do I want to be as a teacher of the ELA?

This is a piece of writing that should build on the response you generated in the first week in response to the overarching question, “What is English?” and related questions, “What is the ELA?” and “What is it for?” Here, I would like you to consider the following questions:

1. What are your literacy goals for your students? What do you want them to know and be able to do as a consequence of participating in your class? Think here in terms of content, as Lampert describes it in her chapter, “Teaching to Establish a Classroom Culture.” Think also in terms of concepts and practices specific to the ELA, and what all that looks like when brought to life.

2. What is the vision I hold of my classroom practice? In your first responses, many of you cited specific purposes for ELA instruction (e.g., to foster critical thinking, exploration of different cultures and histories, self-discovery, to help students learn to make meaningful connections to texts, etc.). So what does this look like in your fondest imaginings of your own practice—of your own teaching?

3. How do my responses to the above questions work to inform and establish my identity (i.e., sense of self) as a teacher of the ELA? That is, how does my stance toward the discipline of English studies and the school subject of the ELA shape my vision of classroom practice, and my work, role, and responsibilities as a teacher of the ELA?

To be sure, there is overlap in these 3 questions. My goal here is to organize the guidelines such that you are working to make connections between your “big ideas” about the ELA—ideas about purpose, philosophy, and outcomes—and on-the-ground classroom practice. I want you to practice kneading those big ideas into workable, practical material.

Since this response is building on the first, and is a bit more complex, I think, in nature, I ask that you write a bit more than you did previously. Say, 3-5 pages (standard MLA or APA formatting).

Instead of bringing a hard copy to class, I am asking you to upload your response no later than 4:30 on Wednesday, September 21, 2011. (See the assignment link on our course website.)
NCTQ Teacher Prep Review

Executive Summary

Once the world leader in educational attainment, the United States has slipped well into the middle of the pack. Countries that were considered little more than educational backwaters just a few years ago have leapt to the forefront of student achievement.

There’s no shortage of factors for America’s educational decline: budget cutbacks, entrenched poverty, crowded classrooms, shorter school years, greater diversity of students than in other countries. The list seems endless.

NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review has uncovered another cause, one that few would suspect: the colleges and universities producing America’s traditionally prepared teachers.

Through an exhaustive and unprecedented examination of how these schools operate, the Review finds they have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers with classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity.

We were able to determine overall ratings based on a set of key standards for 608 institutions. Those ratings can be found on the U.S. News & World Report website, www.usnews.com, as well as our own, www.nctq.org, where there is additional data on another 522 institutions. Altogether, the Review provides data on the 1,130 institutions that prepare 99 percent of the nation’s traditionally trained new teachers. No small feat.

As the product of eight years of development and 10 pilot studies, the standards applied here are derived from strong research, the practices of high-performing nations and states, consensus views of experts, the demands of the Common Core State Standards (and other standards for college and career readiness) and occasionally just common sense.

We strived to apply the standards uniformly to all the nation’s teacher preparation programs as part of our effort to bring as much transparency as possible to the way America’s teachers are prepared. In collecting information for this initial report, however, we encountered enormous resistance from leaders of many of the programs we sought to assess. In some cases, we sued for the public information they refused to provide. We anticipate greater cooperation for future editions of the Review, which will be published annually, resulting in more ratings for more programs.

For now, the evaluations provide clear and convincing evidence, based on a four-star rating system, that a vast majority of teacher preparation programs do not give aspiring teachers adequate return on their investment of time and tuition dollars. These are among the most alarming findings:
Less than 10 percent of rated programs earn three stars or more. Only four programs, all secondary, earn four stars: Lipscomb and Vanderbilt, both in Tennessee; Ohio State University; and Furman University in South Carolina. Only one institution, Ohio State, earns more than three stars for both an elementary (3 stars) and a secondary (4 stars) program.

It is far too easy to get into a teacher preparation program. Just over a quarter of programs restrict admissions to students in the top half of their class, compared with the highest-performing countries, which limit entry to the top third.

Fewer than one in nine elementary programs and just over one-third of high school programs are preparing candidates in content at the level necessary to teach the new Common Core State Standards now being implemented in classrooms in 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The “reading wars” are far from over. Three out of four elementary teacher preparation programs still are not teaching the methods of reading instruction that could substantially lower the number of children who never become proficient readers, from 30 percent to under 10 percent. Instead, the teacher candidate is all too often told to develop his or her “own unique approach” to teaching reading.

Just 7 percent of programs ensure that their student teachers will have uniformly strong experiences, such as only allowing them to be placed in classrooms taught by teachers who are themselves effective, not just willing volunteers.

Breathing new life into teaching requires that we begin at the beginning: who gets in and what kind of training is provided.

[not included here are the contents of page 3—two bar graphs]

The Review was inspired by a landmark study conducted more than a century ago, the Flexner Report of 1910, which evaluated the nation’s medical schools and led to consolidations and upgrades that transformed the system of training doctors into the world’s best.

Our goal is the same. We have created the largest database on teacher preparation ever assembled, with information from thousands of syllabi, textbooks, student teaching handbooks, student teacher observation instruments and other material. With this data, we are setting in place market forces that will spur underachieving programs to recognize their shortcomings and adopt methods used by the high scorers. At the same time, the Review serves as a consumer guide for aspiring teachers in selecting a superior preparation program and for principals and superintendents in their recruitment efforts. It also includes recommendations for current teacher candidates in these programs, school districts, institutions and policy makers to hasten the market forces that will overhaul the system.

As much attention as teacher quality has received in recent years, teacher preparation has stayed remarkably off the radar. States have made unprecedented changes in their teacher policies but almost none in teacher preparation. However, as illustrated by trail-blazing nations such as Finland, South Korea and Singapore, breathing new life into teaching requires that we begin at the beginning: who gets in and what kind of training is provided.
The importance of addressing these issues has never been more urgent. With the wave of baby-boomer teacher retirements, novices make up a greater share of the teacher workforce than ever. Twenty-five years ago, if you asked a teacher how much experience he or she had, the most common response would have been 15 years; if you ask the same 2013 question of teachers today, the answer is one year. The real challenge is that first-year teachers now teach around 1.5 million students every year, many of whom, because of district placement practices, are already behind in their learning.

The heart of the matter for the field of teacher education is that students taught by first-year teachers lose far too much ground. And it’s not just the students who suffer. First-year teachers deal with so much anxiety and exhaustion that many just crash and burn.

Should first-year teaching be the equivalent of fraternity hazing, an inevitable rite of passage? Is there no substitute for “on-the-job” training of novice teachers? The answers are obvious. We need more effective teacher preparation. Our profound belief that new teachers and our children deserve better from America’s preparation programs is the touchstone of this project.
### Table 3 Syntactical construction of NCTQ in the Review’s Executive Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verbs associated with NCTQ as agent</th>
<th>NCTQ positioned as active agent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>NCTQ’s Teacher Prep Review</td>
<td>has uncovered</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>the Review</td>
<td>finds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>We</td>
<td>were able to determine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>the Review</td>
<td>provides</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>We</td>
<td>strived</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>encountered</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>sued</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>We</td>
<td>anticipate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>the Review</td>
<td>was inspired by</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>We</td>
<td>have created</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>are setting in place</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>the Review</td>
<td>serves</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-71</td>
<td>It [the Review]</td>
<td>also includes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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### Table 4 Syntactical construction of university-based teacher education (UBTE) in the Review’s Executive Summary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Reference to UBTE</th>
<th>Verbs associated with UBTE</th>
<th>UBTE positioned as active agent?</th>
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<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>the colleges and universities producing America’s traditionally prepared teachers</td>
<td>producing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>these schools</td>
<td>operate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>they have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out teachers</td>
<td>the Review finds…</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>608 institutions</td>
<td>We [NCTQ] were able to determine overall ratings for</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>522 institutions</td>
<td>there is additional data on another…</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1,130 institutions that prepare 99 percent of the nation’s traditionally trained new teachers</td>
<td>Altogether, the Review provides data on…</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>all the nation’s teacher</td>
<td>We [NCTQ] strived to apply</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preparation programs</td>
<td>the standards uniformly to…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>leaders of many of the programs</td>
<td>We [NCTQ] encountered enormous resistance from…</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-34</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>refused to provide</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-37</td>
<td>a vast majority of teacher preparation programs</td>
<td>do not give aspiring teachers adequate return on their investment of time and tuition dollars</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Less than 10 percent of rated programs</td>
<td>earn three stars or more</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-41</td>
<td>Only four programs, all secondary… Libscomb and Vanderbilt, both in Tennessee; Ohio State University; and Furman University in South Carolina</td>
<td>earn four stars</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Only one institution, Ohio State</td>
<td>earns more than three stars for both an elementary (3 stars) and a secondary (4 stars) program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>teacher preparation program</td>
<td>It is far too easy to get into…</td>
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<tr>
<td>43-44</td>
<td>Just over a quarter of programs</td>
<td>restrict admissions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>46-49</td>
<td>Fewer than one in nine elementary programs and just over one-third of high school programs</td>
<td>are preparing candidates in content at the level necessary to teach the new Common Core State Standards</td>
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<td>50-51</td>
<td>Three out of four elementary teacher preparation programs</td>
<td>still are not teaching the methods of reading instruction that could substantially lower the number of children who never become proficient readers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Just 7 percent of programs</td>
<td>ensure that their student teachers will have uniformly strong experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>teacher preparation</td>
<td>We [NCTQ] have prepared the largest database on…</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>underachieving programs to recognize their shortcomings and adopt methods used by high scorers.</td>
<td>We [NCTQ] are setting in place market forces that will spur…</td>
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<tr>
<td>69-70</td>
<td>a superior preparation program</td>
<td>the Review serves as a consumer guide for aspiring teachers in selecting…</td>
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Appendix H: Syntactical constructions of NCTQ, UBTE, and Novice Teachers in the Review’s Executive Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Reference to novices/ students of UBTE</th>
<th>Verbs associated with novices</th>
<th>Novice positioned as active agent?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>teacher preparation has stayed remarkably off the radar</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>teacher preparation States have made unprecedented changes in their teacher policies but almost none in…</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>The heart of the matter for the field of teacher education is that students taught by first-year teachers lose far too much ground.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>more effective teacher preparation We need</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>America’s preparation programs Our [NCTQ’s] profound belief that new teachers and our children deserve better from…</td>
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</table>

Table 5 Syntactical construction of novice teachers in the Review’s Executive Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Reference to novices/ students of UBTE</th>
<th>Verbs associated with novices</th>
<th>Novice positioned as active agent?</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>America’s traditionally prepared teachers the colleges and universities producing…</td>
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<td>15-17</td>
<td>first-year teachers with classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity [schools of education are] churning out…</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>traditionally trained new teachers. 1,130 institutions that prepare 99 percent of the nation’s…</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>America’s teachers are prepared</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>aspiring teachers a vast majority of teacher preparation programs do not give…</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>students Just over a quarter of programs restrict</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syntactical constructions of NCTQ, UBTE, and Novice Teachers in the Review’s Executive Summary</td>
<td>admissions to…</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>admissions to… candidates just over one-third of high school programs are preparing…</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>the teacher candidate is all too often told to develop his or her “own unique approach” to teaching reading.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>student teachers will have uniformly strong experiences, such as only allowing them to be placed in classrooms taught by teachers who are themselves effective.</td>
<td>Just 7 percent of programs ensure that their…</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>aspiring teachers the Review serves as a consumer guide for…</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>current teacher candidates It [the Review] also includes recommendations for…</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>novices make up a greater share of the teacher workforce than ever.</td>
<td>Yes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>first-year teachers now teach around 1.5 million students every year, many of whom, because of district placement practices, are already behind in their learning.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>students taught by first-year teachers lose far too much ground.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>first-year teachers deal with so much anxiety and exhaustion that many just crash and burn.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Should first-year teaching be the equivalent of fraternity hazing, an inevitable rite of passage?</td>
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<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>novice teachers? training of</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>new teachers deserve better from</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6  Required Courses for Teacher Candidates Pursuing Secondary ELA Licensure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course title</th>
<th>Course Description(^{22})</th>
<th>Sample of required readings</th>
<th>Sample of assignments</th>
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</thead>
</table>

\(^{22}\) Language of the course descriptions, sample of required readings, and sample course assignments displayed in Table 6 were cited directly from corresponding course syllabi collected, and where possible, I cited directly from versions of course syllabi that matched when this study’s preservice-teacher participants took each course
<p>| <strong>Adolescent Development</strong>* | This course introduced candidates to theories of learning and adolescent development. To deepen candidates’ emergent understandings of theories and concepts read about and discussed in class, the course also included a mandatory field experience component in which candidates spent a minimum of two hours each week tutoring and observing in a community-based learning environment. Principal assignments invited candidates to draw connections between educational psychology, adolescent development, and learning processes observed at the service-learning site. | Course texts included empirical and theoretical selections from <em>Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education</em> (Ed. Michael Sadowski). Also included were texts such as: Bickman, M. (2000). Reforming all the time: Recuperating the tradition of the active mind for teacher education; Gutiérrez, K., &amp; Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice; Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! Analyses of learning papers: Twice during the semester, candidates were asked to relate theoretical constructs developed in course readings, lectures, and discussions to observations made at the service-learning site. Candidates’ fieldnotes, recorded during and following each site visit, were to function as the “central empirical entry points for analyses.” |
| <strong>Differentiated Instruction in</strong> | This course asked candidates to critically | Echevarría, J., Vogt, M., &amp; Short, D. J. | Lesson plans, Teaching, &amp; |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Diverse Secondary Classrooms*</th>
<th>examine and experience ways to meet the needs of diverse learners in American public schools. Candidates analyzed connections between field-based observations and experiences, their own personal experiences as students, and course content to link educational theory and research with the real practices of teachers and schools. The course centrally focused on developing candidates’ understanding of strategies for differentiating instruction for all students, with an emphasis on specific populations; content was organized around two units: 1) English Language Learners, and 2) Special Education.</th>
<th>(2010). <em>Making Content Comprehensible for Secondary English Language Learners</em>. Boston, MA: Allyn &amp; Bacon.</th>
<th>Reflections: Candidates were required to plan and facilitate two lessons: a SIOP-based lesson and a differentiated lesson. One lesson was presented in the university-based classroom, and the other, in candidates’ field-based classrooms. For each lesson, candidates submitted a formal lesson plan and post-teaching reflection.</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Courses below were required of all candidates pursuing Secondary ELA licensure.

| Composition for Teachers | This course provided an introduction to approaches to teaching writing and practice in strategies designed to support students’ growth as writers. Candidates | Smagorinsky, P., Johannessen, L. R., Kahn, E., & McCann, T. M. (2010). *The Dynamics of Writing Instruction: A Unfamiliar Genre Study*: To practice risk-taking and feeling what it’s like to write “outside their comfort zones,” |
were invited to challenge the notion that writing is a mysterious and private activity, casting the composing process as profoundly social, rich with cultural significance, and both complex and teachable.

candidates selected an unfamiliar genre to explore, study, and practice writing in, and after moving through the process, they reflected on what they took away and how they might adapt the assignment for use in their own teaching practice.

**Instructional sequence:** As the final course project, candidates designed a writing-rich sequence-of-instruction or unit plan that included a rationale, lesson plans, and supplemental materials.

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<th>Language &amp; Literature Across the Curriculum*</th>
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<td>This course was designed to provide candidates foundational knowledge of the theories and classroom practices in contemporary secondary reading instruction. The central purpose of the course was to provide prospective teachers with knowledge of research-based classroom practices for teaching reading within</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Strategy Mini-Lesson (Novels):</strong> Choosing 1 of the 4 fictional novels that they read from instructional perspectives in the course, candidates planned and taught a lesson designed in small groups to support literacy growth. The lesson had to include an</td>
</tr>
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</table>
the secondary ELA classroom. One of the most challenging tasks for novice teachers is to understand the link between what is taught in the university and what they, as teachers, need to do in school-based classrooms. This course was designed to bridge that theory/practice gap.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Literature for Secondary Teachers*</th>
<th>This course aimed to provide candidates with background and experiences relevant to using reading, writing, and a range of other social languages of the classroom in order to</th>
<th>McCormick, P. (2006). <em>Sold</em>. New York: Hyperion.</th>
<th>Respond with a teaching idea: Candidates developed an activity each week that focused on activities for engaging a wide</th>
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</thead>
</table>

assessment of comprehension, a focused mini-lesson, and discussion. Candidates also submitted a formal lesson plan.

Case study: Candidates selected, administered, and interpreted a variety of formal and informal diagnostic assessment tools and used those findings to develop a research-based plan for instruction or intervention to foster their case-study focal students’ reading comprehension. At the end of the term, candidates administered a post-assessment and reflected on their successes and areas for growth as teachers of literacy.

| | | | |
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teach literature to a culturally and intellectually diverse population of students. Literature, through an intense engagement with language, confronts us with ourselves, our deepest dilemmas, our towering heights, and our most humbling contradictions in a manner which is both personal and social. The intention of this course was to remain true to this purpose especially as it relates to the role of the humanities in public education.


range of students in reading literature and assessing the growth of those students. Candidates were encouraged to explore possibilities for developing and teaching essential aspects of literature and reading instruction (e.g., support comprehension, independent reading, affective dimensions of literary reading).

Collaborate, create, and plan: Candidates created a comprehensive unit plan on 1 required course literature selection. Plans included a philosophical rationale supporting curricular and pedagogical decisions made, a curriculum map, a weekly calendar, daily lesson plans, and formative/summative assessments. Plans were to be standards-based and be related to theoretical
| **Nature of English** | This course was organized around historical and ongoing controversies concerning the nature of “English” as an academic field of study and of “English language arts” as a school subject. Informed by Shulman’s notion of “pedagogical content knowledge,” this course will integrate understandings of our subject-matter specialization, of approaches to teaching this contested subject, and of the diverse learners we seek to prepare for 21st century literacies. | Hosic, J. (1917). Reorganization of English in secondary schools... NCTE (2008). *Definition of 21st century literacies* NCTE (1991). *Position on the teaching of English: Assumptions and practices* Selections from: Fecho, B. (2004). “*Is this English?*”: Race, language, and culture in the classroom; Elbow, P. (1990). *What is English?* | Reviewing Methods Books: Candidates selected and read an ELA-methods text of their choice and then composed a review that addressed: the author’s general approach to planning for instruction; what set of beliefs about literacy, teaching, and learning informed those suggestions for practice?; the author’s goals and aspirations, and why do these matter?; |
| **Secondary ELA Methods** | This course was designed to help candidates weave together the strands of prior coursework—the theories, practices, and big ideas about the teaching of literacy—into a coherent conception of what it means to the ELA. The course was organized around the notion of a “practice-centered curriculum” (Grossman, Hammerness, & | Beach, R., Campano, G., Edmiston, B., & Borgmann, M. (2010). *Literacy tools in the classroom: Teaching through critical inquiry, grades 5-12.* New York: Teachers College Press. McCann, T. M., Johannessen, L. R., Kahn, E., & Flanagan, J. M. (2006). *Talking in class: Using Reflective learning logs:* Using an observation protocol, candidates completed 5 formal observations of teaching and learning in their practicum classrooms, identified a “puzzle of | |
| McDonald, 2009) and anchored in a core set of practices essential to high-quality teaching of the ELA: 1) Building a positive classroom culture that privileges learning and supports all students’ positive social-emotional growth; 2) Establishing classroom norms and routines; 3) Planning instructional sequences around complex texts; 4) Providing clear instructions; 5) Facilitating large- and small-group discussions. | * Denotes course included a field-experience component whereby candidates were required to spend a specified number of hours each week in a classroom (or community-based setting, as per the requirements of Educational Psychology). | Discussion to enhance teaching and learning. Urbana: NCTE. Selections from: Conference on College Composition and Communication. 1974. “Students’ right to Their Own Language.” College Composition and Communication 25(3), pp. 1-32. Rose, M. (1990). Lives on the boundary. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books. Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005) Backward design. Ascd. | Practice” that emerged from those observations, and used the reflective log as a venue in which to critically examine that puzzle and reflect on how they might approach that puzzle in their future practice. Engaging Students in Discussions About Literature: After studying the practice of Yvonne Divans Hutchinson, and exploring McCann et al.’s Talking in Class, candidates worked in collaboration with their cooperating teachers to identify an appropriate text and discussion strategy with which to facilitate a literature-based discussion in their field-based classrooms. After teaching the lesson, candidates submitted a teaching reflection. |