Identity Formation of LBOTE Preservice Teachers during the Practicum:

A Case Study in Australia in an Urban High School

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The increase in the number of language background other than English (LBOTE) students entering teacher education in Australia offers a challenge for teacher educators (Cruickshank, Newell, & Cole, 2003; Fan & Le, 2009; Han, 2005; Premier & Miller, 2010). For many LBOTE preservice teachers, the practicum experience is seen as both professionally challenging and personally frustrating and often results in an erosion of confidence of teaching competence (Danyluk, 2013; M. H. Nguyen, 2014; Yoon, 2012). Teacher educators must understand and allow for the LBOTE preservice teachers' experience in Australian schools to assist in the development of a healthy teacher identity. Although several studies to date have examined the general experiences of LBOTE preservice teachers (Cruickshank et al., 2003; Fan & Le, 2009; M. H. Nguyen, 2014; Sawir, 2005), none have specifically examined the impact of teaching practice on identiy formation. The development of teacher identity is a critically important component of the learning-to-teach process (Beauchamp

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& Thomas, 2009; Kanno & Stuart, 2011), directly linked to teacher performance and growth. Bullough (1997) has emphasized that "teacher identity, the beginning teacher's beliefs about teaching, learning and self-as-a-teacher, is a vital concern to teacher education as it is the basis for meaning making and decision making" (p. 21).

This study captures the experiences of LBOTE preservice teachers using a case study approach to explore identity development. Wenger's (2000) "modes of belonging" form the theoretical framework to develop an understanding of the factors contributing to teacher identity. This article draws on in-depth interviews of two participants. The discussion of the findings aims to contribute to a further understanding of the formation of LBOTE preservice teacher identity within the Australian experience. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the LBOTE preservice teacher develop his or her teacher identity?

2. What factors affect the quality of this identity formation during the professional experience with reference to Wenger's matrix?

LBOTE Preservice Teacher Identity

A complex issue in the determination of teacher identity exists around the interrelationship between identity and the notion of self. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) referred to this as understanding self within the outside context, such as a classroom or school. Thus the LBOTE preservice teacher's identity is "shaped and reshaped in interaction with others in a professional teaching context" (p. 178). It is during the practicum experience that the LBOTE preservice teacher's identity and teacher agency are continually influenced by ongoing engagement in the structural and cultural features of a school (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehen, 2002). Lauriala and Kukkone's (2005) model of identity views the notion of "self" as composed of three personal dimensions: the actual self, the ought self, and the ideal self. The dynamic interactions among the different selves are useful in helping us to think about the identity development of the LBOTE preservice teacher. It is during the practicum experience that this connection between the personal dimension of self (linked to culture and background) and the professional self (preservice teaching) becomes important in teacher identity development.

The practicum experience, which provides the opportunity to link theory to practice within the school context, is based on a standard model for all preservice teachers. However, the standardization of mentoring assumes that "one size fits all," when it is clear that different capabilities may be exhibited by the LBOTE preservice teachers. Cultural and contextual factors may explain different responses in dialogue: directness or lack of directness in conversation (Fitch & Saunders, 1994; Strong & Baron, 2004). Differences in modes of spoken English may lead

to misunderstandings and misinterpretations in the mentoring relationship (Hyland & Lo, 2006). An example is the more direct style of Western speakers compared to Asian cultures where there is a preference for a more indirect, implicit style of speaking, with a concern for maintaining cohesion and harmony (Hall, 1971; Triandis, 1995). Supporting this argument, Le (2007) found that Vietnamese mentors "tended to dominate the feedback interaction more than their counterparts in the US context, and there was also a lack of politeness in suggestions and their advice" (p. 213).

Differences in power relationships during the practicum can also be attributed to cultural norms and expectations. Viewed from a Chinese cultural perspective, the teacher is seen as a hierarchical authority figure whose opinions should be respected and not openly questioned (Hyland & Lo, 2006). For instance, Nguyen and Hudson (2012) found that preservice teachers in a Confucian heritage culture, such as the Vietnamese culture, try to avoid conflicts and are hesitant to criticize or challenge their mentors during the practicum. The LBOTE preservice teacher may be reluctant to raise questions if he or she disagrees or misunderstands a point and may not challenge feedback or seek clarification from a mentor (Wang & Paine, 2002).

The LBOTE preservice teacher's emotions and feelings are fluid and influenced by the way certain situations are perceived and are often based on his or her cultural values, beliefs, and sense of competency (Stroll, 1999). Professional self-belief, identity, and personal vulnerability are closely interwoven with emotional vulnerability and sense of confidence. This self-belief is linked to experiences of openness and trust during the practicum and impacts learning and relationship building (Lasky, 2005). For the LBOTE preservice teacher, trust and collaboration are essential in the relationship. He or she will not risk "losing face" and may experience loss or pain (Lasky, 2005). Feelings of vulnerability can lead to a sense of powerlessness, betrayal, or defenselessness, a "lack of control" when forced to act in a way that is inconsistent with his or her core beliefs and values (Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbles, 2001). The emotions that preservice teachers experience may "expand or limit the possibilities" in teaching (Zembylas, 2003, p. 122).

Learning to teach in a new environment, culture, and language is a complex undertaking. Wenger (1998) viewed connecting the personal and professional selves as linking teacher identity with practice. For the LBOTE preservice teacher, this linking can be a challenging process beginning with participation in a new sociocultural and contextual space (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). The preservice teacher's personal and professional selves are influenced by sociocultural factors and the inherent contradictions within the different contexts (M. H. Nguyen, 2014) and their own life experiences in teaching and learning (Rogers & Scott, 2008; Sachs, 2005). For the LBOTE preservice teacher, contextual factors can either promote or hinder construction of teacher identity; it is a "constantly evolving phenomenon involving both a person and a context" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 177).

Teacher mentoring practices are socially constructed and relational with

strengths and limitations reflected in the practicum (Butler & Cuenca, 2012). For the LBOTE preservice teacher, cultural awareness and understanding are important in deepening the mentoring relationship. Intercultural empathy, competence, sensitivity, and mutual understandings within the school require teachers to have the ability to work with people from different cultures with openness and cultural empathy (Gokturk & Arslan, 2010; Kent, 2013; Kochan & Pascarelli, 2012). In addition, the LBOTE preservice teachers may benefit from the use of reflection as a mentoring activity, with prospective reflection—"reflection for action"—assisting in making explicit links between current teacher actions and future teaching situations (Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008). However, oral and written language difficulties together with affective factors arising from different social and cultural backgrounds can place significant limitations on LBOTE preservice teachers' reflection (Hourani, 2013). It is interesting to note that research suggests that mentoring in the school environment may at times reduce reflectivity by openly or subtly implementing an imposed cultural, political, or organizational agenda that impinges upon teachers' self-identity and/or cultural value systems (Enomoto, Gardiner, & Grogan, 2002). Cross-cultural mentoring can succeed as long as the mentor and mentee are both committed to the relationship, are open and sensitive to differences, and the purpose for mentoring is made explicit (Kent, 2013; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

Teacher mentors are often viewed as gatekeepers to the profession; practicums are viewed as high-stakes training, with face-to-face feedback potentially both supportive and threatening for LBOTE preservice teachers (Roberts, as cited in Hyland & Lo, 2006). The complexity of interpersonal relations is increased when practicum negotiations are carried out in the student's second language (Hyland & Lo, 2006).

Theoretical Background

This study uses the theory of *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998) to understand the process and identify those factors that either promote or inhibit the formation of teacher identity for LBOTE preservice teachers. The importance of identity on teacher development has been extensively described in the literature (Hoban, 2007; Olsen, 2008; Sachs, 2005). The concept of teacher identity and formation is complex and dynamic with tensions and contradictions (Olsen, 2008). In a critical review of studies, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) defined teacher identity as "an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one's (working) life" (p. 315). In Wenger's (1998) view, professional identity formation is an ongoing process of framing and reframing through experience and interactions with the member community.

In a review of identity studies, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) expressed a concern that in most studies, the concepts of professional identity were defined

differently or not defined at all and called for studies that offer methodological implications of research on teachers' professional identity. Various frameworks (e.g., Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2000) for describing teacher identity have been conceptualized across the different theoretical approaches. Wenger (1998) described a community of practice as a group of people who share a concern or a passion for doing and learning together as they regularly interact. He emphasized that members of a community of practice mutually construct their identity through participating in the community. Wenger's argument links identity with practice where identity involves a complex set of relations in a community. It is appropriate to use this framework to study teachers' professional identity, as teachers are part of a school community of practice. By participating in a professional community, a teacher can be influenced by the community impacting their developing identity (Clarke, 2008; Danielewicz, 2001; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010; Tsui, 2007).

Wenger's Modes of Belonging

Wenger (2000, pp. 227–228) explored identity construction as "an experience" in terms of modes of belonging in social learning. These modes are considered the three attributes of a learner's identity and are necessary for healthy development:

> A1. Engagement: Doing things together, through which the participants can lay a foundation for joint enterprise and negotiation of meaning.

> A2. Imagination: Relating an image of ourselves to the world beyond the community of practice.

> A3. Alignment: Local activities become sufficiently aligned with other processes such that they can be effective beyond our own engagement.

This study explores the contributions to and the quality of identity that emerge from the interactions between the preservice teachers within the school context. As Wenger (2000) argued, "our identities are not necessarily strong or healthy. Sometimes, they are even self-defeating" (p. 239). In further clarification of a "healthy" identity, Wenger described three qualities of a learner's identity requisite for healthy development:

> B1. Connectedness: Involves personal connections with others sharing histories, experiences, and commitments.

> B2. Expansiveness: The extension of the relationships across communities.

> B3. Effectiveness: The participating of and in the social world of teaching and schools.

Wenger (2000) combined these qualities with the three modes of belonging into a matrix structure. Table 1 offers a model for our analysis on the participatory aspects of the construction of LBOTE teacher identity.

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative, case study research design following Yin (2003) to explore the experiences of two LBOTE preservice teachers during their practicums. This article explores how preservice teachers develop their professional learning with data collected during the practicum blocks from master of teaching cohorts in two leading Australian universities. Ethics was sought and approved for this study, with all participants deidentified.

Participants

The participants were volunteers from some 200 preservice teachers in two teacher education programs. More than one-third of the cohort identified as LBOTE

Table 1
Key Questions for Matrix of Identity Dimensions for LBOTE Preservice Teachers

	Quality of identity		
Mode of belonging	B1: Connectedness	B2: Expansiveness	B3: Effectiveness
A1: Engagement	How does one's engagement within a school practicum contribute to forming deep connections with the mentor and others during the school practicum experience?	How does one's engagement within a school practicum experience contribute to interactions with others in the school practicum environmnt?	How does one's engagement within a school practicum experience contribute to effective action and participation within the school and classroom?
A2: Imagination	How does one's image of self and communit help toward forming deep connections with the mentor and others during the school practicum?	How does one's image of self and community help toward creating interactions with others in the school practicum environment?	How does one's image of self and community contribute to effective action and participation within the school and classroom?
A3: Alignment	How do established alignments contribute to forming deep connections with the mentor and others during the school practicum?	How do established alignments help toward creating interactions with others in the school practicum environment?	How do established alignments contribute to effective action and participation within the school and classroom?

Note. Based on Wenger (2000, p. 240) and Kwan and Lopez-Real (2010, p. 731).

in some form, for example, as international students, new migrants, refugees, or first-generation migrants. Those participants who had previously found professional experience challenging were most keen to take part in the research, seeing it as an opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

Participant 1: Laura. Laura's background is Korean. She completed her secondary school studies and bachelor of science (mathematics major) in Australia. Laura had some experience in tutoring but had never taught in a school and is a shy and reserved student, yet she is passionate about teaching. Laura's practicums were at large metropolitan boys and girls in single-sex state high schools. Both of her schools are considered multicultural.

Participant 2: Lee. Lee's background is Hong Kong Chinese. She is in her 30s. Lee completed her high schooling and undergraduate degree in linguistics in Hong Kong and is now retraining as a secondary teacher in TESOL and Chinese. Lee completed her practicums in an independent and a government school. Both of the schools are considered multicultural.

Data Collection

Data consist of individual semistructured interviews of the participants conducted after a teaching segment (post teaching interviews) and follow-up interviews at the conclusion of their practicums. The interview questions focused on their teaching and mentoring experiences during the practicums. In the interviews, facilitated by the researchers, the preservice teachers were asked to outline their experiences and interactions and how working with their peers and teacher mentors impacted their lesson planning and delivery. Both researchers were familiar with the value issues that arose during the practicums and were sensitive to these issues when conducting the interviews. To check for the reliability of the coding of the two transcripts, ratings of high and low importance were given and compared and reviewed for differences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After a discussion of the coding and importance ratings, the researchers coded a third transcript independently and had 80% agreement on the code allocation and importance ratings.

All interviews were voluntary and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. These interviews occurred with 28 preservice teachers. However, findings for this article were derived from interviews with two of the volunteer participants because they reflected the range of views of the LBOTE preservice teachers in the study and clearly illustrated Wenger's (2000) identity dimensions.

Data Analysis: Case Studies 1 and 2

The analytical method was informed by Kwan and Lopez-Real's (2010) research. Data analysis was conducted by within-case analysis (Merrian, 1998). Using within-case analysis, the researchers first coded the entire data set separately

on each participant. Following Kwan and Lopez-Real's (2010) methods, a full transcript was read three times, and data relating to the three modes of belonging and the three qualities of identity were extracted as key themes to construct the identity profile of that preservice teacher. This data extraction was conducted independently by the two authors, then compared and revised until agreement was reached.

Findings

Case Study 1: Laura

Table 2 outlines the contributory factors for Laura's teacher identity.

School culture. The school culture plays an important role in developing Laura's teacher identity, building connections, expanding her experiences, and creating opportunities to view herself as a "real" teacher in this community. Throughout her three practicums, Laura completed her teaching practice in environments which, in her words, were "friendly, supportive, and professional." She said of her first school that the staff there made her feel "like [I was] part of the staffroom." Laura explained why she felt very comfortable in the school:

> It's really good; the relationship between students and teachers is really fantastic and the relationship with deputy principals and the principal is quite good as well. I can see the whole school as one community, they're really friendly and involved me in everything.

This friendly and collaborative working environment made her feel positive about working collaboratively with teachers. She added, "Teachers are always supportive of one another, I really like this." She attended all the meetings and events of the faculty as a real faculty member. She did not feel marginalized from the issues that arose within the community of practice as constituted by the staff members of the whole school. At the end of her final practicum, she said, "It would be great if I could work with them."

Coincidentally, many of the teachers at this school were LBOTE themselves and spoke with accented English. Therefore Lee did not see herself as much different from other staff members. This type of alignment may result in a stronger sense of belonging to the community.

Building strong relationships. Strong relationships with the different stakeholders were reported to be an important factor to facilitate engagement in the school community. This supported the LBOTE preservice teachers' connectedness, expansion of relationships, and effectiveness of teacher engagement. First, by having a good relationship with her teacher mentors, Laura had opportunities to develop her teacher identity in terms of belonging, imagination, and alignment. During the first practicum, Laura had two teacher mentors: one of Indian background, the

other Asian. These mentors encouraged Laura to be engaged in a variety of school and staff activities. Laura said,

> John tries to give me many opportunities, like marking, supervising, that sort of thing, so I feel like I'm actually working in that school in a permanent job, so that's how they make me feel like I'm part of the staffroom.

Her mentors provided opportunities to expand her community of practice. She

Table 2
Laura's Teacher Identity Matrix

	B1. Connectedness	B2. Expansiveness	B3. Effectiveness
A1. Engagement	Her strong relationship with the mentors contributes positively to their connection (shared understanding of LBOTE background).	Her strong relationship with the mentors helps her to extend relationship to others: students, staff.	Her extended relationships gave her confidence in her teaching and learning.
A2. Imagination	Her prior experience as a nonnative student encouraged her to consider activities with students. She viewed herself as a student teacher; thus she was open to learning more about being a teacher in the school.	Her prior experience as a nonnative student enabled her to have a closer relationship with her students. See saw herself as a student teacher; thus she saw the value of putting energy into making connections and opportunities to connect with other teachers, peers, and students.	Her prior experiences of learning as a nonnative student impacted her desire to be approachable and understanding with students, leading to better relationships with students and to being a better teacher. She saw herself as wanting to take advice from the mentor and other teachers and was willing to change her teaching.
A3. Alignment	School context is multicultural, collaborative and supportive, and this contributed to deep relationships with mentor, peers, and students.	School context is multicultural, collaborative, and supportive, enriching her teaching experience.	School context is multicultural, collaborative, and supportive of positive learning, expanding her view of teaching and sense of being a real teacher.

Note. Based on Wenger (2000, p. 240) and Kwan and Lopez-Real (2010, p. 731).

said that she found it easy to talk to and seek support from other teachers. Laura's personal attributes of being hardworking, respectful to others, open, and flexible were seen as contributing factors in building good relationships. Laura described the progress she made in terms of her teaching skills as a result of working with her mentors and observing other teachers: "I've got a lot more structure in my lessons, and I am better in behavior management." The quality mentoring helped her to refine her teaching style. Laura praised her second practicum mentor:

> She's from Melbourne so she had different knowledge in mathematics, . . . different curriculum it's in more depth. It was really helpful for me to see other ways of teaching those concepts. That was the biggest lesson I learned from her. Another thing about her is she really loves her students so much, and I've picked up a bit of that from her.

Sharing a similar teaching philosophy and background with her mentors, Laura made significant progress in learning to be a teacher. At the end of her practicum, Laura said she wanted to be like her mentors, who were well organized and cared for their students.

Good rapport with students facilitated her progress toward becoming a caring teacher. Laura was passionate about becoming a teacher and helping students to reach their potential but viewed behavior management as one of her limitations. However, her good rapport with her students made her realize that she could do more for the students. She saw this as benefit to her relationship with the students and was happy to share her time and knowledge:

> For the last lesson, I got my students to write something about me and most of them said it was really good because they could see that I was trying to help them. . . . Maybe I asked too much but they seemed to really appreciate it. It was really touching to see them saying that.

Through all the three practicums, she maintained a good relationship with the students and had few difficulties with student behavior. At the end of her last practicum, Laura said that she had made improvement in managing student behaviors.

In addition to a good rapport with staff, relationships with other practicum preservice teachers facilitated her teacher identity development. She praised her interactions with peers during the first practicum by saying that they had "mental, emotional support, because we're working together. I'm not the only one who's the baby in the staffroom." She mentioned that they often observed each other's lessons, commented on them, and shared resources. Having a peer during the practicum helped her to realize that she was not the only one who experienced difficulties. She said she had learned a lot from observing her peers and consequently made changes in her class. It can be seen that through interaction with her peers, she had more opportunities to reflect on her own teaching practice and that of her peers. Through collaboration, taking and producing artifacts, Laura and her peers were engaged in socially valued activities. Instead of working in isolation in their classes,

they were engaged with one another and realized that interaction with peers was an integral part of their teaching practice at the school practicum. According to Wenger's theory, this enabled them to establish and develop joint enterprise.

Educational and cultural background. Laura's constructed image of a LBOTE preservice teacher impacted her concept of self, as a teacher, and her role and practice in the school community. Her educational and cultural background impacted to a certain extent her teacher identity formation during the practicums. Although completing her practicum in a school with a high percentage of students from non-English backgrounds, Laura was not very confident with her English language abilities. She said, "Yeah, when I teach them about the content I'm fine because I know the content and the terms, but when I get them into trouble and tell them off I find it a bit hard." She realized that she would "have to be careful about [my] spelling, because English is [my] second language, and when [I'm] teaching [I] also have to teach them how to spell things as well." This was one of the reasons why she said she wanted to design more hand-outs for students, as they would reduce the amount of time she had to talk with them.

However, she believed that her Asian background brought her closer to her non-English-background students as well. She said that she identified with some international students and reflected on her first time in Australia when she also needed more support from teachers. Her high school teacher in Australia was an excellent teacher. She said,

> I don't know, I want to break the barrier that students have. Some of the students say 'I hate maths' and stuff like that, but I want to change that by being approach-able and understanding. I want to build a personal relationship with my students because when I look back on my high school life, if I liked the teacher then I liked the subject more.

Her prior background was a positive factor that resulted in deeper engagement with her students.

Her previous learning experience in her home country also influenced her teaching styles. Most of Laura's observed lessons were teacher centered. She always spent time explaining different mathematical concepts to her students rather than organizing student-centered activities for them. According to Laura, this may be the result of the teacher-centered approach used by her own Korean teachers of mathematics and her familiarity with this teaching approach. However, her per-ception of a student-centered approach was further strengthened at the university, where she was shown many hands-on activities to teach mathematics. She realized that she should change this. "I want it to be more student centered, and also how I organize my board, I think I have to improve that."

Case Study 2: Lee

Table 3 outlines the contributory factors for Lee's teacher identity.

School culture. The differing school cultures offered challenges in developing

Table 3
Lee's Teacher Identity Matrix

	B1. Connectedness	B2. Expansiveness	B3. Effectiveness
A1. Engagement	Her understanding of the importance of teacher responsibility and the need to build strong working relationships contributed to a shared understanding of teaching.	Her relationship with the mentor enabled her to accept help, e.g., the mentor stepped in to help with discipline, and this extended her relationship with mentor and peers.	Her relationship gave her encouragement and support to develop her own style of teaching in an "Australian" classroom.
A2. Imagination	Her initial perception as a beginning teacher and as a nonnative student herself made her conscious of mentors who were unaware of her cultural and education background and its impact on expectations and relationships.	Her prior experience as a nonnative teacher gave her the confidence to clarify her own background and explain her own linguistic challenges in teaching and her expectations of students. This enabled her to build closer relationships with students.	Her prior experiences as a nonnative teacher impacted her desire to be a role model for students and to work collaboratively with her peers. This led to a better relationship with her mentor and others, enabling more effective teaching and learning.
A3. Alignment	The school context was complex and challenging (second practicum); a casual teacher was appointed as a mentor, and this was not conducive to her developing relationships with mentor and peers.	The school context (first practicum) was multicultural and collaborative; her mentor was a teacher from a similar background with a similar subject area, and this broadened her experiences at the school.	The school culture is multicultural; staff have a tradition of sharing, collaboration, and valuing staff. This contributed to her feeling welcomed and valued as a teacher.

Note. Based on Wenger (2000, p. 240) and Kwan and Lopez-Real (2010, p. 731).

Lee's identity as a teacher. Prior to undertaking her master's in teaching, Lee had worked as a teacher in her home country, teaching English as a foreign language. Her first practicum placement was at an inner-city grammar school with small classes and a large population of international students. She felt well supported by the mentor; however, she was concerned that the experience might limit her exposure to mainstream Australian schooling. The staff in this school worked closely together and included her in staff meetings and events. She felt welcomed and included as a member of staff.

Her second practicum was in direct contrast. This school was a large metropolitan state high school with a diverse staff and student population. For this placement, Lee was assigned a mentor who was a casual replacement teacher, and Lee often felt isolated and poorly supported, even though she valued the opportunity to develop her own practice. Although Lee was confident with her teaching, she struggled with discipline and student engagement issues and sought support and guidance from her mentors. Lee commented on the differences she experienced from teaching in her home country: "I had been teaching English for 7 years, but my students were university students. Now when I faced the teenagers, I felt confused about how to teach them and how to get along with them."

Building strong relationships. Strong relationships with the different stake-holders were reported to be an important factor in facilitating engagement in the school community. As Lee had already worked as a teacher in her own home country, she undertook her placements with an understanding of the importance of build-ing strong relationships with her mentor, staff, and the students. She considered this part of the responsibility of being a professional teacher. Lee talked about the challenges she was facing with class discipline: "The first time they saw me they tried to test me. I think they thought maybe, 'Oh, yeah, student teacher.'"

Lee was very discouraged by the discipline problems in one of her secondary practicums. Her approach was to talk to her mentor and ask for support: "I talked to my supervising teacher about the situation on Thursday, and she stepped in and lent me a helping hand in classroom discipline." Having a mentor step in enabled Lee to step away from a challenging situation to reflect and work collaboratively with her mentor on possible solutions. Lee was also very critical of teachers who were reluctant to share both time and resources, which she considered an important part of the role of relationship building and essential in supporting the preservice teacher.

Lee also spoke about the need for mentors to have an awareness and under-standing of the culture of the LBOTE preservice teacher. Unfortunately, Lee did not always find the relationship and support she wanted from a mentor, and in her second practicum, Lee was assigned a mentor who was a casual member of the staff and not a teacher in her subject area. Lee believed that this situation limited her opportunity to develop closer relationships in the school. She also felt the mentor

was not able to offer her the teaching support she needed. Lee talked about one of her practicum experiences:

> The situation is so complicated because my supervising teacher, she was only there for 2 days. The original Chinese teacher actually just quit her job, so there's only a casual teacher. So most of the time I was there without a supervising teacher. . . . The casual teacher, she didn't want to do anything. So she just wanted me to do everything. So the good thing is I could learn a lot.

Lee felt isolated, with limited opportunities to discuss her developing practice with another colleague from her teaching area. She felt this impacted her understandings of teaching and learning within this school context.

Lee suggested that even though the experience was useful, she considered it inadequate for supporting preservice teachers. It impacted Lee's opportunity to discuss and explore her own teaching methodologies with a mentor and to engage in collaborative planning and reflection on the teaching and learning that were occurring.

Educational and cultural background. Lee's constructed image of a LBOTE preservice teacher influenced her perceptions of herself as a teacher, her role, and her practice within the school community. Lee's educational and cultural background had a significant impact on her teacher identity formation. From her prior experience as a teacher, Lee had firm ideas and beliefs of the value of collaboration, teamwork, and sharing. She also had strong ideas of the importance of modeling acceptance and tolerance toward other cultures in her classroom and the value of language as a learning area.

Lee's image of self was centered on her ability to minimize mistakes and overcome linguistic and cultural barriers as a LBOTE beginning teacher. The concept of "not losing face" was an important part of her culture, and it shaped her expectations, her self-image, and her developing professional identity. Lee described the importance she placed on maintaining the students' trust and her mentors' confidence with her teaching and management of the classroom evidenced by not making mistakes in her teaching:

> I think the first thing that he looked at in my teaching is how I control the class-room in terms of behavior management. So he did tell me . . . take time to build trust . . . because they are good students. . . . So I cannot afford to make any single mistakes. If I do make a mistake they start to lose trust because you know the idea of good students . . . they take time to get rapport with you. One thing I remember my supervising teacher saying to me is, "Try to minimize mistakes."

For LBOTE trainee teachers, minor language errors can occasion general mirth and loss of face in the classroom. There are two important aspects to note from Lee's comments on this issue. First, she clearly felt that as a LBOTE preservice teacher, making language mistakes would impact her image as a capable, English-speaking professional and that she would lose the trust of the students and her mentor. In

addition, she was able to mitigate against making errors by establishing effective conversations with her students and by not taking her own mistakes too seriously: "At the beginning, they laugh at my accent in English and because their names are so hard to pronounce, especially from Arabic background. I couldn't pronounce them properly and then they were, ha ha, laughing." However, she resolved this problem effectively by having a friendly conversation: "Then I just take the time, OK, I say, 'You can teach me how to pronounce properly if I pronounce your name wrong.'" From this example, it is clear that such language mistakes can easily disrupt class interaction and, if not appropriately addressed, can lead to impaired effective classroom relationships.

In establishing a relationship with her mentor, Lee was frustrated by her experience at one of the schools. She believed that discipline problems for the preservice teachers are increased by the lack of routine and value placed on language learning:

> I was shocked with the discipline problems of the Year 8 Chinese classes in my first days of teaching. Most of them didn't see any point of learning Chinese. Some of them didn't pay attention to the lesson at all, talking, laughing, moving around . . . in the lessons. . . . There is no routine in class at all.

In trying to establish an effective professional relationship, Lee was confronted with the issue of her supervising teacher not having the mentoring experience or expertise to support Lee's developing teaching skills:

> Later, I realized that the original Chinese teacher just quit her job at the beginning of the term, and right now, the teacher is a casual teacher, and she is not a trained Chinese teacher. . . . She only had very limited Chinese language knowledge.

Lee believed good mentoring contributes to effective participation of the preservice teacher in the classroom and the school. She believed this occurs when the mentor and mentee share resources, when they engage in professional conversations, and when the school provides opportunities to develop supportive relationships with other school colleagues. Lee explained what is needed in establishing a community of practice in a school environment: "I think it is important . . . to have . . . experienced teachers sharing experience and teaching tips. . . . I also had this opportunity to share and talk to the other teachers, and they are really happy to share."

Lee's description of her experiences during the two practicums shows the value she placed on developing professional relationships, building trust, and establishing herself as a capable teacher. She believed that by avoiding mistakes, she could maintain both her students' and mentor's confidence in her abilities. Lee sees her identity as that of a teacher who encourages students to value languages, learning, and other cultures. She wants her students to be open to cultural diversity as well as learning a foreign language.

Lee's own cultural background, work, and school history strongly influenced the importance she placed on learning, developing trusting relationships, and not losing face in developing her teaching identity. However, it is clear that she found

this difficult at times, particularly in her second practicum, where her mentor was less engaged in the mentoring process and where the school culture may have been a factor against sharing and valuing language learning. Lee's sense of disappointment may lay in her own high expectations, where she found it difficult to imagine that a mentor would not want to engage in a professional relationship with the preservice teacher or where a student many not want to learn a new language. The question to be considered is whether this is a cultural aspect specific to all LBOTE preservice teachers or whether Lee's own past work and schooling experiences have led to the higher value she placed on learning, on mentoring, and on supporting beginning teachers.

Discussion

Teacher professional identity is a complex issue, and there have been many approaches to conceptualizing this identity. In a review of identity studies, Beijaard et al. (2004) expressed a concern that in many studies, the concept of professional identity has been defined differently or not defined at all and called for studies that offer methodologies for research on teachers' professional identity. In this study, we relied on Wenger's (2000) concept of identity construction as "an experience" in terms of three modes of belonging to social learning. The use of the Wenger matrix framework offered an innovative tool as well as theoretical framework to guide the data collection and to understand identity formation and its quality. This provides additional evidence for the practicality of this framework in studies of identity and the quality of identity formation, which has been initially confirmed by Kwan and Lopez-Real (2010).

This study identified school context, cultural background, and the building of strong relationships as factors contributing to the quality development of LBOTE preservice teacher identity. The influence of the context, particularly the school culture, was reflected in both case studies. Feeling emotionally safe in the mentor relationships was important for the LBOTE preservice teachers to ensure that they would not risk "losing face" (Lasky, 2005). Feelings of vulnerability led to a sense of powerlessness, betrayal, or defenselessness and to a lack of control where they are forced to act in ways inconsistent with core beliefs and values (Korthagen et al., 2001). In Laura's case, her collaborative and supportive school culture contributed to her quality identity development and the further development of her teaching as well as to reaffirming her passion to be a good teacher. In Lee's case, by contrast, the different practicum schools presented different learning experiences and subsequently impacted how she felt as a beginning teacher. The school culture, student behavior, staff collaboration, and staff arrangements all contribute to the LBOTE preservice teachers' sense of belonging. LBOTE preservice teachers' identities were influenced by their own experiences in the practicum schools as well as by their past experiences of education. The school culture was an important factor in

fostering confidence and acceptance and thus significantly contributed to the quality of teacher identity development.

Laura felt part of the school community, and Lee's teaching ideals were validated. These findings support the argument made by a number of scholars (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Reynolds, 1996; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004) who claim that the influence of context on teachers' professional identity is important. For beginning LBOTE teachers, whose teacher identities are tentative, the school context was seen to have a significant impact on their self-belief as a teacher. This also lends support to M. H. Nguyen's (2014) findings that contextual factors particularly influence a LBOTE preservice teacher's emotions, which can in turn "alter a teacher's identity in relation to the profession" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 180).

LBOTE preservice teachers may face additional challenges in developing their teacher identity in another cultural environment. LBOTE preservice teachers who have strong affinity with their culture may not share the common practice of their teaching places. Both Laura's and Lee's teaching pedagogy and their perceptions of being a teacher were influenced by their prior experiences in their countries and by their cultures. This study confirms that the core values and beliefs LBOTE preservice teachers bring to the practicum are sometimes quite different to those of the teacher mentors.

Relationships with mentors and others in schools are important in enabling LBOTE preservice teachers to develop a positive identity. This is true in Laura's and Lee's cases, which showed that building strong relationships with teacher mentors, students, and others in the school helped them to develop their teacher identity at all the levels to which Wenger (2000) referred. Laura's experience was more positive than Lee's, as she was able to develop stronger relationships with the stakeholders in her schools. This benefited Laura, as she was able to develop more fully her teaching practice. In Wenger's view, this would allow her more effective action and participation within the school and classroom. In comparison, Lee was not always able to develop supportive relationships, and this limited her opportunities to be engaged with the school and to further develop her teaching practices. It can be seen that the quality of her identity formation was hindered.

The LBOTE preservice teacher's developing identity is both complex and multilayered. A LBOTE preservice teacher shares similar issues and challenges as other preservice teachers; however, these issues become more pronounced when personal cultural values, beliefs, and expectations come into play. Wenger's framework is useful in exploring these factors and the impact they can have on the quality of identity formation during the professional experience. Understanding teacher identity formation for beginning teachers is of vital concern to teacher education as it informs our decision making about how best to prepare our future teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). This study demonstrates that the identity development of LBOTE preservice teachers needs more consideration

if we are to meet their developmental needs during the practicum. Even though they shared similar issues to other preservice teachers, their concerns were complex and interwoven with cultural factors. Ongoing support for LBOTE preservice teachers during the practicum needs strengthening to ensure that the university has an overview of what happens in practice and how best to support LBOTE preservice teachers prior to, during, and after the practicum experience.

This study also argues that more attention should be paid to the role of context in the professional identity formation of LBOTE preservice teachers. The pre-practicum experiences of these preservice teachers are important to familiarizing them to the school and the teacher mentors; as Danyluk (2013) reported, this "may have lessened the stress levels reported during the practicum" (p. 332). Familiarizing students with their school contexts with early school visits and school orientation programs is important to avoid confrontation and tension. Although confrontation and tension could lead to healthy identity formation (Wenger, 1998) and are generally inevitable (Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013; Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010), negative emotions, the preservice teacher's experience may limit the possibilities of learning. Thus choice of the practicum school context for LBOTE preservice teachers should be taken into consideration to ensure that the preservice teacher enters an environment that supports cultural awareness and where he or she is recognized and accepted as an LBOTE preservice teacher. It can be seen from Laura's and Lee's cases that they felt confident when sent to a multicultural school with multicultural staff and students. In addition, as Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) suggested, teacher educators should incorporate knowledge of the school community, context, and culture into the teacher education program.

This study points out that strong relationships with different stakeholders, especially with the teacher mentor, are critical to the LBOTE teacher's identity formation. Preparing LBOTE teachers with interpersonal skills, communication skills, and coping strategies would possibly help them feel more confident in building relationships. Teacher education programs should offer alternative forms of interaction in practicum schools for preservice teachers. In both participants' cases, relationships with school mentors were important in deciding the quality of the preservice teacher's learning. When these relationships are not fruitful, they will limit the preservice teachers' opportunities to learn. Building other types of communities of practice among preservice teachers, such as learning circles (Le Cornu, 2007), peer mentoring (H. T. M. Nguyen, 2013), critical friend groups (Judith, 2002), and pair placement (Bullough et al., 2003; Sorensen, 2004), may support their positive experiences of the school. Peer support can be an alternative source of learning and support for preservice teachers.

Findings in this study show how preservice teachers' cultural and educational backgrounds affect the dynamics of the quality of their identity formation. It is therefore important for those involved in the LBOTE preservice teachers' learning process, such as teacher mentors and university supervisors, to be able to recognize

and allow for these differences to provide effective support. The communication that occurs among teacher mentors, university supervisors, and preservice teachers should be strengthened to avoid any misunderstandings. Crutcher (2007) pointed out that mentors for those with different backgrounds must be adept at navigating the cultural differences. He also suggested focusing on strategies to ensure effective cross-cultural mentoring. As shown in both cases, the LBOTE teachers' identities were impacted by their cultural beliefs. This requires teacher education programs to pay more attention to cultural awareness in terms of communication, learning styles, teacher ideals and values of relationships, and appropriate pedagogy in certain contexts.

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