

Identity, Pedagogy, and Change

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Author Note

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Abstract: *Teacher identity guides classroom choices and responses to proposed change, yet identity work and reflection are frequently overlooked components of professional development. Based in dialogic self theory, this qualitative study used narrative case study to examine teachers' perceptions of interactions between their identities, choices, and responses to change. This study determined that while teachers are aware of how their identities guide their choices, they often do not acknowledge divergences between their identities and choices and do not see responses to change as connected to their identities. Further research into specific elements of teacher identity and teacher reflection is recommended.*

Keywords: teacher identity, narrative case study, secondary school change

INTRODUCTION

Change in education is a lengthy process often filled with conflict and logistical obstacles (Lasky, 2005; Smith et al., 2016; Sozen, 2019); however, implementing new teaching practices can provide significant educational benefits to students (Ay Emanet & Kezer, 2021; Donche & Van Petegem, 2011). Teacher reluctance to fully embrace new teaching models or try unfamiliar teaching strategies often stems from conflict between their identities and the values and beliefs implicit in new pedagogical frameworks and practices (Heyd-Metzuyanim & Shabtay, 2019; Marz & Kelchtermans, 2013; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). However, teachers are often unaware of the ways in which their identities are playing active roles in their classrooms and schools (Ambusaidi et al., 2021; Clarke, 2009; Cossentino, 2004; Donche & Van Petegem, 2011; Dotger & Smith, 2009; Heyd-Metzunaium, 2019; Kaplan, 1991; Raymond, 1997; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Spillane & Zeuli, 2016). Without an awareness of the ways identity guides choices and responses to change, growth is impossible (Beijaard et al., 2004; Clarke, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Cossentino, 2004; Day, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009; Louie, 2016). Although a significant amount of research has been done to demonstrate the connections between teacher identity and their classroom choices (Badia & Iglesias, 2019; Berger & Lê Van, 2019; Coldron & Smith, 1999; de Vries et al., 2013; Donche & Van Petegem, 2011; Dotger & Smith, 2009; Goldston & Kyzer, 2009; Kaplan, 1991; Louie, 2016; Mockler, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Romylos, 2021) and between teacher identity and their responsiveness to and perceptions of school change (Ambusaidi et al., 2021; Barahmand, 2019; Bas, 2020; Batten & Franke, 2008; Carinus et al., 2011; Clerc, 2019; Coldron & Smith, 1999;

Curwood, 2014; Day, 2002; Day, 2006; Goldston & Kyzer, 2009; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2011; Hathcock et al., 2020; Heyd-Metzuyanim, 2019; Kelchtermans, 2009; Louie, 2016; Marz & Kelchtermans, 2013; Mockler, 2011; Sloan, 2006; Tao & Gao, 2017; van Veen, 2001; van Veen et al., 2005), little research has been done to explore or explain how awareness of teacher identity and identity development can potentially motivate and inspire teachers to engage with student-centered reforms in their schools and classrooms (Day, 2002; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2011). School leaders and teachers themselves can use the results and implications from this study to inform their professional development choices, inspire their own reflection, and reconsider the forces guiding their teaching decisions.

The study focused on the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive their identities as influencing their pedagogical decisions?
2. How do teachers perceive their identities as impacting their responses to proposed pedagogical change?

LITERATURE REVIEW

DEFINING IDENTITY

Identity essentially refers to the kind of person that an individual believes themselves to be (Gee, 2000). Identity is constructed by and interpreted through the narratives individuals tell about themselves to themselves and others based on past experiences, stories others tell them, and the ways they want to be perceived by others (Heyd-Metzuyanim, 2019b; Heyd-Metzuyanim & Shabtay, 2019; MacLure, 1993; Rogers & Scott, 2008; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Identity can and does change based on one's surroundings and perceptions (Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Lutovac & Kaasila, 2017; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Varghese et al., 2005), yet individuals are not always aware of their own identities or how, why, and when their identities shift (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Discovering and defining one's identity is a complex process of identifying elements of identity, analyzing the contexts in which those identities shift, and reflecting on the ways in which the definition of identity is constantly changing (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Gee, 2000; Hathcock et al., 2020).

TEACHER IDENTITY

Identity awareness is especially important for teachers because of the unique combination of professional knowledge and personal values and beliefs that go into the act of teaching (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bullough & Stokes, 1994; Canrinus, 2011; Clarke, 2009; Day, 2002; Dotger & Smith, 2009; MacLure, 1993; Namaghi, 2009; Romylos, 2021). Teachers make professional decisions overall and every day demonstrating their values and their beliefs of what that good life looks like for themselves and for their students (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Day, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009). Teachers choose instructional methods as well as content material based on who they are, making teachers' personal lives and identities instrumental in everything they do in their classrooms (Berger & Lê Van, 2019; Bullough, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Pajares, 1992; Raymond, 1997; Rex & Nelson, 2004).

SELF-EFFICACY AS A PRIMARY COMPONENT OF TEACHER IDENTITY

Self-efficacy is how an individual perceives their ability to do or control something and is an essential component of teacher identity (Berger & Lê Van, 2019; Lauermaann & Karabenick, 2013; Settlage et al., 2009; Wheatley, 2002). It is distinct from responsibility in that self-efficacy

only suggests what individuals believe themselves capable of doing or controlling, not what they believe they should do or control (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013). While high self-efficacy in a specific area does not necessarily mean there will be high levels of implementation or success, experiencing high levels of responsibility and low levels of self-efficacy may lead to burnout and resistance (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013). High levels of self-efficacy have also been correlated with higher student achievement and more effective teaching practices (Kennedy & Smith, 2013; Settlage et al., 2009), and teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to be more focused on student socioemotional needs, which may also lead them to connect with and implement more student-centered change (Berger & Lê Van, 2019). Independently, high levels of self-efficacy do not necessarily lead to more effective teaching (Settlage et al., 2009; Wheatley, 2002); however, self-efficacy impacts the choices teachers make in the classroom and their interactions with students and colleagues (Berger & Lê Van, 2019), making it an important consideration when investigating the relationship between teacher identity and teacher choices.

TEACHER IDENTITY TENSION

The frequency of identity-based decisions in teaching also requires teacher vulnerability: Their identities are judged on a near-constant basis by students, colleagues, administrators, and an ever-watching public (Day et al. 2006; DuFour, 2015; Kelchtermans, 1996; Kelchtermans, 2009). Feelings of vulnerability, especially those created by external challenges to value-based choices, can lead to identity conflict (Kelchtermans, 1996; Lasky, 2005), and while focused and intentional reflection can transform that conflict into productive identity negotiation (Olsen & Buchanan, 2019; Romylos, 2021), those conflicts can also negatively impact self-efficacy and increase feelings of powerlessness, both of which affect job performance (Kelchtermans, 1996). Purposefully and reflectively acknowledging vulnerability can lead to more in-depth identity awareness (Alsup, 2019; Geijsel & Meijers, 2005) with the potential to directly influence the ways teachers feel about their students and the practices they implement in their classrooms, making identity development and awareness even more important in the lives of teachers than in other careers (Day, 2006; Kelchtermans, 2009).

IDENTITY AND TEACHER CHOICES

From wide-reaching curricular and assessment decisions to smaller classroom choices, teachers' professional lives are full of choices that have the potential to impact student learning, performance, and attitudes (Shavelson & Barko, 1979). All classroom practice decisions are guided by teachers' identities (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Goldston & Kyzer, 2009; Lutovac & Kaasila, 2017; Rex & Nelson, 2004). Once teachers are aware of the ways that elements of their identities are guiding their classroom decisions, they will be increasingly able to identify the ways that proposed changes in the classroom interact with their beliefs and identities and will be more likely to attempt to authentically engage with them (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Day, 2002; Hathcock et al., 2020; Heyd-Metzuyanin, 2019a; Kelchtermans, 2009; Lutovac & Kaasila, 2017; Mockler, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Raymond, 1997).

DEVELOPING TEACHER IDENTITY AWARENESS

Since identity is by nature unstable and varied, there is great potential for reformers and teacher-leaders to use identity development to promote teacher engagement in and understanding of proposed change (Gunersel et al., 2016). However, as individuals are often unaware of the ways in which their identities are shifting from moment to moment or between situations and contexts

(Rodgers & Scott, 2008), self-awareness is a requisite first step in developing and shaping identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2000; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Neumayer-DePiper, 2013; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Romylos, 2021; Zembylas, 2018). Through active engagement with and understanding of their own identities, individuals can actively shape their identities, particularly when given the opportunity to understand identity creation and negotiation as developing in stages (Badia & Iglesias, 2019; Beijaard et al., 2004; Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I used dialogical self theory to guide my understanding of identity and the ways teacher identity informs classroom practices and choices. Dialogical self theory is a combination of the identity theory of Henry James and the dialogical process theory of Mikhail Bakhtin (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Hermans, 2001; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1992; Meijer & Hermans, 2018). Dialogical self theory posits that the self is made up of multiple “I-positions”: Identity is not centered around one core self but is made up of a number of different positions that may interact with each other in a variety of ways (Hermans, 2008; Hermans et al., 1992). By becoming aware of the different I-positions that comprise one’s identity and noticing the dialogues and conflicts among them, an individual can become increasingly self-aware and open to learning, change, and transformation (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Using dialogical self theory as a foundation for my research and my interviews, I was also able to specifically address how participants saw different elements of their identities as impacting their classroom choices and responses to change. In teacher participant interviews, I presented and discussed the theoretical framework and prompted participants to acknowledge and discuss their multiple I-positions, encouraging them to begin or continue their own processes of self-awareness (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Hermans, 2018).

METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used narrative case study methodology, combining elements of multiple-case case study and narrative methodologies to answer the research questions. Using theoretical replication (Yin, 2014) and maximum variation sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I chose three participants, all teachers in a suburban public high school in Colorado, based on my prior knowledge of individual teacher demographic information, observed their teaching for one 94-minute class period of their choice, and conducted two semi-structured interviews with them individually. All three participants had been full-time high school teachers in their content areas for at least four years and had all been teaching for at least ten years. See Appendix A for the observation protocol and Appendix B for the interview protocol.

DATA ANALYSIS

My data collection and data analysis processes overlapped in this study as is typical in case study research (Merriam, 1985). I used text-level analysis during coding (Syed & Nelson, 2015) to analyze identity elements and decision-making within and between individuals. I also used an inductive, data-driven coding approach to develop codes directly from my data. Starting with in vivo coding to prioritize participant voices, I then coded for instances or examples of values and self-efficacy. After two rounds of initial coding, I organized codes using versus coding. I coded

each participant's interview and observation data independently to see if there were clear conflicts or connections between identities and classroom choices, then I compared versus codings between participants to determine overall themes using the case study analysis technique of explanation building.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in narrative research moves beyond Guba and Lincoln's four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Moss, 2004) and into what Clandinin and Connelly call wakefulness (2000). Wakefulness involves a consistent adherence to reflection throughout the data analysis process and necessitates constant awareness of researcher bias and the ways researcher decisions shape participants' stories. As I moved through my data collection and analysis process, I regularly reflected on how I was using participants' words and voices to inform my final writing. I also contextualized participants' voices and stories in order to tell a clearer version of their truths (Moss, 2004). I triangulated my themes by using data from observations and multiple rounds of participant interviews and incorporated participant voices frequently in my results, including both their spoken words as well as contextual and nonverbal details.

RESULTS

My three qualitative participants were drastically different individuals, at least on the surface. Rachel just finished her 13th year of high school teaching, Dave his 30th, and Jerry his fourth, though he was previously an elementary teacher in the district. They teach in three different content areas with different student populations: Rachel teaches core courses primarily to underclassmen, Dave teaches high-level electives in a core content area, and Jerry is an arts elective teacher, teaching large classes of students of all levels. My observations reflected these differences. Rachel's seventh-period on-level class consisted of 31 sophomores, enrolled for required graduation credit, and while Dave's AP class was also full of sophomores, the 21 students had chosen the more challenging AP class instead of other sophomore department offerings. Jerry's audition-only first-period class consisted of 40 students, primarily upperclassmen. In order to highlight the complexities of each participant's identity and their perceptions of how their identities guide choices and responses, I overview the results of each participant before reporting overall themes.

RACHEL: "IT'S BEEN A PRETTY FUN ADVENTURE SO FAR"

Rachel's 7th-period class is crowded, quiet, and comfortable. She casually greets each of her 31 students by name as they enter the classroom and find their seats. After the bell rings, Rachel continues to greet students as she makes her way to the front of the classroom where a question is projected on the screen behind her. Her demeanor is easygoing and friendly, and after reviewing the posted question and asking the class to briefly share about their days, Rachel overviews the plan for the period and launches into what could be considered a lecture but what she hopes comes across more like a conversation.

IDENTITY AND DECISIONS: "I CARRY A LOT OF IDENTITIES. LIKE, A LOT. IT'S OVERWHELMING SOMETIMES."

Dialogic self theory immediately resonated with Rachel. “I carry a lot of identities,” she said, nodding, and after listing a number of her different identity roles, she said,

100% they do fight...there are different personalities within [each] role. Sometimes I feel like they’re so conflicting that I’m just, I can’t even handle that and I gotta go in the closet and cry. Because, you know, you have to find yourself, find a way to balance and juggle all those roles.

Rachel has found a way to transform her identity tension into strengths: She “[tries] to multitask constantly,” “recognize[s]... who’s the most emergent need,” and is “always thinking about how to be better.” She refers to herself as “kind of a squirrel and if I’m constantly doing the same thing I get bored with it,” leading her to frequently and comfortably choose and experiment with new teaching strategies. These elements of her identity play out in her classroom management: She is comfortable in nearly any situation, especially “organized chaos” and has a preference for students who “talk a little bit more.” Rachel “[doesn’t] spend a lot of time thinking about myself” and sees her identity as focused on other people because “the time that I have in my day is taking care of others and teaching others.” She is generally not concerned about her own comfort or about others’ perceptions of her; in her classroom, every choice is geared towards helping students. “There are so many different kids... they all have different needs... [you] just gotta become really good at juggling,” she says, and while “it’s so easy to avoid those [struggling or disengaged] kids, I’m getting better at that [not avoiding them].” The second half of my observation of her was filled with Rachel flitting around the classroom, connecting with every student in the room, and consistently using her identity-based skills to make relationships a priority in her teaching.

IDENTITY AND RESPONSE TO CHANGE: “I’M A PRETTY EASYGOING PERSON... THANK GOODNESS.”

Rachel “respond[s] pretty well to change,” in part because of the amount of change in her personal life. “I go home and it’s chaos,” she explained, laughing, “I think, as a teacher, you have to be relatively flexible, or you’re going to be in a constant state of annoyance.” Her comfort with change was confirmed and enhanced by my observation of her: When little pieces of her whole-class experiment did not work, she laughed and said, “let’s call this experimental error.” She also frequently referenced alternate ways students could access the content if the initial approach did not work, demonstrating her capacity to make small changes to benefit students.

Rachel’s identities as a role model for students, knowledgeable content teacher, and collaborator also guide her responses to change. She recognizes that “there are some kids that panic” about change and that “helping the kids see that I’m okay with change helps them.” Additionally, because “[the content] is changing on a daily basis, if you’re being a good [content] teacher, you’re exposing the kids to new changes out there in the world.” For Rachel, teaching relies on committing to shared agreements, so even when she struggles to see the purpose of the change, “I’m going to do that [the change] because I don’t want to get fired. It’s part of being a team player and understanding that sometimes things need to change.”

DAVE: “NOBODY CAN TEACH IT BETTER THAN I CAN”

Dave’s second-period AP class is filled with enthusiastic, loud sophomores. They are mere weeks away from the AP test, the culmination of a year of learning and an opportunity to gain early college credit, yet the room is filled with the noise of springtime teenagers. When the bell rings, Dave presses play on a student-created video of weekly announcements teachers are asked

to play at the start of second period. As the video begins, Dave chats briefly with students, passes out graded assessments from the previous class, and makes sarcastic remarks about the presented announcements before officially beginning instruction.

IDENTITY AND DECISIONS: “I TEND NOT TO TEACH STUFF I DON’T KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT.”

Dave, a no-nonsense storyteller, says his “identity is wrapped up in how I think other people think of me,” and that a key component of his identity consists of “wanting to be known as smart.” He is constantly reading and learning so “if somebody asks a question, I can answer it.” Dave is “very aware” of this element of his identity and the influence it has on the choices he makes for his classroom and his students: He avoids teaching “stuff I don’t know too much about, and if I don’t know about it, I learn it so I can teach it.” In response to a question about his perceived connection between his identity and his teaching practices, Dave forcefully said,

100% I don’t like stations where the kids go and teach themselves. No... So yeah, what I teach, how I teach does tie into my identity. I know about Darfur. I’m not going to have them go to a station and read about it and then, because they filled in a fill-in-the-blank note guide, think that they learned anything.

Whether it is in his classroom or in his personal life, Dave is “not going to waste my time,” which means that because he “knows what I’m doing” he should be the leader and provider of content information in the classroom. He acknowledges that sometimes “it’s hard for me and my ego to let things go,” specifically referring to his tendency to explain answers or situations to students instead of prompting student discussion or problem solving.

IDENTITY AND RESPONSE TO CHANGE: “I’M FINE WITH IT. I DON’T LIKE CONFLICT.”

Dave perceives himself as being “fine” with change. However, instead of embracing or accepting change, he simply believes it is futile to fight against it. “I don’t want to be the stick that goes into the spoke that crashes everything,” he said, discussing a time when he “fought [a specific change] and nobody listened to me. So I just threw in the towel and said, okay, I tried, you guys will see that [the change won’t work].” At his core, Dave does not believe in change: Although he acknowledges that pieces of his teaching practice have changed over the years, “I don’t think kids have changed. I think that I’m the same and they’re the same.” Dave applies this same perception of the world to his teaching, repeating to his students during my observation of him that “the more things change, the more things stay the same.”

JERRY: “I JUST LOVE IT TO DEATH, OBVIOUSLY”

Jerry started interacting with students long before the bell rang to start class. The entryway to his large room, which also serves as storage, lounging space, and lunchroom, was filled with students. Jerry was chatting happily with them until a tear-stained student approached and asked to see him in his glass-walled office. As Jerry consoled her privately, students milled around, joking and preparing their materials. By the time Jerry emerged from his office, full minutes after the bell, students were settled and ready for the rehearsal ahead. Without rushing, Jerry turned on the projector, displaying an agenda on the screen behind him, shared his goals for the class period, and welcomed his students into their shared space.

IDENTITY AND DECISIONS: “ALMOST MY ENTIRE IDENTITY IS WRAPPED UP IN THIS [TEACHING].”

Jerry says that unlike his wife, for whom “there’s the school life and the home life and they never cross over,” the line between his personal and professional lives “is almost nonexistent.” Although he never thought he would “be this emotionally vulnerable around anybody,” he talks about his teaching passionately and emotionally. He says “I love you all” to his students at the end of class, and during our first interview, he “almost cried like six times” as he discussed “his relationship with this school,” the “soul-crushing experience” of feeling like he had not lived up to expectations in his first year in his current role, and, most of all, his love and gratitude for the students with whom he works.

Jerry is consistently working and reflecting to be the best at what he does. Although he admits “it’s hard to [teach this content] as a mediocre teacher... because everything we do is so public,” shrugging and stumbling over his words because that “sound[s] way too egotistical,” Jerry is a combination of incredibly confident and constantly questioning. In his first year in this role, “it all blew up in my face... I don’t want to say it was the worst year of my teaching career, but it was rough.” He then drastically changed his teaching; however, “there was a lot of pushing kids probably too hard that year...that was probably the most growth they’ve ever had, but I don’t like the person I was for that growth to happen.” Ultimately, Jerry completely changed his approach again after reflecting on “what does it mean to be a good person and to pursue excellence?” This past year “[has] been a very open honest year,” he said, and he is proud of the results, asking students to “just stop and think about how great this year has been.”

A key component of Jerry’s identity is gratitude. While his gratitude for his role and career is “a little overwhelming,” his gratitude for his students is unwavering. “Everybody needs to be reminded of how special what we have is,” he told his top ensemble. “I’ve only succeeded because of [students],” he said, “I get all these accolades and everything, but it’s only because the kids trust in what I’m doing, and I appreciate that.” This mindset leads Jerry to give students frequent opportunities to share their ideas, evidenced in my observation of him when he asked students to provide feedback to the group before he gave his own. His teaching is led by the understanding that “this is not just your program. The kids are just as invested in it as you are.”

IDENTITY AND RESPONSE TO CHANGE: “I’M VERY COGNIZANT OF CHANGES.”

“I don’t want to say I’m comfortable with change,” Jerry said, “but I try to think out the change a lot.” Jerry makes his own changes thoughtfully and is guided by considering “how many kids are actually benefiting?” Jerry’s focus on potential impacts of change leads him to consistently ask for and include student voice in his decision-making, even when he is making a choice about his own future in the profession. In early spring, he was considering leaving teaching because of schedule changes that would limit his interactions with students. “I was livid,” he said, “I [did] not think I [could] do this job the way it [was] presented.” His identity-based focus on being the best teacher possible made him unwilling to compromise, even if it meant leaving teaching altogether.

THEMES COMMON TO ALL PARTICIPANTS

“PURE SERENDIPITY”

Though Dave said it, the theme of “pure serendipity” echoed in each participant’s stories. Rachel said that while she “just fell into the [content] major,” teaching has been “a pretty fun adventure” so far. Jerry was the most enthusiastic about the way chance has led him on his specific path. “Looking back, I just think, oh my god, I could have missed this by a mile,” going on to say, “I just love it to death, obviously.” None of them used this sense of serendipity to negate the work

it took to get to where they are, though our conversations highlighted the enjoyment they generally get from their current roles. This similarity is significant in that while they all referenced challenges in teaching, all three participants cited feeling a great deal of joy and purpose in teaching. The recognition of serendipity also demonstrates a shared foundational element of their viewpoints and indicates the high level of passion and care they each bring to the profession.

TEACHER ROLE

All three teachers saw their purposes as teachers as more than teaching their specific content; however, there was a surprising lack of consistency in their definitions of the role of a teacher. Dave wants his students to “trust the system” because he as the teacher “know[s] what I’m doing” and that students can most effectively receive the knowledge through him. While Rachel also approaches students as the content expert, she believes her “job is to present to them what’s out there and help them to decipher how they want to put what they believe together with the information that I’m presenting them.” She sees herself as “being kind of a role model for kids.” Jerry takes the active role of students in his classroom even further, working to “[have] that openness with [students]” and seeing them as collaborators in “building a program.” He sees his role as helping students to discover and learn skills successfully and independently to build the lives they want.

OBSERVED VERSUS REPORTED SELF-EFFICACY

Another important area of divergence among participants were their differing levels of observed self-efficacy seen through observations and perceived self-efficacy explained in interviews. Rachel demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy in my observation of her: trying a new activity, calmly responding to student questions, and patiently redirecting students when needed. During independent work, she checked in with every student and used the same tone with every one of them, showing her belief in her ability to help every student learn the content. In her interviews, Rachel demonstrated high self-efficacy regarding her ability to learn and teach her content, especially in new and different ways, and in her ability to help and connect with every student. Dave demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy in his interviews, although his actions during his observation did not. Every time the room got loud with student voices, he reminded them to focus and pay attention, demonstrating that while he thought he had some ability to keep the class controlled and contained, he also felt as though he was not able to engage or teach them without quiet and visible signs of focus. Both in his observation and in his interview, he had high self-efficacy in content knowledge and pedagogy. However, his reported level of self-efficacy is so high that it leads him to avoid collaboration, experimentation with new strategies and activities, and inclusion of student voice in his classroom. My observation of Jerry consistently demonstrated his high levels of self-efficacy. He confidently gave thoughtful, immediate feedback to student work, and his high self-efficacy in classroom management was demonstrated through his ability and willingness to joke and relax with his large group of students. However, Jerry’s interviews were peppered with indications of low perceptions of self-efficacy. As he shared his journey into teaching, he consistently mentioned considering different careers because he did not think he would be successful in this specific role. He also discussed feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of the role, in his early years and now, demonstrating a moderate level of self-efficacy: He acknowledges the challenges of his position and has chosen to keep coming back.

DISCUSSION

All participants acknowledged strong connections between their perceived identities and their choices in the classroom. However, none of them explained clear or explicit connections between their identities and their responses to change. They perceived their change responses as connected to external factors, such as the purpose of the change or the potential impact of change on students, but were unaware of how their views of those factors were driven by their identities. These findings directly line up with the current literature on teacher identity: Teachers often accurately identify areas in which their identities directly connect with their practices but are frequently unaware of elements of their teaching that do not align with who they perceive themselves to be or what they claim to value (Ambusaidi, et al., 2021; Clarke, 2009; Cossentino, 2004; Donche & Van Petegem, 2011; Dotger & Smith, 2009; Heyd-Metzunaum, 2019; Kaplan, 1991; Raymond, 1997; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Spillane & Zeuli, 2016).

PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is one component of teacher identity that highlighted the disconnect between perceived identity and classroom choices in my study. I compared participants' performed self-efficacy as seen in my observations with their perceptions of their self-efficacy as demonstrated in their interviews. Rachel and Jerry, who stated lower levels of self-efficacy and self-efficacy that focused on their ability to learn and grow, demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy in the classroom than Dave, who reported higher levels of self-efficacy in terms of knowledge and a lack of questioning yet demonstrated lower self-efficacy in practice. While Dave has been teaching the longest out of the three participants and had the strongest reported sense of self-efficacy, he also demonstrated the lowest interest in learning about and implementing student-centered classroom activities such as students teaching other students or collaborating to solve problems, as well as the lowest observed self-efficacy in the classroom. While experience can prompt confidence and higher self-efficacy (Wheatley, 2002), the important distinction lies in whether experience-inspired self-efficacy is based on confidence that leads to eschewing reflection, help, or change, as is the case with Dave, or if that high self-efficacy is a reflection of teachers' increased awareness of their ability to continue growing and learning even when they make mistakes because of their capacity to reflect and see their areas of growth. This focus on self-efficacy and the connection between self-efficacy and classroom choices demonstrates the importance role of identity awareness and reflection on how or if teachers implement student-focused change in their classrooms. Rachel and Jerry, both of whom thoughtfully reflected on their identities and identity tensions, also demonstrated and shared their eagerness to grow, reflect, and change in their teaching practices. Dave engaged in identity reflection, but was much less willing or able to see the ways his identity tensions created conflicts in his teaching practice.

IMPLICATIONS

While teachers are frequently aware of the ways their identities guide their classroom decisions, they are often unaware of the areas in which their identities and their practices do not match (Ambusaidi, et al., 2021; Clarke, 2009; Cossentino, 2004; Donche & Van Petegem, 2011; Dotger & Smith, 2009; Heyd-Metzunaum, 2019; Kaplan, 1991; Raymond, 1997; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Spillane & Zeuli, 2016). However, teachers who reflect on their identities are more likely to acknowledge these identity tensions and consider their responses to change thoughtfully instead of rejecting proposed changes outright (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2009; Olsen

& Buchanan, 2019; Romylos, 2021); these reflective teachers may even report lower levels of self-efficacy (Settlage et al., 2009; Wheatley, 2002). Ironically, while agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy are essential parts of teaching and can enhance student achievement (Grasalfi & Cobb, 2011; Hong et al., 2018; Kelchtermans, 1996; Kennedy & Smith, 2013; Namaghi, 2009; Neumayer-DePiper, 2013), doubt and vulnerability are also necessary components of teacher growth and success (Hong et al., 2018; Lasky, 2005; Settlage, 2009; Wheatley, 2002). A certain amount of doubt can inspire reflection (Wheatley, 2002) and reflection is a necessary component of growth by inspiring awareness and acknowledgment of identity tension and prompting productive shifts in teaching practices based on those tensions (Olsen & Buchanan, 2019; Pinho, 2014; Romylos, 2021).

Teachers need to be given the space and freedom to doubt themselves; however, the capacity to doubt starts with teacher identity work (Beijaard et al., 2004; Clarke, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999). The current level of pressure and expectation on teachers leads many teachers, especially veteran educators like Dave to resist doubt, reflection, and change because they feel the need to present their significant content and pedagogy knowledge to the world (Hargreaves, 2005). However, teachers like Rachel and Jerry both implemented a significant amount of reflection and questioning into their work, enhancing the student-centered nature of their classes and the quality of their teaching. These differences in engaging with doubt and reflection lead these three teachers to have very different responses to external change: Rachel and Jerry, whose practice involves constant reflection and questioning, see change as an expected and often necessary part of their practice, while Dave fundamentally believes that change is something to get through before returning to the same classroom with the same students, year after year.

LIMITATIONS

One limitation of this study was my approach to participant sampling. While I used my background knowledge of colleagues' demographic data to make my participant selection as diverse as possible, it is possible that there were potential participants I missed because I did not know enough about them to consider requesting their participation. One of the inherent challenges in narrative methodology interviews is unpredictability and the potential challenge of asking participants to share information through stories instead of a more traditional question and answer interview (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2015). However, the potential benefits of seeing participants' perspectives of their identities and classroom choices through narrative outweigh these concerns: Although there were occasional moments of uncertainty in the interview process, participants had more room to share their honest experiences, underlying feelings, and perspectives in a narrative interview (Dwyer & emerald, 2016).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Teacher identity is a growing field of educational research that requires further study (Beijaard et al., 2004; Gee, 2000; Hong et al., 2018; Lutovac & Kaasila, 2017). The vast majority of the current research focuses on how teacher identity broadly plays a role in classroom decisions and in response to change. However, few studies have been conducted on how specific elements of identity, such as self-efficacy, impact those elements of teaching, especially in seasoned, not pre-service, teachers (Canrinus et al., 2011). Identity, as explained by dialogical self theory, is contextual, flexible, and consists of multiple overlapping elements that are constantly conflicting and collaborating, making the focus on one specific element of identity difficult as multiple elements lead to choices and perceptions at any given moment. However, this makes further

research into the ways components of teacher identity interact with teachers' choices and responses even more essential. Little research has been done, for example, on the role teaching contextual factors such as student age and content area play in determining teachers' senses of self-efficacy (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), or on the impacts of specific elements of teacher identity on teaching practices, such as the impact gratitude has on teaching choices. Future teacher identity research would also benefit from longer studies of specific teachers who participate in reflective identity work: Is identity work able to shift teachers' identities in ways that are accurately and objectively reflected in their classroom choices and responses to change? This study confirms the guiding role of teacher identity on classroom choices and responses to change and emphasizes the necessity of further research into how teachers can productively acknowledge and explore different components of their identities. It is only when teachers become aware of pieces of their identities and identity tensions that they can recognize the ways in which those identities are guiding their choices and feelings.

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