IF YOU CAN HEAR MY VOICE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY OF EIGHT FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

December 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the eight remarkable teachers who participated in the study. Thank you for sharing your experiences and for giving me the privilege to retell your stories. Mahalo to Jamie Simpson Steele, my committee chair, for being an inspiring colleague and mentor. You have taught me to be bold and to turn my thoughts into action. Thank you to Hunter McEwan and Anne Freese for planting the seeds of practitioner research and to Sarah Twomey for helping those seeds to grow. Mahalo to my friends and colleagues who held my hand and gently pushed me forward: Jennifer Padua, Rayna Fujii, Doreen Elliot and Stacy George, your humor and insight are priceless. Thank you to my friend and classmate, Joyce Yamada, for your wisdom and collaboration. It has been an honor to learn beside you. Also, thank you to Chanel Makepa-Wong, Angela Matian and Poki‘i Seto for being such amazing dissertation writing partners.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. To my parents, Russ and Nettie Tiffany, you are my heroes and taught me that anything is possible. Dad, I know you are looking down on me with pride. To my daughter, Kayte, thank you for your love and wisdom. You are my life’s greatest accomplishment. Finally, to my husband, Lon, my best friend and greatest fan, thank you for your belief and encouragement. I could not have done this without you.

ABSTRACT

The first year of teaching is a time of excitement, wonder and exploration. It can also be a time of uncertainty, doubt and survival. This qualitative study explores the questions, "What are the experiences of first-year elementary school teachers teaching in Hawai‘i public schools" and "What can be learned from these experiences?" The participants were eight first-year teachers who graduated from a teacher preparation program that followed a cohort model. The purpose of this study was to understand the participants' experiences as told through their stories. They shared their stories through semi-structured individual and focus-group interviews held throughout the academic year. This study employed a narrative inquiry approach to gain insight into their experiences and applied thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns across their stories. The theoretical framework of Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) Figured Worlds provided a lens for analyzing these stories. Findings suggest the experiences of these first-year teachers are impacted by their social and cultural interactions with their colleagues, mentors, students and parents which in turn played upon their self-efficacy and confidence. New teachers also are challenged by their workloads both in and out of the classroom, leading them to develop procedures and systems to manage their time and tasks. Based on these insights into the experiences of first-year teachers, this study calls for reimagining how we prepare teachers and how we support them during their early career years.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Crossing the Bridge

In May 2018, my cohort of elementary education teacher candidates graduated from the University of Hawai‘i and crossed the bridge from pre-service to classroom teacher. For two years I had been their instructor, coordinator, and advisor as they gained the knowledge, skills and dispositions to become teachers. The bridge metaphor is often used in educational research to describe deficits in new teachers' content knowledge and pedagogy or illustrate the disconnect between theory and practice (Allsopp et al., 2006; Farrell, 2012). New teacher studies use the phrase "bridging the gap" to describe the "reality shock" of first-year teachers and the efforts of induction and mentoring programs to ease beginning teachers into their new roles (Veenman, 1984; Koetsier, 1995). Korthagen (2008) describes the gap as occurring between professional cultures and calls for the need to build collaborative communities of researchers and practitioners to deepen learning through a practical focus. Farrell (2012) also discusses bridging the gap and suggests a "tripartite collaboration" (p. 439) of novice teachers, inservice teachers and school administrators to transition emerging educators from teacher preparation to their first year of teaching.

However, in a paper prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Teacher Education, Griffin (1984) chose to deviate from this language believing it had an "implicit negative connotation" (p. 2) that focused on deficits and tensions. He took a more optimistic tone to write about the new teacher experience and used "crossing the bridge" to evoke a positive, optimistic image to discuss programs that stengthen "the professional power of new teachers" (p.

2). Crossing the bridge suggests a journey driven by interest, motivation, determination and commitment.

I have both participated in and observed crossing the bridge from pre-service to classroom teacher. After graduating from a teacher preparation program, I was hired to teach in the same school where I had completed my internship. I remember stepping into my first classroom, attending my first faculty meeting and holding my first parent-teacher conferences. I recall feeling a mixture of angst, excitement and anticipation. But with time comes distance and while I remember having those feelings, I can no longer access them; it is as if they belong to someone else.

Today, as a teacher educator, I hear the same mixture of emotions in my students' voices as they graduate from their program, apply for jobs, interview for positions and get hired. They reveal eagerness and worry through phone conversations and text messages and for a brief moment, I remember how it feels to be in their shoes. But as a teacher educator, this is where the story ends. Most new teachers have no further contact with their university instructors after graduation (Farrell, 2012). University faculty may know where their graduates are hired but have limited or no knowledge about their experiences as first-year teachers. Meanwhile, new teachers begin their careers and quickly become immersed in lesson planning, instruction, assessment, classroom management and a myriad of other non-instructional responsibilities. They work to understand and navigate their school cultures, each with their unique histories, protocols and procedures.

A few years ago I ran into a beginning teacher at an education conference who was halfway through his first year in the classroom and clearly overwhelmed. He said he that he missed being at the university and wondered if he should return to take a class. He explained, "I

have forgotten who I am or what I believe in. At least when I was in the [teacher preparation] program, I knew." What happened in just five months that led to this question? What had he experienced that brought such uncertainty and wondering? At the same conference, I spoke to another first-year teacher . She said that in many ways teaching was much easier than being at the university. She agreed that she had a mountain of work to do and everything moved at a very quick pace but emphatically added, "At least I am in charge. I get to set my own own deadlines and decide what gets done when. Of course there's a lot to keep up with, but the day-to-day is all on me." What were these two teachers experiencing that led to such different perceptions? How might these experiences impact their emerging identities, self-efficacy and their longevity in the profession?

This study follows the journey of eight first-year teachers who crossed the bridge from teacher candidacy to classroom teacher in Hawai‘i public schools. The participants belonged to a two-year teacher licensure program in elementary education; the program is constructed around a cohort model where teacher candidates take methods courses and attend field experience with a core group of undergraduates. During the program, candidates developed a strong support system and came to rely on one another to navigate coursework, overcome academic hurdles and tackle personal stresses. They also gathered to celebrate cohort milestones and personal accomplishments. As one candidate explained, the experience gave them "a place of belonging and acceptance."

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, I use the following definitions:

- Beginning/new teacher: classroom teachers in their first year of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001)

- Early career teacher: classroom teachers with 1-3 years of teaching experience (Feiman-Nemser, 2001)
- Career entry years: first 3 years of teaching (Huberman, 1989, 1993)
- Teacher candidate: an undergraduate enrolled in a teacher licensure program at a four-year university
- Field placement: the classroom in which teacher candidates complete their practicum towards licensure
- Field experience: opportuinities for teacher candidates to observe and apply teaching competencies
- Cohort coordinator: counselor and advisor for teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher licensure program
- Teacher attrition rate: the percentage of teachers leaving the profession in a given school year (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017)
- Professional identity: one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004)
- Self-efficacy: belief in one's own ability to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment (Bandura, 1997)

Overview of the Study

The first years of teaching are a time of discovery, adaptation, learning and survival. As Feiman-Nemser (2001) describes, it is "an intense and formative time in learning to teach, influencing not only whether people remain in teaching but what kind of teacher they become" (p. 1026). New teachers bring to their practice beliefs about who they are and the kind of teacher they hope to be. Novices enter teaching with a sense of purpose and self that continues to be

molded by their complex social and professional interactions within school cultures and communities. New teachers also face personal concerns of control, adequacy, learning and acceptance. While becoming a new teacher involves the development of a professional identity and forming a professional practice, these processes often come into conflict with competing images, perceptions and experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

I came to this research hoping to learn more about the new teacher experience and to understand the relationship of this experience to my graduates' decisions to remain in teaching, pursue advanced degrees, change schools or leave the profession. My interest was driven by articles I had read on recruitment and retention within the context of my position as a teacher educator. I was concerned that teacher attrition rates had increased in the United States by one-third since 1997 (Gray & Taie, 2015) and that approximately 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2012). On a local level, the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) reported a retention rate in school year 2017-18 of 54% five years after hire.

My interest turned to frustration in 2016 when the Hawai‘i teacher shortage made national headlines as HIDOE ramped up its efforts to recruit teachers on the continent. News articles appeared portraying teaching in Hawai‘i as an extended vacation. Women's Day Magazine (2016) featured an article titled "Hawai‘i Wants to Pay you $60,000 to Work in Paradise" and invited readers to scroll through images of seascapes, sunsets, and a woman lounging in a hammock. The article ends with:

> So if creating a lesson plan while kicking back in a hammock under a palm tree sounds like a dream come true, head to Hawai‘i's State Department of Education, and learn more about how you can apply for the job of a lifetime. The beach awaits you. (p. 6)

Teaching in Hawai‘i was portrayed as an opportunity to live in paradise while the need to recruit highly qualified teachers was muted.

That same year, the University of Hawai‘i College of Education (UHM-COE) looked for ways to change the public’s perception of teaching and uplift the profession. In 2017, UHM-COE partnered with Kai Media to launch the "Be a hero. Be a teacher" campaign to address Hawai‘i’s teacher shortage. The campaign targeted high school and college students as well as working professionals to consider a career in teaching

As the need to recruit and retain teachers grew, I was troubled by the way teaching was portrayed and offended by the work of teachers being reduced to a leisurely activity with heroic intent. Current literature on early career teachers examines singular topics such as retention, identity or induction, however the collective experiences of first-year teachers and the stories behind them remain absent. In response, I initiated this qualitative study to inform Hawai‘i’s educators, policy makers and program developers so they may ask the right questions and strategically plan how to support teachers, decrease attrition and promote professional growth and leadership. To do so, I employed a narrative inquiry approach to follow the professional journeys of eight first-year teachers as told through their stories while they unfold in real time.

However, as is the nature of narrative inquiry, the purpose may change as the research progresses (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). While I became situated in the research, I also became situated within the stories of my participants. I saw myself in the past, present and future and learned to “work through the complexities that need to be negotiated: negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating transitions and negotiating ways to be useful” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 63). My role in the research, my place in the stories and my privilege of retelling these stories reshaped the purpose of this study. While the implications of

this research may indeed contribute to educational policy making and program development, the core purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of eight first-year teachers, my former teacher candidates, as told through their stories. Although I gathered their stories real time (close to the actual time in which the event occured), I present them nested within other stories from other times or with other people, including myself as teacher and researcher.

The Role of the Researcher

My role in the research and my relationship to the participants is an integral part of this study. I bring both the insider's perspective (emic) and outisder's view (etic) (Merriam, 2009). Currently, I am a teacher educator or, more specifically, a cohort coordinator in an elementary education program. As a coordinator, I teach and advise teacher candidates during their two-year teacher licensure program. I supervise them in their field placements which includes formal and informal observations with specific feedback to guide them towards demonstrating teacher competencies. I also conduct field seminars in which we discuss educational topics, field experiences and their emerging philosophies of teaching. My interactions with my cohort are more frequent and personal than a typical university professor. We communicate several times a week, including evenings and weekends, either face-to-face or by email, phone call, web conference or text message.

I work closely with the teacher candidates in my cohort from their first day in the program through graduation. Together we examine and scrutinize their instruction, classroom management, dispositions and professionalism. I also help them to manage their personal stresses and balance their lives in and out of the program. We often talk about overall wellness and self-care such as eating and sleeping habits and relationships with family and friends. The result of

these interactions is an extended paradigm of faculty/student relationships. It is personal, intimate, complex and a critical part of the teacher preparation program.

The participants in this study are graduates from one of my cohorts. I leveraged our existing relationships to create a space for them to share their stories and to earn the privilege of retelling their stories. The familiarity and prior knowledge we have of one another opened doors to conversations that may have taken outsiders months to open, if ever. We spent two years working along side one another as they pursued their education degrees and created a relationship of trust and mutual respect.

Prior to becoming a teacher educator, I was an elementary school teacher in Hawai‘i public schools. I began teaching in 1995 until joining the faculty at the University of Hawai‘i in 2013. The Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) is a close-knit community with a unique culture, sub-cultures practices and philosophies. I have observed and experienced the informal induction processes for new teachers who must learn the discourse, protocols and nuances of their school communities. I have experienced the challenges of system-wide changes to instruction, assessment and grading and have celebrated the successes of professional development and student achievement.

Both my teacher candidates and HIDOE mentors acknowledge and value my teaching experience. Course evaluations and mentor teacher surveys often mention their appreciation for the “real life experiences” I bring to my work with teacher candidates. These experiences provide a context for understanding the stories of the participants of this study. They help me to connect to their experiences and empathize with the range of emotions that come with them. Several times during the research process the participants would make comments such as “you know how it is” as if my experiences bring validity to their stories.

My insider's perspective also applies to my relationship with my participants. I had known and worked with them for two years prior to this study as their cohort coordinator and instructor. As previously discussed, my interactions with them were more frequent and personal than a typical university professor. Over the course of their pre-service program we had numerous conversations about their philosophy of teaching, their perceptions about who they are as educators and their goals for future growth. I stood beside them as they experienced challenges and realized success. By the time this study was launched we knew each other well, both professionally and personally.

Yet, in spite of my experience in teaching and my role as cohort coordinator, I also came to this study with an outsider's view. I had not been a HIDOE teacher in six years. I was no longer immersed in the community; I was, as my former colleague tells me, a "visitor." I no longer had the perspective of an in-service teacher and had no true understanding of what they were currently experiencing. While I could empathize with their stories, I no longer shared their lived experiences.

In that same respect, my positionality with my participants shifted to an outsider's view. When this study began, the participants were newly graduated from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). Their identity and our interactions reflected a teacher candidate/cohort coordinator dynamic. However, this changed as the participants accepted teaching positions and established themselves as classroom teachers. Their time and interests shifted from university student to professional educator. In that same regard, the structure of our relationship also shifted. Whereas I once took the lead and held somewhat of a power position in our work together, this paradigm shifted as the participants role as teacher candidates faded and their emerging identities as teachers bloomed. As I wrote in my field journal, "I wonder if when we

started they felt obligated to participate – as if they owed me. But things have changed. Their priorities and how they spend their time has definitely changed" (April, 2019).

My work as a teacher educator also contributes to my positionality in this study. While I am collecting the stories of former teacher candidates/first-year teachers, I am concurrently teaching and advising a new group of teacher candidates. My experiences in these two spaces undoubtedly intertwine and I have had to consciously bracket my biases so as to remain focused on the purpose of this study and not be derailed by opportunity to grow and change my own practice. I will discuss more about the impact my positionality on this study in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding the lived experience through stories (Hatch, 2002; Clandinin, 2013). It is an approach that honours lived experiences as sources of knowledge, understanding and meaning. This study uses a narrative inquiry appoach to explore these research questions:

1. What are the experiences of first-year elementary school teachers teaching in Hawai‘i public schools?
2. What can be learned from the stories of these experiences?

Overview of Paper Organization

The remainder of this study is divided into four chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the topic of new teacher studies in the areas of attrition of early career teachers, transition from pre-service to classroom teacher and tensions in teacher identity. Chapter 3 describes the research design, methodology and theoretical frameworks for this study. Chapter 4 describes and presents the stories of new teachers lived experiences. Chapter 5 analyzes the findings, shares implications and presents conclusions on the findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the existing research and literature provides a historical background, current context, theoretical underpinnings and related research in the field. To support this study I have reviewed literature in following areas: a) attrition of early career teachers; b) transition from pre-service to in-service teacher; and c) tensions in professional identity of early career teachers.

Attrition of early career teachers

Since 1984, increases in student enrollment and teacher retirements have contributed to the growing need for teachers nationwide. Ingersoll (2003) explains that a larger part of the problem is teacher attrition. About 90% of the nationwide annual demand for teachers is created when teachers leave the profession, with two-thirds of teachers leaving for reasons other than retirement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Goldring and Riddoes, 2014), teacher attrition rates have increased in the United States by one-third in the past 20 years. Attrition of new teachers is particularly high with 40-50 percent of all beginning teachers leaving the profession within the first five years. Moreover, attrition rates of early career teachers have increased by about one-third since 2002 (Ingersoll, 2012).

Who is leaving the profession and why? Deangelis and Presley (2011) describe the demographics of teachers who leave the profession during their early career years. Female teachers are more likely to leave teaching than male teachers although the difference has decreased in recent yeears. Teachers who enter the profession at a younger age are also more likely to leave and high school teachers are more likely to leave the profession than elementary school teachers. Deangelis and Presley report that one of the most consistent findings in a

number of studies in regard to attrition of early career teachers is in relation to teacher's academic skills as evidenced by test scores and certification exams. Teachers with stronger academic qualifications leave the profession at higher rates than teachers with weaker qualifications.

A report from the National Center for Education Statistics (Goldring and Riddles, 2017) identified the causes for attrition of new teachers. They include: a) family or personal reasons (42%); b) pursuit of another job (38.8%); c) dissatisfaction (28.9%); and d) school staffing action (18.9%). A second survey was to the 29% who indicated dissatisfaction was their leaving the profession to determine what was the cause of their dissatisfaction. Responders cited dissatisfaction with: a) school administration; b) lack of influence on school decision making; c) facilities and resources; d) assessment and accountability mesasures; e) working conditions; f) teaching as a career.

In a review of the research on teacher retention, Schaefer, Long and Clandinin (2012) categorize the reasons for early career attrition into problems related to individual factors and problems related to contextual factors. Individual factors include burnout, reslience, personal demographics and personal factors such as family. Contextual factors include support, salary, professional development, collaboration, nature of the context, student issues and teacher education. While teacher attrition is characterized as a particular event, the research suggests attrition is "a process negotiated over time" (p. 115). They describe much of the research on teacher attrition as stripping away the experiences of those involved to look at the *why* of leaving. Schaefer et al (2012) suggest that the conversations shift to include the new teacher experiences in order to discover how they can be sustained and retained.

Studies on teacher retention and attrition show a correlation between teacher attrition and student achievement (Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2017) write that “teacher turnover takes a toll on schools and students” (p. 1). Teacher attrition is the primary contributor to teacher shortages. Schools often respond to teacher shortages by hiring unqualified teachers or increasing class sizes. This can negatively impact the the quality of teaching and learning (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). Strong evidence for a causal relationship between teacher attrition and student achievement comes a quantitative study by Ronfeldt, Loeb and Wycoff (2013). The authors examine the effects of teacher turnover on more than 600,000 New York City 4th and 5th grade students and find student achievement scores in Math and ELA were lower in grade levels with higher teacher attrition.

Teacher attrition also disrupts school stability, collegial collaboration and the accumulation of institutional knowledge. As Guin (2004) explains, teacher turnover impacts “a school’s ability to function as an organization” (p. 2). It impedes their ability to instill trust and instructional cohesiveness that is necessary for student achievement. Similarly, Ingersoll‘s (2001) findings indicate that the disruption caused by teacher attrition can negatively impact the quality of the school community and the performance of its teachers and students.

Transition from pre-service to in-service teacher

In his classic study of novice teachers, Veenman (1984) describes "reality shock‘" a concept used "to indicate the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life" (p. 143). Farrell (2012) suggests new teachers often have a feeling of isolation in their first year. They have no further contact with their teacher educators as they struggle to face the same day to day challenges as their experienced colleagues, often with minimal support. Lesson planning, lesson implementation,

assessment, classroom management and identity development require teachers to transition the knowledge and skills they gained in their teacher preparation programs to new academic, social and professional contexts.

Feimen-Nemser (2003) also describes the challenges new teachers face when they leave their university programs and take on the same responsibilities of their experienced colleageus. New teachers are usually hired just weeks before the school year begins and can become overwhelmed by classroom set-up, new teacher meetings, and new curriculum as they prepare for their first day with students. Beginning teachers are met with an avalanche of "newness" beyond curriculum -- physical space, relationships, responsibilities and priorities. Feinmen-Nemser (2003) describes the "learning agenda" of the new teacher that includes "legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the contexts of teaching" (p. 26).

The literature on transitioning from pre-service to classroom teacher research suggests two approaches towards addressing challenges faced by new teachers. One is to “bridge the gap” by restructuring teacher preparation programs, strengthening university-school partnerships, creating networks of professional development schools and connecting coursework with field experiences. This approach also recommends a seamless continuum of mentoring support from pre-service to new teacher induction. A second approach, closely tied to the continuum concept is to strengthen induction and mentoring programs for new teachers within their school communities.

Tensions in professional identity of new teachers

Understanding the complexities surrounding teacher identity and its development has emerged as a focus of educational research in teacher education and new teacher studies. Identity tension is a lens through which to examine teachers’ sense of belonging, acceptance, resilience

and self-efficacy. In a review of the literature on teacher education that emphasizes the importance of identity, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) found that teachers experience a shift in identity as they move from pre-service programs to school communities. This change in context from university community to school community challenges their sense of self and "implies multiple tensions as adaptations and adjustments to identity are necessitated or provoked" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011, p. 6). New teachers experience what Pearce (2011) refers to as "cognitive dissonance" (p. 54). She cites Galman (2009) who describes this phenomenon as the conflict that arises when individuals experience opposing thoughts. New teachers often question their knowledge, beliefs and practices as their realities of teaching are adapted and accommodated to social and cultural influences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Freese, 2006; Pearce 2011).

McNally and Blake (2012) explain that the formation of professional identity for new educators reflects the intrinsic relational nature of teaching. It is grounded in the relationship between teacher and students from which new teachers gain confidence from being acknowledged and valued. Colleagues also form perceptions of new teachers based on the teacher's interactions with students and the academic performance and behavior of the students in the class. McNally and Blake (2012) describe the transition from pre-service to classroom teacher as "ontological rather than epistemological" (p. 203). Teacher identities are formed from the observations and reflections of changes teachers make in their new roles rather than from "naïve notions of applying knowledge or about learning techniques or skills" (McNally & Blake, 2012, p. 203).

McNally and Blake (2012) discuss tensions shared in the personal stories of new teachers who "struggle with the self, a self that is transforming into a teacher" (p. 204). As one participant

explained, “You have to give of yourself but not be yourself.” New teachers are often challenged by the need for acceptance and approval by their school communities while navigating their transformation and development.

Beijaard et al. (2004) describe teacher identity as a “complex and dynamic equilibrium where professional self-image is balanced with a variety of roles teachers feel that they have to play” (p. 113). Teachers struggle to make sense of competing perspectives of roles and expectations situated within their developing understanding of and induction into their learning communities. Teachers experience tensions between agency (the personal dimensions in teaching) and structure (the social ‘given’) as they feel the push and pull of advocating for an identity that is socially legitimated (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Existing research and literature on the new teacher expereience describe the early career years of teaching as a challenging time. New teachers face identity tensions as they transition from teacher candidacy to classroom teacher. These tensions, along with other job dissatisfaction, change of careers and family or personal reasons, contribute to 40-50% of new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years. Further research is needed to understand how to reduce tensions, increase job satisfaction and improve teacher retention.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

If you can hear my voice, clap once!

(Clap!)

If you can hear my voice, clap twice!

(Clap, clap!)

In elementary classrooms across the state, teachers use this familiar strategy to gather students' attention and engage them in learning. It signals the need to pause, listen for important information and take action. It also suggests that teachers have stories to tell and knowledge to convey. I use the term "stories" to describe these interactions because, as Bleakley (2005) explains, "narrative means 'to know' and storytelling involves knowledge production and shaping of experience, not simply transparent recounting of events" (p. 535).

We learn about experiences through stories. When asking a colleague about their work or a friend about a recent vacation, we do not give them surveys or Likert scales to quantify their experiences. Instead we pause to listen to their stories in order to connect and understand. Similarly, teachers need their voices to be heard both in and out of the classroom. The knowledge they share and the stories they tell can transform audiences -- and the storytellers themselves.

Research is a relational endeavor that honors the voices, settings, and knowledge of the objects of study (Patel, 2016). Qualitative research places the researcher in the world that is studied in order to understand how people make sense of their lives (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). I employed a narrative inquiry approach to gain insight into the lived experiences of first-year teachers. I listened to their stories as they unfolded in real time to discover the meaning they

bring to these experiences. As both the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 2009) and as a researcher nested within these stories, my positionality and values contribute to the research. This qualitative study therefore emphasizes relationships, reflexivity, and wholeness.

Reflexivity

As discussed in Chapter 1, my positionality in the research and my relationship to the participants are integral to this study. It gives me access to and understanding of the participants' stories. How might my positionality influence this study? Finlay (1998) explains that if positionality refers to our knowledge and beliefs, reflexivity describes what we do with this knowledge. Reflexivity is the researcher's continuous reflection of how he or she is situated within the study and how this may influence the outcome (Dowling, 2008; Finlay, 1998). It is a continuous, conscious, self-aware analysis of the researcher's role in all aspects of the study including participant recruitment, data collection, and interpretation of the data. As the research study is built, researchers engage in reflection and reflective analysis to understand their own motivations, assumptions, and interests and to identify how they may impact the direction of the research and its outcomes (Finlay, 1998; 2002).

Reflexivity also acknowledges the reciprocal nature of the researcher-participant relationship and calls to question the neutrality of that relationship. The researcher and participants "become partners in the research endeavor" (p. 2) and the researchers own experiences and reflections intertwine with that of that of the participants to make meaning ("Reflexivity: Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods," 2008). Throughout this study, I practiced reflexivity through audio journaling, particularly during the data collection process. Before and after each interview, I reviewed the purpose of this study as it relates to my position as a teacher educator, reflected on my relationship with each participant and recalled the

experiences they had as teacher candidates. I considered how these interactions and experiences may buffer or filter the stories they shared as well as influence my interpretations of their stories. The participants also engaged in reflective analysis during our interviews, pausing at times to question themselves or to reveal a personal insight. While I acknowledge that I am a central figure nested in the participants' stories, I firmly believe that these are not my stories and I am not a participant in this study. I made a true effort to capture their lived experiences. If there is bias, it is in my belief in the authenticity of their voices and in my ability to hear their stories as they intended.

Values

In her introduction to *Decolonizing Educational Research*, Patel (2016) discuss taking deep pauses in the course of her writing as a "productive interruption to these competitive ways of being, doing and knowing" (p. 1). Similarly, I find it necessary to pause and discuss the values that guide my study and shape my research design. In this section, I detail the values I bring as a researcher to this study and how they shaped my engagement with my participants and their stories.

Establishing Relations of Care

From the onset of my doctoral program, advisors and former EdD graduates suggested to our cohort that we select a research topic that we love – one that we truly care about. My passion is teaching and the strength of my teaching is in my relations of care. Noddings (2012) identifies reciprocity and mutality as the importance of the caried for's reality. The carer observes and listens attentively to understand the cared-for's reality. The focus is not on the merit or work of the carer but on the needs and interests of the cared-for. I worked to position care as the motivator for this study and for my interactions with my participants. It was important that they

not see themselves merely as research subjects serving a purpose for my own agenda. I made a sincere effort to extend the caring relationship that we had established during their preservice program into the work for this project. I worked to make my intentions clear – that I care about them and the profession they have entered. I care about the influence they have on my practice while under my care and about their success and wellness after I have released them from my care.

Aloha and Kuleana

As a Hawaiian scholar conducting research in Hawai‘i, I honor this place and acknowledge the values of *aloha* (love) and *kuleana* (responsibility) that are embedded in my work. A characteristic of narrative inquiry is that the researcher needs to find many places, in and out of the research setting, to explain what they do and to bring clarity to their work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My family, who are not educators, have become what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as my "response community" (p. 73). Over family dinners, I have shared my research process, my need to excercise care and my sense of obligation to the profession. While I wondered how much they were listening to my monologue, they surprised me by responding that aloha and kuleana are truly what is driving my work. I bring aloha, a loving presence to this study and am moved by kuleana, a responsibility and privilege to retell the stories of these first year teachers. I also carry kuleana to other groups and individuals that are woven into these stories: former and current colleagues, partnership schools and former and current teacher candidates.

Ho‘okahe Wai

Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua (2016) tells the story of student who talks aout *ho‘okahe wai* (to cause the waters to flow) as one of her favorite tasks at the lo‘i (taro patch). Ho‘okahe wai

involves cleaning leaves, rocks and branches from the water ways to strengthen the natural steady flow of the water that strengthens and feeds the loʻi. As Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (2016) explains, clearing the waterway parallels the journey of self-discovery and clearing out the blockages, tensions and "everyday sediment of life" (p. 12). I have come to realize that during my doctoral studies, I have worked in the loʻi three to fourtimes a year either with my cohort, faculty or family. Coincidentally, the task I usually do is hoʻokahe wai.

I value the time needed to remove obstacles and blockages in order to bring strength and sustainability to who we are and the work we do. In this study, I was conscious of the time needed by participants to veer from our interview in order to tackle issues they were having either personally or professionally. At times they were apologetic for getting "off track," but I assured them that talking through these tensions is a healthy part of the process and a critical part of their stories. Similarly, I made a true effort to be conscious of my own obstacles and blockages that might disrupt the flow of the research. I set aside my need to validate or strengthen my practice as a teacher educator so that the participants could speak freely and hoʻokahe wai. And finally, I hope that this study will hoʻokahe wai for new teachers to strengthen their pathway as they begin their professional journeys.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is informed by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) Figured Worlds. In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Holland, et al (1998) describe figured worlds as **"**socially produced, culturally constituted activities'' (pp. 40–41). Drawing from the work of Vygotsky and Bhaktin, Holland et al. describe identity and self as being socially constructed through our relationships and communications with others. Through

these processes and activities and within the embedded social types and positions of power, people develop identities while impacting the worlds in which they are situated.

Holland et al. define four characteristics of figured worlds: a) figured worlds are historical phenomena to which we enter or are recruited into and develop through the work of the participants. Figured worlds are not objects but rather processes or transitions that give us form as we intersect with them; b) figured worlds are social encounters in which positions of the participants are significant. Activities of figured worlds are socially instanced and located in particular times and places which give them meaning and relevance; c) figured worlds are socially organized and reproduced as people learn to relate to one another through their sorted roles and through these interactions perpetuate the figured world; d) figured worlds distribute people by relating them to "landscapes of action" (p. 41). Worlds are populated by people of related roles while "giving the landscape human voice and tone" (p. 41).

As Urietta (2013) explains, figured worlds are socially organized and form as our lives intersect with them. There are some worlds based on our social rank or position that we may never enter, worlds which we may deny entry to others and worlds we may enter only temporarily or peripherally (Urietta 2013). In educational research, the framework of figured worlds has been used to study identity production in sociocultural constructs.

As the participants of this study shared their stories, they were making meaning of who they are as emerging educators and constructing teacher identities situated within the figured worlds described by Holland et al. (1998). As their worlds impacted their identity so did they impact the worlds in which they are situated. The theoretical framework of figured worlds provides a lens for understanding the complex exchange between historical context, social interactions, organizational structures and the understanding of self.

Research Design

As Clandinin (2006) explains, lived and told stories help us create meaning in our lives and connect with ourselves and others. Stories are a "portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). This qualitiative study uses a narrative inquiry approach to examine the storied lives of first-year teachers.

Clandinin (2006) describes narrative inquiry as being rooted in Dewey's (1938) concept of experience. Clandinin (2000) describes a three-dimension narrative inquiry space that includes interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present and future) and place (situation). Experience is both personal and social. While people need to be understood as individuals, they exist within a social context. Experiences also have continuity: they arise from previous experiences and lead to future experiences. In addition, experiences are situated within a place or community.

Narrative inquiry is a study of experiences as story. As Haydon et al. (2018) explains narrative inquiry is an exploration of "the experience of an individual and how their physical, social, and cultural environment impacts and shapes their individual experiences" (p. 126). It is a means for new teachers to "reflect on and learn from their beliefes, values, instructional practices, and professional environment" (Schreff, 2008, p. 1320). As a narrative inquirer, I am not bracketed outside of the study, but rather am positioned within, to "both shape and [be] shaped by the landscape" (Clandinin, 2006, p.47).

Sharing experiences through stories was part of the participants learning landscape during their teacher preparation program. In seminars, I invited teacher candidates to share stories of their field experiences which we used as talking points for understanding instructional practice,

solving challenges in the classroom or exploring ideas and wonderings. I too shared stories from my own teaching experiences not only to reinforce course content but to highlight commonalities among our experiences. Storytelling was often a spontaneous, reciprocal process with constantly shifting rules of engagement that proved to be mutually beneficial to its participants.

To gather data for this study, I did not use a survey or structured observations to learn about the first-year teaching experiences of the participants. Instead, I looked to capture the authenticity of their experiences through their stories. I leveraged our relationships and our familiarity with one another to engage in a series of semi-structured interviews that provided a space for their stories to be told and their voices to be heard.

Participant Description and Recruitment

The participants in this study were eight first-year teachers who graduated from a teacher preparation program in elementary education. This two-year program was one of nine pathways for teacher licensure in the College of Education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, a Research 1 land grant university. Graduates earn a bachelor’s degree in education with recommendation for licensure for general education, grades K-6. The program uses a cohort model where teacher candidates take methods courses and attend field experience with a core group of undergraduates and are advised by a cohort coordinator. Field experience occurs over three semesters where candidates work with a teacher mentor in an elementary classroom for two days a week. Candidates are formally and informally observed by field supervisors. I was the cohort coordinator for the participants of this study. As cohort coordinator I served as advisor, field supervisor and instructor.

During their field experience, teacher candidates observe, assist, co-teach and lead instruction with a gradual release of responsibility. In their fourth and final semester, teacher

candidates transition into student teaching which includes a three-week solo period. During this time, student teachers assume full responsibility for the classroom with periodic visitations by their mentor and field supervisor. Student teachers are evaluated using college-wide assessments that measure their teaching competencies and professional dispositions.

Prior to this study, I guided total of 13 candidates in one cohort. After graduation, four candidates left the state to teach abroad. The inclusion criteria for this study as approved by the Institutional Review Board was that participants must be full-time teachers in a kindergarten through sixth grade setting and must have a state teaching license in the field of elementary education. The candidates who accepted teaching positions abroad did not meet the criteria. One candidate expressed interest in participating in the study, however he had difficulty scheduling times for interviews and eventually stopped responding to interview requests.

Table 1 shows the key participant demographics. At the time of this study, all participants were teachers in public elementary schools on the island of Oʻahu in the state of Hawaiʻi. They accepted teaching positions during the summer following graduation and began teaching from the first day of the 2018-2019 academic year. Seven participants were hired as general education classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth. One participant was hired as a special education resource teacher in elementary for grades 3 through 6. The participants were of various ages and ethnicities; all participants were female.

Table 1

Key Participant Demographics (all names are pseudonyms)

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Grade(s)	Classroom Setting	School Characteristics
Taylor	Korean	26	5	General Education	Urban
Kayla	Caucasian	24	1	General Education	Rural

Jessica	Filipino	24	2	General Education	Rural
Alyssa	Japanese	22	1	General Education	Rural
Ashley	Chinese	22	4	General Education	Rural
Emily	Japanese	24	1	General Education	Rural
Samantha	Japanese	22	4 - 6	Special Education	Urban
Jennifer	Japanese-Caucasian	48	1	General Education	Rural

Recruitment for this study began teaching in August 2018, shortly after the beginning of the academic year. I contacted participants about this study via email. Those who were interested in participating responded via email, phone call or text messages. I held individual meetings with each participant to discuss the study, the terms of participation and consent forms. I informed participants that there would be no compensation for particpation and that they could determine the time and place to meet within the scheduled window for interviews.

Data Collection

In November 2018 and April 2019, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews to coincide with the ending of the first and third quarter of the academic year. I held focus group interviews in February 2019 and July 2019 to coincide with the end of the second quarter and the end of the academic year. For both individual and focus group interviews, I built on emerging themes and made connections to previous interviews as well as to their pre-service teaching experience. Examples of questions from the semi-structured individual interviews are: 1) What were your thoughts and feelings the first time you entered the classroom? and 2) Tell me about something you have learned about yourself personally or professionally this past academic year. Examples of questions from the focus group interviews are: 1) What metaphor would you use to describe your teacher self? and 2) How do you think others view you as an educator? How is this similar to or different from how you view yourself? I also asked participants to

examine artifacts from their pre-service program and reflect on their professional growth and philosophical beliefs.

The participants selected the time and place for each of the interviews. For the individual interviews, all but one participant asked to meet at a coffee shop; one participant asked to meet at my office at the University of Hawai‘i. To accomodate the participants' schedules, I divided the focus group interviews into two sub-meetings; one sub-meeting was held in-person at the College of Education the other was conducted via web conference. The average time for the individual interviews was 45 minutes. The average time for the focus group interviews was one hour and 15 minutes. I audio recorded and transcribed each interview, then emailed transcripts of the individual interviews and focus group interviews to participants for member checks with offers for hard copies upon request. Table 2 shows the number of participants per data collection segment and indicates that attrition occurred during the study. One participant stopped responding to emails after the first individual interview. Three participants reported through email that they did not participate in the final focus group interview because they had difficulty making time in their schedules.

Table 2

Number of Participants per Data Collection Segment

Segment	Participants
Individual Interview #1	8
Focus Group Interview #1	7
Individual Interview #2	7
Focus Group Interview #2	4

Coding and Data Analysis

Bleakley (2005) describes narrative analysis as processes that synthesize experience and ideas through stories. A cognitive-oriented method employs an analytical mindset to derive categories from raw data and apply them back to the narrative to make meaning and draw conclusions. Bleakey (2005) describes this as *thinking about the story*. An affective-oriented method of analysis, on the other hand, calls for a holistic and integrative understanding where the researcher captures and retells the elements of the stories that would otherwise be lost in a structural or statistical approach. Bleakley (2005) explains this approach as *thinking with stories* that requires a researcher who can synthesize and has a developed narrative competence. To analyze the stories in this study, I applied Bleakley's affective-oriented approach and employed a thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within stories (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis describes pattterns (themes) across qualitative data and can be used to both "reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality" (p. 81). A theme captures important points about the data in relation to the research question and the purpose of the study. It represents a patterned response across the data. For this study, I adopted a constructionist approach (Burr, 1995) and used latent themes to reach beyond the the semantic content of the participants' stories. I examined the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations that shape or inform the semantic content (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Burr (1995) describes a constructionist approach as one where meaning and experience are socially produced rather than manifested in the individual. This approach aligns to the theoretical framework used for this study that describes the development of identity and self as being socially constructed through our relationships and communications with others (Holland et al., 1998).

I used the six phases for thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) (Table 3) to guide my analysis. This approach to analysis is a not a linear process of moving step-by-step through the phases but rather a recursive process of moving back and forth as needed to organize data and make meaning.

Table 3

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if themes work in relation to the code extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Reprinted from Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

To familiarize myself with the data, I used a number of organizational strategies. I kept an audio journal to record my initial impressions immediately following the interviews. Table 4 shows samples of the audio journal. These audio journals allowed me to document responses and behaviors that may not have been conveyed or evident in the transcripts.

Table 4

Samples of Audio Journal

Participant	Interview/Focus Group	Transcript
Alyssa	Individual #1	*[Participant's name] is having a hard time in her classroom. When I sat down, I simply asked her how she was doing. he spent about 20 – 25 minutes telling me about problems she was having with a student in her class and with one of her grade level colleagues. I wasn't sure if I should offer advice or just listen.*
Samantha	Individual #2	*She seems to enjoy teaching special ed. Maybe she has found her niche. She smiles a lot and talks with much more confidence than she used to.*
Kayla	Individual #1	*After our interview Kayla invited me to come see her classroom. It's nearby where we were meeting. She was so excited! She walked me through her centers and told me how and why she set up each space. She was pretty excited in her interview but even more excited to show me her classroom.*

I made a true effort to become close to the participants' stories to mirror the close relationships I had with the storytellers. I repeatedly listened to the audio recordings of their interviews, without engaging in notetaking or coding. My aim was to have uninterrupted space to hear the voices and subtle nuances of the participants. I immersed myself in their words so that their stories were truly lived experiences and not just text on paper or on the computer screen.

I transcribed the interviews throughout the data collection process to allow time and opportunity for repeated readings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The transcripts informed my subsequent interviews leading to follow-up questions and connections to previous interviews. I printed hard copies of the interview transcripts which I kept in a binder and read through

repeatedly throughout the data collection process. I took notes about emerging patterns as well as my wonderings or questions. In my work as a teacher educator, I travel frequently both on and off island. I carried my transcripts and audio recordings with me to read or listen to during my travels to school sites. Living with the stories in my roles as both practitioner and researcher, kept me grounded. It brought relevance to my study and helped me to remain focused on my purpose.

To begin my data analysis, I physically organized my workspace to surround myself with the stories of my participants. I used chart papers, white boards and a mirrored closet to document emerging themes as they occurred over time. Using post-it's, colored pens, colored chalk and yarn, I employed a visual and tactile experience to make connections and demonstrate how stories and themes overlap and reoccur. These mind maps were posted on three walls that formed a u-shape in my workspace; I was able to physically position myself middle to see the stories of their experience in a surrounding panorama. By immersing myself in their stories, I was able to connect to their world and understand their experiences (Bleakley, 2005). To the outsider the display may have seemed chaotic, but to me, as a researcher who heard their stories and was nested within in them, it represented the dynamic, intertwined nature of their experiences.

From the mind map display, I took notes of any interesting features to generate an initial list of ideas for coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I used the coding families of Bogdan and Biklen (2007) shown in Table 5 to guide my engagement with the data and to provide a framework for organizing regularities and patterns across the data set.

Table 5

Coding Families

Coding Family	Description
Setting/Context	General information on surroundings that allow you to put the study in a larger context
Definition of situation	How people understand, define, or perceive the setting or the topics on which the study bears
Perspectives	Ways of thinking about their setting shared by informants ("how things are done here")
Ways of thinking about people and objects	Understandings of each other, of outsiders, of objects in their word (more detailed than above)
Process	Sequence of events, flow, transitions, and turning points, changes over time
Activities	Regularly occurring kinds of behavior
Events	Specific activities, especially ones occurring infrequently
Strategies	Ways of accomplishing things; people's tactics, methods, techniques for meeting their needs
Relationships and social structure	Unofficially defined patterns such as cliques, coalitions, romances, friendships enemies

Adapted from Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed). Pearson.

To generate initial codes, I worked systematically through the entire collection of stories and identified interesting aspects that formed repeated patterns across the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I employed MAXQDA Qualitative Analysis Software to code and annotate the transcripts. This involved manually developing codes and "tagging" data extracts to create "coded segments." Sample of coded segments are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Samples of Coded Segments

Data Extract	Code
I think I've learned that I'm not….that I can, I can do it. I'm going to be okay like I have some days, I'm like, Oh my God, I'm so. I'm so unorganized. When am I going to get this right?	Efficacy
But yeah, she's, she's great. She's always sends us like articles and just gives us so much advice. She like lets me borrow her books. So she's, she's really helpful.	Mentor
I normally will stay in my classroom for at least an hour and just like kind of organize. I like to just…I like a clean slate in the morning if I can kind of set myself up as much as possible for success in the morning because I kind of got a lot to do.	Time management

I applied the MAXQDA creative coding tool to design coding maps to provide a visual representation of initial codes as shown in Figure 1, the relationships between codes as shown in Figure 2, and the relationships between themes and sub-themes as shown in Figure 3. I analyzed the codes and combined them to form overarching themes.

Figure 1

Sample of Coding Map: Initial Codes

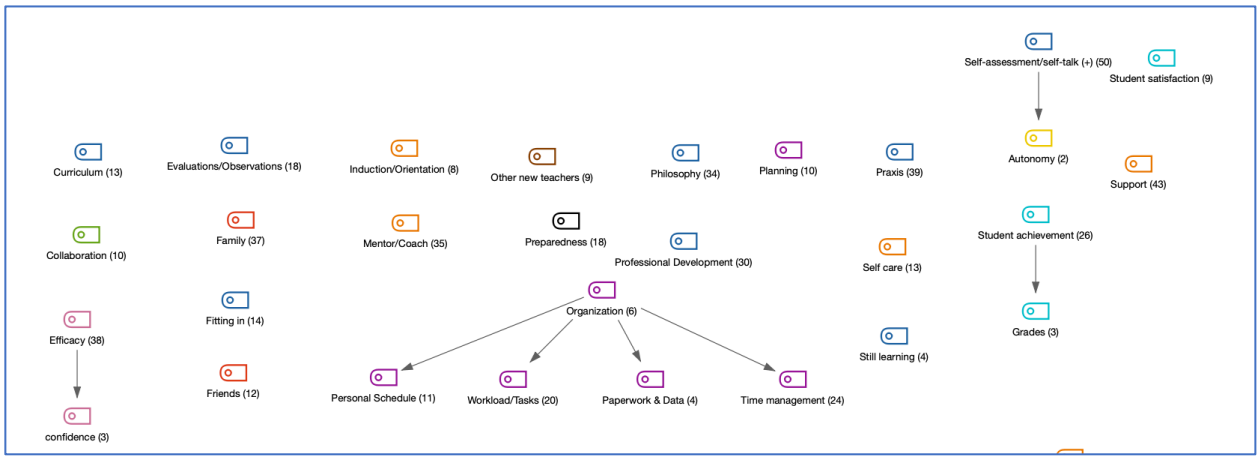


Figure 2

Sample of Coding Map: Relationship between Codes

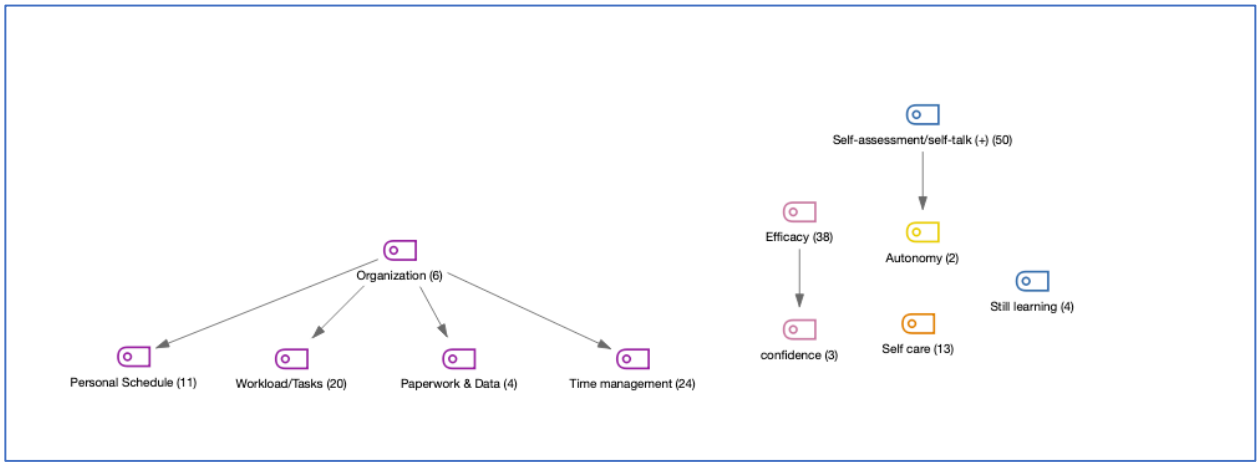
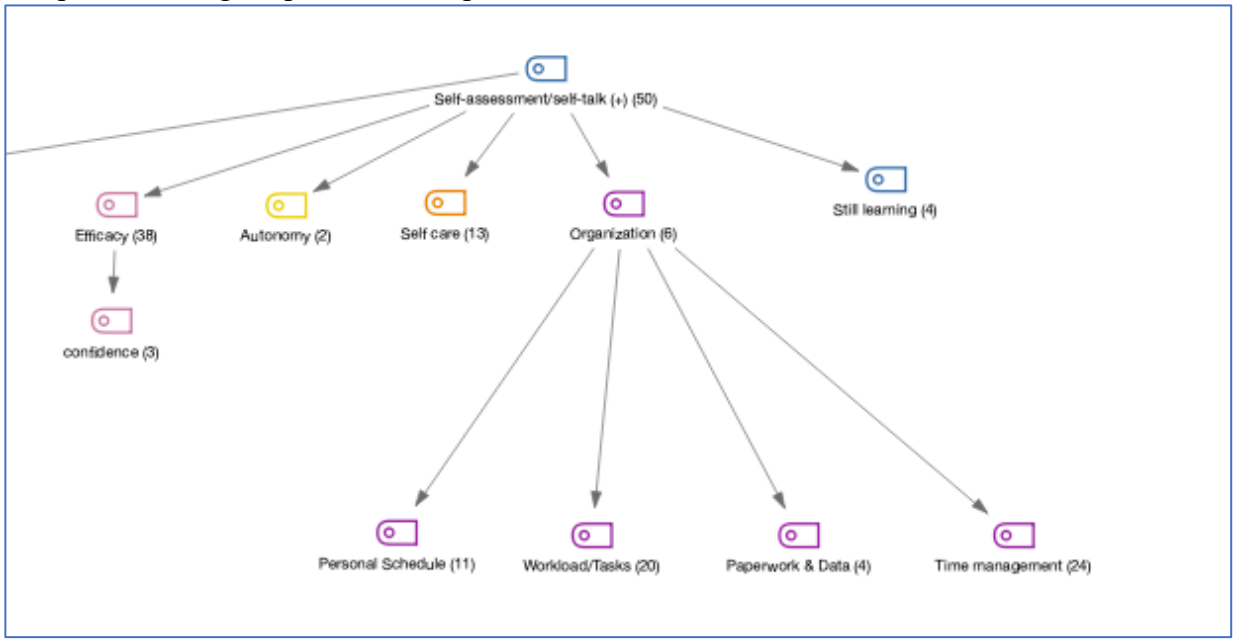


Figure 3

Sample of Coding Map: Relationship between Themes and Subthemes



While flexibility and researcher judgement are critical components in qualitative research, it is also important to have a sound theoretical and methodological approach to thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned*

response or meaning within the data set." For this study, I developed themes in terms of frequency of occurrence as well as the depth of the theme's occurence. I determined the "keyness" of a theme (Braun and Clark, 2006) based on how well it captured the essence of the participants' stories in relation to the research questions for this study.

After creating the visual maps, I returned to the data to review the collated extracts. I determined whether the themes worked in relation to the data set or whether I needed to code additional data within themes that may have been missed in the earlier coding stages (Braun and Clark, 2006). I referred to my hand-written notes and used MAXQDA's lexical analysis tool to refine and re-code the data. I then analyzed each theme to determine the stories that they each told and their relationship to the overall data set and to the purpose of this study.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln et al. (2011) identify trustworthiness as a way for researchers to persuade themselves and others that their findings are worthy of attention and the knowledge generated can inform practice. They developed criteria of credibility to parallel the quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliabilit. For this study I employed the criteria of credibility through the six phases the thematic analysis process as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Trustworthiness Criteria

Criteria	Description	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
Credibilty	Determined when co-researchers or readers are confronted with the experience, they can recognize it.	Prolonged engagement with the data Researcher triangulation Peer and/or mentor external checks Member checks
Transferability	The generalizability of inquiry	Reflective journal Rich descriptions Use of a coding framework Documented theoreteical underpinnigs Visual diagrams

Dependability	Ensure the process is logical, traceable and clearly documented	Audio recordings Transcripts Field notes Reflective journal
Confirmability	Establish that the researcher‘s interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached	Peer debriefs Member checks External member and peer checks

Assumptions

This study is built on assumptions regarding my relationship with the participants and the content of this study. I assumed that the participants shared the belief that our relationship was one of trust and mutual respect. I also assumed that the participants were comfortable sharing stories of their experiences and that they would recognize the reciprocal nature of this study and feel that benefited personally and professionally from participating. In addition, I assumed that the participants first-year of teaching was challenging and that the participants' emerging professional identities would be disrupted by their experiences.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study includes a number of limitations that could have a potential impact on the generalizability of this research. One limitation is selection bias. The participants graduated from the same teacher preparation program with the same coursework and instructors. Another limitation is data reliability. The researcher was the coordinator of the participants' cohort. The participants may be reluctant to share information that may negatively reflect on the researcher or the pre-service program. A third limitation is number of participants. The small number of participants cannot be used as a representative sample. The limitations of this study could be

addressed in future research by adding to the collection of stories to broaden the narrative and deepen our understanding of the experiences of first-year teachers.

The delimitations of this study are that all participants are elementary education majors who graduated from a teacher preparation program at the University of Hawai‘i. In addition, all participants are teachers on the island of O‘ahu and all participants were educated in grades K-12 on O‘ahu.

CHAPTER 4

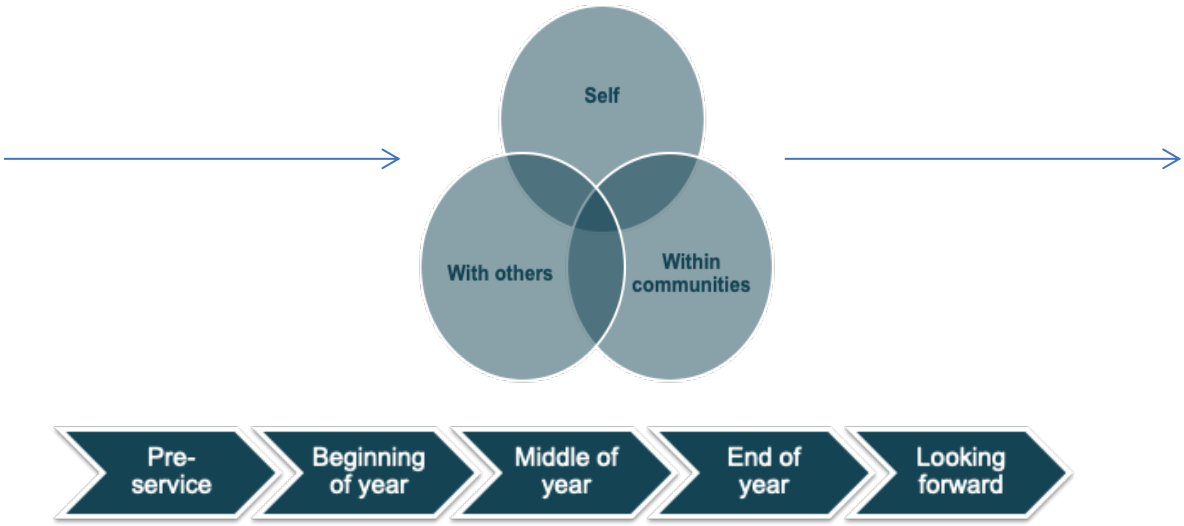
FINDINGS

For the findings of this study, I retell the stories of eight first-year teachers through collections of narratives that capture their shared experiences while honoring and celebrating their individual voices through excerpts and anecdotes. As described in Chapter 3, I employ a narrative inquiry approach for this study; I purposely do not include quantitative data with the intent of not reducing the participants' experiences to impersonal numerical values. These findings are also not a comparative analysis of first-year teaching experiences. I do not compare one teacher's experiences to another. Instead, I have organized their stories into three collections: stories of self, stories with others and stories within communities.

I gathered these stories over the course of the academic year. According to Institutional Review Board guidelines, I used pseudonyms to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. The first-year teachers in this study shaped and reshaped their stories over time. For example, when discussing interactions with their colleagues, all participants shared stories of support, tensions, discomfort and belonging, however they did not tell their stories in the same way nor did they share a defined, sequential path. Their stories of self, with others and within communities were not static or self-contained. As shown in Figure 4, they were dynamic, intertwined and overlaping, unfolding in their own way, at their own pace, throughout the academic year.

Figure 4

Representation of Story Collections



This collection of stories speaks to the impact that social and cultural interactions have on teachers' experiences, their interpretations of these experiences and how they share these experiences through storytelling. Their stories are what Boje (2012) refers to as "living stories, often without beginning or end, and just unfolding in the middle" (p. 5). The intent of retelling their stories is not to establish truth, but to endow experience with meaning (Bruner, 1986).

Stories of Self

The first collection of stories are stories of self. They describe how first-year teachers in this study see themselves, their roles and their responsibilities. They also describe the strategies and processes they used in in their practice to organize their tasks and time. These stories tell of the fluid perceptions of self: the struggling teacher, the confident teacher and the eager teacher. They also tell about being one kind of teacher on the outside but another on the inside. There are many stories of feeling the pressure of time or work demands and searching for strategies to balance tasks, exercise self-care and remain connected with family and friends. While there are stories of satisfaction, knowing they had made the right decision in terms of career choice,

school or grade level, there are also stories characterized by the phrase “I don’t know enough.” “I don’t know” was the opening line to many anecdotes.

Developing confidence is a common theme in the stories of first-year teachers. The participants shared stories about what led them to become teachers and how they worked to develop confidence in their teacher preparation programs. Some participants shared stories of carrying self-confidence from their pre-service programs into their classrooms while others shared stories about how their confidence was shaken by the challenges they faced in the classroom or with colleagues. Participants also discussed the impact responsibility and autonomy had on strengthening their confidence. They emphasized the importance of demonstrating confidence and acknowledging the need to learn more.

Organizing time and tasks is another common theme in the stories of first-year teachers. New teachers face a myriad of tasks and work to find ways to prioritize tasks and manage their time. Participants in this study shared the challenges they faced in balancing their work life, home life and self-care. They also shared stories of feeling pressured by their work load and having the need to decompress and reenergize. All the participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and believed nothing could have prepared them for the tasks and time demands of teaching.

Finding the right fit is a third common theme in the stories of first-year teachers. Some participants described having a sense of belonging in their schools and discussed how this contributes to their overall happiness and wellness. The participants also discussed how finding the right fit influenced their decisions to accept their current teaching positions and was a factor when considering long range plans for their future. They also talked about the importance of having congruency between their school’s philosophy and their own beliefs about teaching and

learning. The participants explained that having the right fit helped them to feel connected to and accepted by their school community.

The fourth common theme in the stories of first-year teachers is that they are still learning. These stories describe how the participants felt about identifying their own learning needs and continuing their professional development. The participants also discussed why professional growth is important and how they are working with their mentors and colleagues to strengthen their practice. They revealed how they allow themselves to be vulnerable with their colleagues and students, and described themselves as needing to learn more about being an effective classroom teacher.

Developing Confidence

In their study of first-year teachers, McCormack et al, (2006) discuss the relationship between self-confidence, professional identity and self-efficacy. Developing confidence occurs within the context of a new teacher's school community and is influenced by interactions with his or her students, colleagues and administrations. The first-year teachers in this study shared stories about why they became teachers and how their classroom experiences contributed to their developing confidence. They discussed ways their confidence was sustained, strengthened or shaken during their first-year of teaching. In this section I retell the stories of five three first-year teachers and how they developed, or continue to develop, confidence.

Alyssa is a first-grade teacher who always knew she wanted to be an educator. She said, "Most of my friends were like, 'Oh, I want to be a nurse, I want to be a doctor.' And I was like, 'I want to be a teacher.'" Inspired by her elementary and high school teachers, Alyssa "wanted to be one of those teachers that change this generation to be a better generation." She smiled as she recalled the relationships and interactions she had with her teachers and the impact they have had

on her chosen career path. When asked if they know that she had become a teacher, she nodded her head said she was still in contact with some of them and that they have encouraged her to follow in their footsteps.

Soon after the beginning of the school year, Alyssa began feeling the pressures of being a classroom teacher. When asked to describe her experience in three words Alyssa replied, "challenging, dreadful and suffocating." She told the story of one student who "drops f-bombs everywhere" and ran around the classroom constantly touching other people and resisting her attempts at redirection. Although she had confidence in her classroom management when she was a student teacher and as an after-school program leader, Alyssa questioned her ability to manage her own class. She reflected on her first week of school and the difficulties she had with student behaviors. She said:

> It impacted my confidence for the first month and I was like, I have no idea what to do, and I cried the first day of school. As soon as all the kids left, I walked back to my classroom I sat down at my desk and I just cried. I was like, today was the worst day ever. And when I look back at it. I'm like, yeah, it was the worst day ever. Unforgettable. But yeah, it was so intense.

In addition, Alyssa felt unsupported by her colleagues and was reluctant to ask for help. Instead, she turned to friends of her family, educators in other schools, for help. She also applied her experience working in theater and improv to engage her students and "go off tangent with them and then drive them back." She transferred her confidence as a performer to her classroom practice in order to build her confidence as a teacher.

Samantha is another first-year teacher in this study. She entered college planning to be a veterinarian, but soon realized it was not the career path for her. After volunteering at an

elementary school in her community, Samantha decided to pursue a degree in education with a focus in elementary education. Although her teacher preparation program was in general education with a majority of her time spent in the lower grades (kindergarten through 3rd grade), Samantha now works as a special education resource teacher for grades 3-6. She described herself as having found her niche working in special education with older students. However, she talked about the difficulties she had in getting started in a field where she had very limited training.

Samantha said she gained confidence by connecting with other new teachers who were "in the same boat." he discussed receiving support and encouragement from colleagues, particularly those who, like her, were licensed in general education but working in special education. For example, when describing a meeting with the special education teacher whose position she would eventually fill, Samantha said:

> I got to meet her, and she was in the same position as I was where she was a General Ed major and she got hired as a special educator. She shared her experiences and then after that I was like, "Okay, I'll give it a go." So that's how it went.

Knowing that others in similar situations had experienced success boosted Samantha's confidence.

Recalling one of her first trainings in special education Samantha said, "I wasn't the only one that was kind of like, 'What's going on?' For the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan), I had no idea like what went on in the meetings or even how to write a PLEP [Present Levels of Educational Performance. I was kind of confused because I was getting all this information, but I had no idea how it comes together." With the support of colleagues and her on-site mentor, Samantha said she has learned how to manage her time and resources to meet the diverse

learning needs of multiple grade levels in a single classroom setting. She explained that she constantly reflected on her effectiveness, knowing that she was accountable for the objectives on the students' IEPs but also tried to meet her goal of building her students independence and confidence. Samantha recognized her flexibility as a strength saying, "I think I can adapt to situations if I'm give the chance to reflect on it. If I have guidance, I can use that to get better. I think I am a lot stronger than I thought." Samantha's flexibility and her response to support helped her to develop confidence.

Ashley is a first-year teacher who teaches fourth grade in rural Oʻahu. She described her first months in the classroom as "having an I-don't-know feeling." When asked to elaborate she simply stated, "I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know…….like everything…..I don't know." She went on to explain that during the first quarter of the school year, she had weekly observations which she said helped her to "keep on track with what I'm doing and what I could do better." Ashley described in detail how she prepared her lessons, received feedback from her academic coach, and reflected on her teaching. When complimented for her organization and confidence she laughed and said, "It may look that way, but I still feel like I don't know enough," and added, "Inside I'm shaking." Ashley added, "I believe people have to believe in themselves more. All people. Even teachers or children…they have to believe in themselves more rather than saying, hey, I did this wrong or I cannot do anything. They have to believe they CAN do it." Finding balance between being uncertain and believing herself was an underlying theme in Ashley's story.

Along with developing confidence, the first-year teachers in this study experience an increased awareness of responsibility. Jennifer, a first-grade teacher, explained:

> The one thing you can't really prepare for is that feeling of responsibility. I'm responsible for other people. As a student teacher you can go home at the end of the day. But now you really don't go home. You take it all with you.

Prior to becoming a teacher, Jennifer had a well-established career in the food and beverage industry. When sharing stories about her first year of teaching, Jennifer often referred to the skills and dispositions she developed in her earlier profession and how they benefit her work in the classroom. She said:

> You're in charge and you need to have confidence in yourself. Like, I can do this. I know what I'm doing. Even it's not right, I think I know what I'm doing, so I feel good. Even if I get it completely wrong…..well, I tried and I can fix it! I'm in charge of doing it right or doing it wrong and if I do it wrong, I'm also in charge of making it right. And that's okay. I can do that. I can teach myself how to do it.

Jennifer said she wanted "to do a good job" and sometimes felt stressed to keep up with her peers. She eased her stress by remaining confident and empowered.

Kayla, also a new first-grade teacher, acknowledged that while the responsibility can be overwhelming, she felt more in control of her time and decision-making as compared to when she was a student teacher. She said, "I like having the freedom of making my own due dates and creating my own schedule." She added, "I am capable of a lot more than I think I gave myself credit for." Kayla shared that having a sense of autonomy contributed to her confidence in the classroom.

The stories of these five first-year teachers describe how their interactions in their classrooms and with their colleagues impacted their self-confidence. Positive interactions and outcomes led to a heightened sense of self-confidence whereas negative interactions reduced

their level of self-confidence. Another important contributing factor was their ability to make connections to colleagues in their school communities and to have a sense of autonomy and responsibility in their workplace.

Organizing Time and Tasks

Studies of early career teachers describe how new teachers feel challenged and disheartened by the numerous responsibilities of the classroom (Beauchamp, 2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Freese, 2006). When the first-year teachers of this study were asked how they were feeling after their first three months in the classroom, they all used the same word: overwhelmed. From their first day on campus, they were charged with a myriad of tasks to manage and began looking for strategies to organize their time and workload. In this section, I retell the stories of two first-year teachers who struggled to balance workload, personal time and self-care.

Emily described feeling "pulled in all directions." She referenced a mentor from her teacher preparation program who described teaching as "having 50 open tabs in her brain and wanting just to close a few." Emily felt the pressure of keeping up with the school's curriculum and teaching to the targeted standards while remaining true to her instructional beliefs and teaching goals. Emily also talked about trying to find ways to balance her workload, family time and sleep. She relied on her husband to get their children ready for preschool and day care so that she could hurry to campus and organize herself before the children arrive. Emily set aside time after school for her family but said she stays up late to plan lessons and "deal with paperwork." She said she lacks sleep.

Emily found it challenging to manage "every single thing about 22 different kids" giving the example of having to collect field trip forms – a task she never imagined would be such an

ordeal. She also described the constant influx of tasks saying, “It's gonna keep coming. And even when you think like, okay, this week is over, get ready because then the next week is coming and the next challenges are coming.” Emily sighed and said she was unprepared for the work, but then shrugged her shoulders and explained, “There’s so many things. Like, truly, truly that you would not know. No teaching course could ever prepare you for actually being in the field.” Although Emily may have felt prepared to teach, she struggled to keep up with the long to-do list of the classroom.

Like Emily Alyssa began her school year feeling “squeezed” by her workload and didn’t know how to manage her time and tasks. She found herself staying later and later after school only to go home tired but with more work to do. She said, “At the end of the quarter I felt like one of those watermelons – you know how they put all the rubber bands on and then just like….POP!” She said she felt so much pressure as if her head wanted to explode but over Fall break, the pressure subsided and “the watermelon was put back together.”She said she used the time to reconnect with friends who she had not spent much time with since the school year began.

Towards the end of the school year, Alyssa said she felt more in control of her students which allowed her to have “time and energy” to better organize herself. She also made more of an effort to socialize with her “non-teacher friends” which gave her a “mental break” from the strain of the classroom. However, Alyssa also said she enjoys spending time with a friend from her teacher preparation program and likes to collaborate and share ideas. At the end of the school year, when she talked about her professional growth, Alyssa described herself as being positive and having perseverance but then added, “I just figured myself out.” She laughed and said she still felt like a squeezed watermelon but now only had two rubber bands.

The stories of these two first-year teachers described being overwhelmed and unprepared for the number of tasks they faced as classroom teachers. To ease their stress, they turned to friends and family for support, reorganized their personal schedules and reflected on their work habits and dispositions. They also reconsidered how to balance and prioritize time and tasks.

The Right Fit

Ingersoll and Smith (2012) found that pursuit of another career and job dissatisfaction accounts for two-thirds of new teacher attrition. The first-year teachers in this study described the importance of having a sense of belonging and teaching in a school whose vision aligns to their own philosophical beliefs. They also shared how having the right fit helped them to feel accepted by their colleagues and to connect to their school communities. In this section, I retell the stories of three first-year teachers who shared how finding the right fit at their schools contributed to their overall happiness and wellness.

Jessica is a new second-grade teacher. In her graduating semester, Jessica and her cohort visited a school in rural O‘ahu. During a presentation by the school’s administrator, he shared the school’s philosophy: every child, every time. Jessica said she was stunned – it was exactly what she had written in her personal statement about her philosophy of teaching. Jessica explained that she had felt an instant connection to the school as she visited each classroom and got to meet the students and teachers. At the end of the visit, Jessica approached the principal and left her resume. A few weeks later, he offered her a teaching position for the upcoming school year. Jessica accepted.

Jessica began attending articulation meetings with her new colleagues before graduating from her teacher preparation program. She described her colleagues as being a strong, supportive team who helped her set up her classroom and introduce her to school procedures. Jessica felt

she had gotten to know her grade level team well and said they spent a lot of time together laughing and joking. Jessica's grade level departmentalizes meaning that each teacher was assigned to teach a specific content area. Jessica was the designated language arts teacher– a role she found challenging. In her interview she exclaimed, "How do I teach reading!" She explained that so many of her students were below grade level and she didn't know where to start. Jessica had been attending teacher trainings offered by her district on strategies for teaching basic reading skills. In spite of her long commute and instructional challenges, Jessica believed she would remain at her school in the future. She said, "It's so nice to have people, like multiple people, that you can talk to about all these struggles." Jessica confided that at times she thinks about what other jobs she might do besides teaching then added, "I think I couldn't see myself doing anything else except being a teacher. I love my kids and I tell them that all the time." Although Jessica was challenged in her role as language arts teacher, she appreciated the support and was happy with her position in her school.

Kayla, another first-year teacher in this study, also accepted a teaching position prior to graduating from her teacher preparation program. She attended a job fair for prospective teachers where she was offered a teaching position at a school that she was familiar with. At her interview, the teachers were warm and welcoming, and she described the principal as having had "good energy." However, after accepting the position she had a moment of regret and questioned whether she should have looked at other schools or explored other options. Nevertheless, she spent the summer setting up her classroom and developing curriculum; she described her grade level partner as her "teaching bestie." Kayla said she now knows she is in "the right place."

Jennifer, a new first-grade teacher, was determined to find a teaching position near her home. However, by mid-July, just a few weeks before the beginning of the school year, she had

not been hired. Jennifer was invited to a phone interview with a school far from her home and, eager to begin teaching, took the interview and was offered a position. Jennifer accepted. She immediately began setting up her classroom, meeting with her grade level partners and becoming familiar with the school. Her classroom is what is commonly referred to as a portable – a stand-alone structure that Jennifer referred to as being "her house." She smiled and said, "I love that school. I love my classroom. I love my grade level." When asked where she sees herself five years from now, she says, "I really would like to stay exactly where I am."

Finding the right fit helps new teachers experience job satisfaction and establish themselves in their school communities. The first-year teachers of this study described how they developed a sense of belonging and envisioned a future for themselves in their schools. They were able to connect to their administrators and colleagues through shared philosophical beliefs, friendships and support.

Still Learning

Feimen-Nemser (2001) contends that new teachers have two jobs: they have to teach, and they have to learn to teach (p. 1026). She states that while teacher preparation programs provide a foundation for good teaching, it is only when new teachers are on the job that learning begins in earnest. The first-year teachers in this study shared stories of needing to learn more and discussed how they engaged in professional development with colleagues and mentors. In this section, I retell the story of four first-year teachers who talked about their learning needs and how they confided to their students and colleagues that they were still learning and growing as teachers.

As soon as Taylor was hired, she began setting up her classroom to have "everything done" before the students came in. She worked with her academic coach to start planning

curriculum and used data to "establish a baseline." She also started preparing her SLO's (Student Learning Objectives) that are an integral part of the Educator Effectiveness System (EES), the state's comprehensive evaluation system for all teachers. Taylor quickly realized that she needed to strengthen her writing instruction as well as her own writing skills. She felt that being a better writer would help her to become a better writing teacher and to be more intentional in planning instruction. She wanted to be "more articulate" hoping it would help her to be more effective in her instruction and classroom management. Although she said she did not like to share too much personal information with her students, she wanted them to understand she was a new teacher with more to learn. Taylor said, "I try to be honest all the time. If something unexpected happens or if I don't know, I tell them I will get back to them. I am still learning." At the end of the school year, Taylor shared some of her successes in the classroom. When asked how she would describe her professional self she said, "I am a teacher who feels I have room to grow." Taylor was comfortable sharing with her students and colleagues that she still had more to learn.

Jessica mirrored Taylor's thoughts about allowing herself to be vulnerable with her students. She said, "I tell them I am new and still learning." She also worked regularly with the school's language arts coach to strengthen and broaden her pedagogy. She said, "We meet every Tuesday and our meetings go from like an hour to two hours long. Sometimes even more. There's still so much that I need to learn….it's just a work in progress." Jessica smiled as she talked about her meetings with her coach and said that they helped her to be a better teacher.

Jennifer and Kayla both expressed excitement and confidence in being in the classroom and working with children. However, both stressed the importance of continued growth and acknowledged that there's more to learn. Kayla said, "I'm excited to go to work and I feel like I

know what I'm doing. I found a lot of things that work but there are so many more things to learn. I'm learning every day."

The first-year teachers in this study readily expressed their need to continue their learning in order to strengthen and broaden their teaching practice. They discussed how they included their students and colleagues in their reflections of who they were as educators and how they looked to further their professional growth. They often described themselves as "works in progress" and were eager and excited to learn more about teaching and learning.

Stories with Others

The second collection of stories are illustrations of how first-year teachers relate with others. They include stories of interactions with their students, colleagues, parents, administrators, families and friends. Their stories tell about the importance of connecting with people, gaining trust, having empathy, and understanding differing perspectives. There are also stories about establishing boundaries and finding a balance between give and take. Stories of self and stories with others often overlap and affect one another. And like stories of self, stories of others roll along the time continuum. They appear, change, evolve, repeat and reappear.

The importance of building relationships with colleagues, students and parents was a common theme in the stories of first-year teachers. Participants in this study shared stories of how they developed personal and professional relationships with their colleagues and how they worked to build trust and mutual respect with students and parents. While all the participants in this study spoke of relationships as being critical to their work, the kind of relationships they experienced varied. Some relationships were nurturing and validating while others were combative and intimidating.

A second common theme in the stories with others is that of give and take. The participants in this study discussed how they benefited from the resources, expertise and guidance of their mentors and grade level partners. In turn, they wanted to contribute to their learning communities by bringing their knowledge of new content standards and experience with educational technologies.

Building Relationships

The first-year teachers in this study talked about the importance of building relationships with different groups of people on their school campuses. When speaking about how to face challenges working with students, parents or other faculty members, the participants spoke of the need "to build strong relationships" and "to be comfortable with each other." They shared how relationships impact their practice and their feelings about themselves and their work environment. In this section, I retell the stories of a number of first-year teachers and the relationships they have with different people in their school communities including colleagues, students and parents.

Colleagues. Ashley was hired for her current teaching position one week before the start of the school year. Like Jennifer, Ashley's classroom was in a portable – a duplex portable with air conditioning which she says is "like being in my own building." Unlike other new teachers from her cohort, Ashley's room was set-up, organized and decorated before she arrived on campus. The vacating teacher, who was now the school-based mentor, had prepared the room not knowing what his position would be for the new school year. Ashley said it was nice to have everything ready so she could dive into planning, but also felt "awkward" worrying that she might offend her mentor if she were to make any changes to the classroom set-up and decor. She also shared that she was the youngest faculty member, "basically the baby," and although she

had good working relationships with her fellow teachers, she felt disconnected from the group text messages about their family events and children.

At the end of the school year, Ashley talked at length about how the teaching assignments at her school were being reconfigured and that she had been working closely with her colleagues to create a plan to departmentalize. She had also been helping her team learn new educational technology tools. When asked about her future plans, Ashley said, "I was thinking of probably moving closer to home but I really like my grade level so now, I don't know." Ashley suggested she had connected to her grade level team and was hoping to continue their working relationship.

Alyssa described a different kind of relationship with her colleagues and the challenges of being "a newbie." She said, "I feel a little belittled here and there….you know how usually like those movies they kind of like bully or like belittle, the new teachers? I kind of feel like that." Alyssa described difficulties she had with one particular student and how she felt unsupported by her grade level and administrator when she turned to them for help. She said the teachers on her grade level "just do everything on their own" and she had become increasingly uncomfortable reaching out. She said, "I can't just go in there and totally be myself….I have to hold back what I want to say and I'm always thinking before I say like…ok…this is how I'm going to word it so that you know, I don't get yelled at." At the end of the school year, Alyssa said she was looking forward to changing grade levels, feeling she would have more success managing and connecting with older students. She was hoping to have a fresh start.

Jennifer emphasized the importance of having good relationships with the people you work with. Contrary to Alyssa, Jennifer felt her relationships with her co-workers positively impacted her work and ability to deal with challenges. She said:

> If you don't feel comfortable with the people you're with, how are you going to function day to day? It's uncomfortable. It's awkward. You're out there and it's just like, hey this is me. You like me. I like you. Let's do this. And that's how I feel every day I go there.

She said she was "never stressed walking into any meeting," whether it be with her principal, vice principal or grade level team because "they're just cool." Jennifer appreciated having positive relationships and knowing she could reach out to ask for help. She said, "It's so nice to be able to walk in and say, hey, I don't know what the hell I am supposed to be doing!" Jennifer talked about how comforting it was to be able to admit to her colleagues over lunch that things aren't working out as she planned and then having them assure her that "there is always tomorrow." She also appreciated their empathy and their willingness to share that they too were struggling with the same issue.

Jennifer extended the importance of relationships to other staff members on campus. She referred to the custodian as her "buddy" and often spent time chatting with him after school believing that "everyone needs to talk about their day….and everyone needs to vent." Jennifer's relationships with her faculty and staff contributed to a positive work environment.

Students. Taylor worked to establish trusting relationships with her students and create a classroom environment that was emotionally and intellectually safe. She wanted her students to feel valued and wanted to hear their voices in and out of the classroom. She said, "Students have only this time with you. This one-time thing. This time is never coming back for myself and for them. So I want to make sure I'm doing it right and that it is a good experience." Taylor said she was bothered by a common practice in school of having children walk in a line in silence with their hands behind their backs. She said it looked like the children were in jail and that it was not the kind of teacher she wanted to be. Taylor also described a time in class when she noticed a

student who had withdrawn from the group. She believed it was important for her to demonstrate care and not assess blame. She recalled as a young child having teachers yell at her if she was disengaged or inattentive and wanted her students to not have those same feelings. Taylor described herself as a compassionate teacher who tries to put herself "in other people's shoes." She smiled and said, "I try to pay attention, and treat them as human beings."

Similar to Taylor, Samantha hoped to establish a trusting relationship with her students with exceptionalities. When she thought back to her most challenging times, she said it was before she had developed a relationship with her students and understood their moods and triggers. She recalled a time when one of her students had an outburst that disrupted learning for the entire class. She said, "He has a 504 plan and behavior issues that he needs to work with. He lashes out and swears. And on those days, I wonder, what sets him off? What motivates him to want to learn? How can I get to him?" Taylor spent a significant amount of time consulting with her educational assistants, taking observational notes and spending time talking with the student "on his good days." She said, "getting to know what they enjoy and joking a little more with them eases the tension a lot." She described her greatest satisfaction to be when she realized that the outbursts had just stopped. Although she did not offer an explanation of why she thought they had stopped, she talked about how they had developed a better relationship and she had a better sense of what triggered his outbursts. She called moments such as these, when positive changes occur, as her "a-ha moments." She said these are the reasons she became a teacher.

When Emily began the school year, she discussed relationships with students in terms of classroom management and instructional interactions. She described herself as being frustrated with the heavy workload and exhausted from lack of sleep. She worried about being short-tempered with her students however, following an observation of her teaching, her administrator

described her as “very tolerant” then added, “and it’s not going to last.” Emily shared that by her second observation, she had “learned ways to do it right” and used a “less harsh, more positive approach.” She added, “First graders love you no matter what. They don’t hold grudges.”

At the end of the school year, when the children were sharing their final thoughts in their community circle, one child echoed a message that Emily had been emphasizing for the past few months: to be humble and kind. Emily described those moments as “the best moments,” when they “soak up all this information that you tell them, and they actually are listening to you. And you can be like the transformation of their hearts throughout the year.” Emily said she was proud of the kindness that her students showed by the end of the year.

Parents. When talking about beginning the school year, Jessica firmly stated that developing relationships with parents was critical. She talked about the school’s Meet and Greet event that took place the week before school began and was an opportunity for parents to drop off school supplies and to meet their child’s teacher. When one of her parents entered the classroom, Jessica walked across the room to greet her and described herself as being “happy, smiling and bubbly.” The parent responded with a hug and appreciated that she had been greeted by “someone who shows she cares” instead of feeling like she had walked in and interrupted someone who was “rushed and busy.” Jessica was proud to have made a good impression on the parent. She said, “First impressions are crucial to parents. Whatever they take away from you when they first meet you, that that’s just going to be how they look at you from then on.” Jessica explained that her principal set the tone for the school and stressed that “relationships are important.”

Just as she said she valued having trusting relationships with her students, Samantha also said she valued forming trusting relationships with their parents. She recalled one of her first IEP

meetings with a parent who had removed her child from the special education class believing he had made no academic gains. Samantha said, “She yelled at me for a good ten minutes, saying he hadn’t learned anything and wanted to know why. I realized the best thing I could have done was just sit there and take it because it wasn’t directed at me. It was the previous year.” She eventually told the parent, “We can’t do anything about this but the reason why we’re meeting today is for your son and to give him the education that will best suit him.” The parent responded positively and asked that special education services be reinstated with Samantha as the teacher. Although Samantha believed it was a positive outcome she said, “I thought I was going to break down and cry. He’s back with me, but I thought I was going to cry.”

Samantha explained that one way she built relationships with parents was by making periodic phone calls just to let them know how their children were doing and to share good news. Although she still had volatile episodes with parents, she tried to understand their perspective and take a more proactive approach. She said, “I feel like with parents [we] spend a lot of time trying to please them compared to collaborate with them.”

Emily drew in a deep breath as she described the parents of the children in her school. Emily works at a school on a military base where parents are part of a very close community. She said that although many of the parents of her students were “amazing,” there were some on campus that were “stressful.” There was a strong parent presence at the school and many of the school’s substitutes and paraprofessionals were parents of students. Emily gave an example of a parent of a kindergartener who works as a part-time teacher at the school. She felt as though the parent was “judging every single one of the first-grade classrooms trying to figure out which class she wants to put her daughter in.” Emily explained that some of the parents are “too

involved" and can be "challenging." When asked to elaborate she said, "They are constantly on Facebook constantly writing things about the teachers and whatever." She added:

> I'll communicate with them and they don't necessarily like what I have to say, but they won't tell me. They'll go straight to the office or they'll go and tell somebody else and then I hear it from somebody else.

Emily did not feel teachers at her school were respected and that she had to constantly prove herself. When asked if she had shared her feelings with her colleagues she said yes and added, "they feel the same way."

The first-year teachers in this study described the relationships they had with colleagues, students and parents during their first year in the classroom. They discussed building relationships of trust and mutual respect and how they contributed to a positive work environment. They also discussed the impact difficult relationships had on their comfort and well-being often causing feelings of tension and discomfort.

Give and Take

The first-year teachers in this study all recognized the benefits of receiving support from administrators and colleagues, however they also acknowledged the importance of contributing to their grade level and supporting others. In this section, I retell stories from three first-year teachers and the ways they gave and received support from their colleagues.

Some of the first-year teachers in this study discussed how they brought to their school communities and learning teams a familiarity with new content standards such the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies. For example, Emily and Ashley, studied and applied these standards to writing lesson plans for their methods courses in their teacher preparation programs. During

professional development sessions with their colleagues, they were able to share first-hand experience teaching standards-based lessons and developing assessments and rubrics. Emily and Ashley said they were happy that they could share resources with their grade level team and that their colleagues appreciated their contribution.

Another area in which first-year teachers were able to support their colleagues was with technology. Ashley attended a workshop with her colleagues on Google Slides although she had been using this technology for years to create presentations and to develop lessons during student teaching. During the workshop, Ashley created an interactive Google Slide presentation to teach fractions and shared it with her grade level. Ashley said, "My grade level always shares things and resources and stuff I feel like I have to share more because I only shared a couple of things, they have so much stuff that I always use." Ashley was pleased that she was able to contribute to her grade level team.

Kayla also supported her colleagues by assisting with education technology. She confided that she was once a student at the school where she now teaches, and her colleague is her former elementary school teacher. She said this created an interesting dynamic that led to moments when she paused and thought, "Okay, let me figure it out." Kayla described their relationship as a give and take. For example, the school did not have a librarian, so her colleague/former teacher helped her to understand what to expect during her time in the library, how to work with the parent volunteers and how to manage the students and resources. In return, Kayla helped her learn how to create a Google Doc. She said, "We both have something to offer each other and I think she is comfortable asking me for help." Kayla learned to use a give and take approach to build a new relationship with her former teacher.

The first-year teachers in this study discussed the importance of establishing mutually beneficial relationships with veteran teachers at their schools. In return for the support they received from their seasoned colleagues, the participants contributed to their learning communities with their knowledge of new standards and their skills with educational technology. The participants expressed satisfaction in working alongside their colleagues in developing curriculum and creating learning activities.

Stories within Communities

The third collection of stories are portrayals of how first-year students engage with communities. The participants in this study found themselves immersed in new communities with different protocols and social norms. Through their interactions with teachers, students and parents, they wondered about their roles and reflected on how they fit in. Although the participants in this study had just spent two years working in schools during their teacher preparation program, one new teacher said, "nothing could prepare us for this." Their stories tell how they navigated their communities and considered how their success in the classroom was perceived and measured by others in their communities.

Joining a school community is a common theme in the stories of first-year teachers. During their student teaching semester, the participants had mentors who provided "a safety net." As one participant explained, they had the comfort of knowing that at the end of their solo experience they would be able to give the students back to their teachers. But, as the classroom teacher, they were now on the "forever solo." Through their stories, participants also wondered how to navigate personal and professional relationships at their school. For some, this was their first full-time job, or their first time having to work with people "in their 30's."

A second common theme in the stories of first-year teachers is building a classroom community. Their stories speak to how their goals and philosophies shaped their instruction and the classroom environment. They discussed how their vision and beliefs set the tone for teaching, were foundations for their classroom management and guided their interactions with their students. Their stories of classroom communities included more than classroom management and student behaviors. They talk about the dynamic exchanges between learners, between teacher and learner and their need to be observant, responsive and flexible decision makers.

Measures of success is a third common theme in the stories of first-year teachers. The first-year teachers in this study questioned their effectiveness and discussed success in terms of external measures defined by larger communities. Institutional evaluation systems and parent perceptions of success impacted the participants' own beliefs about their competency and effectiveness. They explained that they had to balance the teacher they want to be with the teacher they have to be in order to survive. They worked to meet perceived or explicit expectations of their colleagues and parents.

Joining a School Community

Lave (1991) describes schools as communities of practice. First-year teachers understanding of themselves is shaped by their participation in these communities (Holland et al., 1998; Lave, 1991). Lave writes that "participation as members of a community of practice shapes newcomers' identities and in the process gives structure and meaning to knowledgeable skill" (p. 74). In this section, I will retell the stories of three first-year teachers that describe how they came to know their communities and worked to find their places within their communities.

Just before the start of the school year, Taylor's principal met with all the new teachers at his school to talk about the purpose of being a teacher. Taylor said that several times during the

orientation, her principal said, “Student success is our success.” He asked them to “think globally” then passed out cards on which they were asked to write what they thought was their purpose as a teacher. Taylor described the orientation as “very memorable.” She added that there are “a lot of kind teachers” in her school and although she saw them every day, she said it was difficult to get to know them and she does not get to talk to them very often. Taylor found this frustrating and hoped that as time went by and she would get to know her colleagues better to “share [their] daily stress,” however, she said, “I’m not at that stage yet with them” and is still working on “how I can fit into this society.”

Although Jessica felt an instant connection to her school when she visited the campus during her teacher preparation program, she was still anxious about transitioning from student teacher to classroom teacher. After having spent two years with her cohort she said it was “scary to leave them and step onto a campus where you only know your grade level and have to meet new people again.” She was particularly anxious about meeting experienced teachers wondering, “How do I fit in?” Jessica was hired before graduating from college and began attending articulation meetings with her grade level team while she was still a student teacher. She also attended planning meetings with her team during the summer. Jessica said that because her grade level was spread out across two different buildings, her “neighbors” were teachers from other grade levels. Being situated next to each other gave her opportunity to interact with teachers outside of her grade level and have lunch together. She said they were also the same age so had a lot more in common.

Alyssa also was hired by her school before graduating from her teacher preparation program and attended their articulation meetings while still a student teacher. During the meetings, the previous grade’s teachers shared information with the receiving grade and also

spent time in the classroom observing the students that they would be teaching the following year. Alyssa also attended the final faculty meeting where grade level teams met to discuss the curriculum. She said the pacing guide was already made so much of the time was spent looking at the pacing guide and academic calendar. Alyssa explained,

> Every thing was planned for me, so I just have to look at my pacing guide and that's it. We didn't really plan much. It was more like well let's just talk about it really casual. But I had so many questions, but I was like, it's okay. I'll get through this. I'll just do it.

In spite of attending articulation meetings while still a student teacher, Alyssa had difficulty learning the school culture and fitting in. She said, "I guess really understanding like the culture of the school and how people work is necessary. I can't just go in there and totally be myself because it's just not….you know….like how they are." Alyssa continued to work with her grade level but was conscientious about adapting to the practices and protocol of her teaching team. As the school year progressed, Alyssa said she began to contribute more and offer suggestions for change, however, she was looking forward to having a new grade level next school year and was hoping for a more collaborative experience.

Joining a school community is part of the induction process for first-year teachers. The participants in this study engaged with their grade level teams to observe their planning processes and understand how they develop curriculum. They reflected on the culture of their schools, their role in their new communities and how to connect with their colleagues.

Building a Classroom Community

First-year teachers are tasked with building a classroom community that reflects a culture of learning and supports students' social and emotional growth (HIDOE, 2020). The participants in this study described their classrooms as being dynamic places of learning. They discussed how

they worked to set the tone of the learning environment and modeled positive relationships for their students. In this section I retell the stories of three first-year teachers and how they used their belief about teaching and learning and their experiences in their teacher preparation programs to build their classroom communities.

When asked to describe the sounds of teaching, Ashley's response was immediate: students talking. She said she believed it was important to build relationships with students in order to create a classroom environment where "everyone is comfortable and together." Ashley celebrated "Fun Fridays" in her class where she gives students a short time in the afternoon to play games, socialize or catch up on their work. The students enjoyed being given choices and once, when there was no school on a Friday, they asked Ashley if they could celebrate "Terrific Thursday" instead. Ashley said the highlight of her day was seeing the joy and excitement in her students. She believed it was important that they felt safe and accepted and welcomed them to share their thoughts with her and with their classmates

However, Ashley also acknowledged it can be challenging to play dual roles of friend and teacher. She said she is learning how to have "different personalities" depending on the circumstances of the moment. When asked what song or type of music comes to mind when she thinks of teaching, she laughed and started singing *Que Sera Sera (*Whatever Will Be, Will Be) by Doris Day but did not explain why. She says she often reflects on why she became a teacher but does not experience doubt or regret. She had moments during the school day when "everything's happening" and she needed to "calm down" but adds, "Outside of school, I know why I'm doing this."

Like Ashley, Jennifer enjoyed hearing the voices of her students and described the sound of her classroom as, "a hundred kittens meowing." To assist in building a classroom community,

Jennifer employed strategies from the Philosophy for Children, a program that was used by her mentor teacher during her student teaching semester. Jennifer said it was important to bring the children together and to help them learn to care for one another. She recalled a day at the end of the school year when they had a small going away party for a student who was moving. Jennifer called the children together in community circle, a familiar practice in class where students spoke on a chosen topic. She invited them to share what they would miss about their departing classmate. Jennifer said she was not sure how the kids would do because they had "not been getting along all week" but was proud when they came together, participated, and openly shared their thoughts and feelings. She said, "It made me really thrilled that this was my class, that those kids are my kids and they all cared about each other so much." She added, "I want to teach them to be good people I want them to be kind. I think that sometimes we're so busy teaching all this other stuff. But I just try to get them to treat each other with kindness and be there for each other." Jennifer was proud to have established the classroom community that she had envisioned.

Samantha described working hard to build a classroom community from the first day of school. As a special education teacher in a resource room setting, Ashley worked with small groups of students for one to three hours a day. She shared her classroom with another special education teacher and an educational aide. Samantha had to establish classroom norms and set boundaries with her students from the first day of class. She explained that the previous teacher allowed the students to eat her food, sit in her desk and her jackets and sweaters that she kept in the classroom.

Samantha was sometimes challenged by her students about why there were changes to the way the classroom was run however believed in remaining positive and confident. Samantha

redirected those conversations so that the focus was on the students and their learning, not on her and her teaching practices. She said,

> I think they realize that they are behind and they're coming to this classroom because they are. So, I think when they participate, they start to realize we're to help them, that we're on their side……I think it's the part where they open up a little bit and that's when you feel yeah, okay. This is working. The gears are turning."

The first-year teachers in this study entered their classrooms with beliefs about the kind of learning communities they hoped to establish. They engaged their students in discussions and activities to nurture a sense of trust, belonging, acceptance and fun. Their classrooms were not static spaces with defined boundaries, but rather as dynamic communities that grew and changed throughout the school year.

Measures of Success

The first-year teachers in this study shared a number of stories that represented successful teaching moments. Emily felt accomplished when her students demonstrated kindness. Jessica was proud to be able to laugh with her students and join them in learning simulations. When sharing stories of positive classroom moments, the participants used words such as *happy*, *excited*, and *satisfied*. However, when asked directly whether they felt they were successful in the classroom, many of the first-year teachers talked about success how they were viewed by others in their community including colleagues, administrators and parents. In this section I retell the stories of two first-year teachers who reflect on their successful moments and effective practices

Emily worried that that her students' test scores were not what she had hoped for. She questioned her ability to "backwards map" and to use formative data to drive instruction towards

the learning goal. She said, “My greatest challenge right now is feeling okay with what I’m doing. I’m constantly feeling like I’m doing a disservice to the kids. Like I’m not teaching as much as I should or doing it the correct way. I’m constantly beating myself up.” She adds, It’s such a struggle for me to just say, ‘Yeah, that was pretty good.‘ I’m constantly thinking about what I could have done better.” Emily wanted her school community to view her as a competent, successful teacher. She said, “I don’t want people to look back and be like, well it’s because you that that first-year teacher in first-grade.” At the end of the school year, Emily’s story about her success in the classroom changed as she described her success in terms of students’ perceptions and her ability to connect with them. She said, “They’re constantly telling me I’m the best teacher ever. I try to get to know them on a personal level and I think that’s my biggest success this year. Just trying to relate to them and listen to their stories.” Although Emily felt pressured to earn parent approval, her students’ satisfaction and her ability to connect to them gave her sense of accomplishment

Taylor also felt the pressure of test scores and the need for her students to do well on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) test, a statewide indicator of student achievement. She said, “I didn’t know what to expect at the end of the year. They had to take tests. The SBA. My heart is pounding just thinking about it.” She explained that her principal “mentions test scores a lot” and that colleagues who are veteran teachers said that there was more pressure than in previous years. Taylor wondered if perhaps it is because her principal is a new administrator and, like new teachers, “needs the reputation.” In her final interview, Taylor shared that she had received her students’ SBA scores and they had “gone up” so she felt “a little bit more confident.”

From the beginning of the school year, Taylor worked with her mentor to prepare for her professional evaluation under the Educator Effectiveness System (EES). Part of this comprehensive evaluation system is the Student Learning Objective (SLO) which accounts for 50% of the overall rating. Taylor began meeting with her school mentor soon after the beginning of the school year to start creating her SLOs and prepare for her first observation. She described the process as "stressful" and said although she appreciates the rubrics and to-do lists that her mentor shares with her, "it's another thing that on top of one more thing on top of all the other things."

Although the first-year teachers in this study celebrated positive and successful moments in their classrooms, they described their success in terms of what being a successful teacher meant to the community-at-large. Indicators such as student achievement, parent perceptions, professional evaluations and student satisfaction were used by the participants to describe success in their classrooms. While they shared their own stories and definitions of success, they were often shared in tandem with stories of how others within their school communities viewed their success.

As explained in the beginning of this chapter, stories of self, stories with others and stories within communities overlap and are intricately intertwined. How first-year teachers think about and describe their measures of success is closely tied to how they their communities define what makes a successful teacher.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to understand the experiences of eight first-year teachers as told through their stories. I initiated this study to learn more about the new teacher experience and to understand the relationship of these experiences to their decisions to remain in teaching, pursue advanced degrees, change schools or leave the profession. My interest was driven by my concern about teacher attrition and efforts by state programs and policy makers to increase teacher recruitment and retention.

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings as related to the literature on attrition of early career teachers, the transition from pre-service to in-service teacher and tensions in professional identity of early career teachers. The discussion also makes connections to identity, professional development, relationships and self-efficacy. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the experiences of first-year elementary school teachers teaching in Hawai‘i public schools?
2. What can be learned from the stories of these experiences?

In Chapter 4, I discussed the experiences of first-year teachers as told through their stories of self, stories with others and stories within communities. The participants experienced joy, despair, exhiliration, fatigue, satisfaction and doubt. The stories they told and the experiences they had were not static or self-contained nor did they occur in a predictable pattern or sequential path. While there were commonalities in their stories and experiences, their context

and chronology differed. The new teacher experiences were dynamic with overlap and reoccurrence.

In this chapter, I will discuss what can be learned from the stories of these experiences. How can the stories of first-year teachers inform teacher educators, school administrators and mentors in their decision making and program planning? How can their stories contribute to efforts to retain teachers in Hawai‘i public schools? Furthermore, what can current teacher candidates learn from these stories as they begin their own journeys into education?

Understanding the Teacher Self

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Holland, et al (1998) describe figured worlds as "socially produced, culturally constituted activities'' (pp. 40–41). Schools are examples of such figured worlds. Social and cultural interactions with colleagues, students and parents impacted first-year teachers sense of self. Stories of positive, supportive exchanges in school communities paralleled descriptions of confidence, happiness and having a sense of belonging. Participants highlighted their successes in their classrooms and talked at length about their future plans, both short term and long term. They talked about their collaborative conversations with colleagues and how they celebrated successes in their classrooms with their students and in the larger school community with school colleagues. The tone of voice in these conversations was of agency and professional growth.

Conversely, stories of negative or unsupportive interactions in school communities occurred with narratives that expressed doubt, frustration and discontent. Participants who had conflicts with colleagues or parents questioned their efficacy and professional decision making Some expressed concern about the kind of teacher they had become and how they were perceived by parents and co-workers. These stories often came with questions such as, "What

kind of teacher am I?" and "I wonder what else I could do?" Participants began to experience what Pearce (2011) refers to as cognitive dissonance. They began to question their knowledge, beliefs and practices and experience the push and pull of advocating for an identity that is socially legitimated (Coldron and Smith, 1999). The tone of voice in these conversations was uncertainty, isolation and an element of sadness.

The first-year teachers in this study did not have a static understanding of self that remained grounded in either of the interaction types described above. Their sense of self fluctuated depending on their interactions within their school communities and how they saw themselves situated within these figured worlds. Just as these interactions changed over the course of the school year, so did the participants sense of self. However, as Holland et al. (1998) explain, people also develop identities while impacting the worlds in which they are situated. As the participants took on more active roles in curriculum development and decision making, they saw themselves as contributing to their school communities. This gave them a sense of empowerment and strengthened their sense of self. Overtime, their descriptions of selves were less about how others perceived or responded to them and more about how they saw themselves as contributing members of their schools.

Reflection as a Reiterative Process

In Chapter 3, I discussed hoʻokahe wai, or clearing the waterways, as an analogy of the journey of self-discovery and clearing out the blockages, tensions and "everyday sediment of life" (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua , 2016, p. 12). Reflection is a mechanism of hoʻokahe wai for both the participants and researcher as we retraced our pathways, or waterways, for clarity and strength.

The first-year teachers in this study graduated from a teacher preparation program grounded in reflective practice. As teacher candidates, the participants kept journals and took

part in discussions with their instructors, mentors and field supervisors to reflect on their developing practice. I used the participants' experience with reflection to create interview questions that would capture their voices and bring depth to the narratives.

During the first personal interviews, the participants contextualized their responses by making connections to their pre-service experiences. They reflected on their teacher preparation program and talked at length about how they were either prepared or unprepared for the classroom. In the second round of interviews, the participants continued to reflect on their instructional practice and classroom experiences. They did not just reach back to "where we had left off." They continued to reflect on their pre-service program and their beginning of the year experiences, seeing them through a different lens after having spent more time in the classroom.

Some of the participants commented on the transcripts from their first interview and spoke about how much they had changed since then. Some wanted to talk further about what they said earlier explaining that they now saw things in a different way. For example, in her earlier interview, one participant described difficult interactions she had with her students' parents and said she felt that they did not trust her because she was new and young. In the later interview, the participant said that she empathized with the parents of special needs student who "likely spent years" trying to work with teachers to create successful learning experiences for their children.

Schon (1983) describes as reflection-in-action as a process where professional practitioners "think about what they are doing while they are doing it" (p. 54). Reflection provides intellectual space for practitioners to experience surprise, puzzlement or confusion and to examine what works. The stories of the participants in this study suggest reflection is a reiterative process. Reflection is a constant return to the path we have traveled and re-examining

it with a new gaze shaped by new experiences. More than one year following the data collection for this study, three of the participants contacted me to say they had reread the transcripts and were surprised at how much they had grown since then. One participant in this study was taking a professional development course and exploring what she referred to as her "teacher why" – a phrase used by the trainer to prompt discussion about why the attendees had become teachers. The participant said, "When I look back at who I was in that first year I see that my 'teacher why' has changed. And I know it is going to constantly change. I need to always look back and revisit my why."

Mentoring

Mentors played key roles in the experiences of the first-year teachers in this study. The support they provided and the relationships they had, significantly impacted the new educator's sense of confidence, self-efficacy and motivation for professional growth. Mentoring for new teachers is a relatively recent initiative in Hawai‘i public schools. In 2011, Hawaii Department of Education established the New Teacher Center to provide induction and mentoring support during teachers' career entry years. In 2013, the Board of Education passed Policy 5100 stating, "All probationary teachers shall participate in the Department's mentoring program, as guided by the Hawai‘i Teacher Induction Program Standards." That same year, The Hawai‘i State Teachers Association (HSTA) added to their contract that "Probationary teachers in their first and second year will be provided a dedicated teacher mentor in accordance with their complex area's induction and mentoring program" (Nozoe, 2014).

As stated in the HSTA contract, mentoring for new teachers may differ depending on the guidelines of each complex area. Implementation at the school level also may vary depending on staffing allocations by the school administrator. Some participants in this study had designated

school-level mentors who were full-time faculty members. Others had off-site mentors who made scheduled visits anywhere from once a week to once a month. The impact these mentors had on new teachers depended not on the mentoring model but on the quality of their relationships.

First-year teachers in this study who described their mentors as supportive, empathetic and collegial also shared stories that reflected positivity, confidence and a belief in their ability to bring change to their practice and to their schools. For example, two participants described their mentors as people they could confide in and rely on to co-construct solutions to difficult situations. These teachers described relationships in which they were allowed to be vulnerable and could let their true selves to be seen. On the other hand, one first-year teacher who felt unsupported and unfairly judged by her mentor and colleagues was reluctant to seek help and turned to people outside the school community. Although she began the school year sharing her struggles with her grade level team and mentor, she soon shut down saying she did not feel that she could be herself and was careful about what she said to others in her learning community.

Another first-year teacher did not feel unsupported by her mentor or grade level team but felt disconnected. She talked about the disconnect in terms of age, lifestyles and experience. By the end of the school year however, her relationships with her mentor and grade level team strengthened and she began turning to them for assistance and to engage in collaborative discussions. When discussing her short and long-term professional plans, she talked about how she is working with her grade level team to make changes to their instructional responsibilities and redesigning their daily schedule. Whereas she had once spoke about transferring schools to be closer to home, she ended the academic year talking about her future within the context of her current school. While the dynamic of the relationships between mentors and first-year teachers

changed throughout the course of this study there was a clear connection between the nature of those relationships and the new teachers' feelings of success and satisfaction. Positive mentoring experiences coincided with stories of positive teaching experiences.

Fifty Open Tabs

The most common words to emerge from my interviews with first-year teachers were *stressed* and *overwhelmed*. These feelings were not caused by curricular or instructional demands but by the multiple day-to-day tasks of classroom teachers. One participant described teaching as having 50 open tabs in her brain and although she tried to close a few each day, more were added. Feimen-Nemser (2003) explained that new teachers face the challenge of having to take on the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues. As one participant explained, her colleagues had spent years creating systems to run their classrooms efficiently. She was just beginning to learn how to prioritize tasks, arrange her classroom, manage her resources and develop routines and classroom procedures. First-year teachers are immersed in a new world but are expected to demonstrate the same teaching competencies as their grade level peers and carry the same non-instructional responsibilities. There is no learning curve for first-year teachers.

When asked how they could have been better prepared to meet the work and time demands of the classroom teacher, the participants in this study said there is no way a teacher preparation program could have prepared them for the workload. Many of the participants laughed and said they had "been warned" but, as one participant explained it is impossible to know what to do or how to prepare until you are actually in your school and see what is before you. Feinmen-Nemser (2003) explains that the "learning agenda" of new teachers includes "legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance outside the contexts of teaching" (p.

26). The stories of the first-year teachers in this study describe those learning needs and their struggles to meet them.

Emerging Leaders

The first-year teachers in this study discussed their roles and responsibilities as classroom teachers. Initially, most of the participants positioned themselves in role of protégés, acknowledging they were still learning and turning to their more experienced colleagues for guidance and advice. While some participants saw themselves as active, contributing members to their grade level team, others took a less active role opting to follow the lead of their teammates without question or comment.

Over time, the first-year teachers expanded their roles and began taking the lead in curriculum development and technology initiatives. They proposed changes or additions to curriculum materials, daily schedules and the delegation of instructional duties. Several participants ended their first year in the classroom having been appointed or assigned to be grade level chairs, union representatives or committee chairs. Some participants spoke of their emerging leadership roles with confidence while others expressed uncertainty. However, all participants who were planning to take on leadership responsibilities in their second year of teaching spoke with excitement and looked forward to the new school year.

The National Center for Education Statistics (Goldring and Riddles, 2017) identifies job satisfaction as one reason teachers leave the profession. The causes of dissatisfaction include lack of faculty influence and no opportunity for advancement. Several of the first-year teachers in this study expressed satisfaction with taking part in decision making that would impact teaching and learning in their school communities. Having a more active role strengthened their voice, their confidence and their belief in themselves to be change agents. Furuta (2015) explains

that teachers who take on leadership roles feel a sense of accomplishment and take pride in being able to contribute to the betterment of their students and school community. The participants in this study expressed satisfaction with being able to give back to their school. They spoke openly of their futures in terms of professional development opportunities and continuing their education in graduate studies. While this was not the case for all participants, those who discussed their roles as emerging leaders spoke with clarity and certainty about continuing in teaching.

The Researcher/Participant Relationship

As Patel (2016) explained, research is a relational endeavor. This study is grounded in the relationships I built with the participants during the two years they pursued their education degrees and I was their cohort coordinator. We came to the interviews with pre-established relationships of trust and mutual respect. I leveraged those relationships to open the doors to conversations that outsiders would not be able to have.

I initiated this study shortly after the participants graduated from their pre-service program. In many ways, it served as an extension of the conversations we had during their student teaching semester. The participants shared their hopes and expectations for the school year and disclosed their anxiety about their workload and the unknown. In Chapter 3, I described the values I brought to this study including care, kuleana and aloha. These values were also present in my work as a teacher educator. Through my words and actions, the teacher candidates knew that I cared about their well-being, their happiness and their success; their course evaluations reflected these sentiments. After their graduation, we remained in contact beyond the scope of this study. They called or texted to share their life events such as being offered a teaching position, moving into their first apartment, and getting married.

When I began the interviews for this study, it was evident the dynamic of our relationship was that of "teacher/student" or "coordinator/candidate." When the participants talked about their classroom experiences, they often turned to me for affirmation or advice. They included questions such as, "Do you think that's ok?" or "What do you think?" During the first interviews I wondered if the participants agreed to be a part of this study because they felt they "owed" me. Did they feel that it was their kuleana to support me with this study in return for my having supported them in their teacher preparation program? I had little difficulty scheduling their first interview as the participants quickly replied to my request for a meeting and readily offered dates and times when they were available to meet. I wondered if their agreement to participate stemmed our teacher/student relationship and their institutional affiliation. Did they feel an obligation to me and still identified as being a student in the UHM College of Education?

In our later interviews, it was clear that the dynamic of our relationships had changed. The participants spoke about their experiences in terms of their philosophical beliefs, instructional goals and future plans. They engaged in self-talk as they debriefed about recent lessons and reflected on their teaching. They rarely asked for my opinion or advice. Even when discussing difficult situations or times when they were unsuccessful in the classroom, the participants spoke with ownership and autonomy. Their schools and their relationships within those schools was the underlying contexts of their narratives. Unlike the first set of interviews where I was situated within their narratives as their former coordinator, in the second set of interviews the participants spoke to me as a fellow teacher. This was more apparent as we came to know the same people and shared the same friends.

Although the nature of our relationships changed during the course of this study, they continued to be grounded in trust, care and mutual respect. Looking back, I feel that a shift in

power dynamic had occurred. This study began with me in the power position of instructor or former instructor. In the end the power had shifted as the candidates served my research need that depended on their accessibility and insights. At the very least, I ended this study with a more balanced relationship that mirrored that of colleagues or professional affiliates. Those relationships continue to this day.

During the interviews, I often heard myself in the participants' stories as they talked about reflection and relationships. These were key features in my practice as a teacher educator and were embedded in our course work and field seminars during their two years in their pre-service program. I wondered to what extent I had shaped their thinking, and if I had, was that necessarily a negative? In our earlier interviews, when the participants contextualized their responses by making connections to their pre-service program, I wondered if they made these connections because it was something we had in common or if they perhaps felt obligated to validate the work we had done together. For example, during the interviews some participants expressed gratitude for their pre-service program, whereas others were apologetic that they felt unprepared subject areas in which I was their course instructor .

As a researcher situated within the research, the stories of the participants caused me to reflect on who I am as an educational leader. Listening to their stories brought me back to my own journey as a first-year teacher and how I became a leader in the Hawaii Department of Education. My identity as a leader was disrupted when I transitioned from teacher to teacher educator and repositioned myself as protégé in an unfamiliar territory. The participants of this study caused me to reexamine my own identity as an emerging leader and how my narrative may be shaped and reshaped by those in this study.

Implications for Practice

This study informs the practice of teacher educators, mentors and administrators. It provides insight into how systems and programs could be reimagined to support the professional growth and development of new teachers.

Post-Graduation Support for New Teachers

Most first-year teachers have no further contact with their program instructors or advisors beyond graduation (Farrell, 2012). University faculty may know where their graduates were hired but have little or no knowledge about their day-to-day experiences. As discussed earlier, mentors play a significant role in the professional lives of first-year teachers. Positive relationships and interactions with mentors can help increase new teacher's self-efficacy, confidence and motivation for professional growth. Teacher preparation programs should include post-graduation mentoring as part of their program design to help graduates transition from pre-service to classroom teacher. Mentors should be instructors or advisors that have a trusting relationship with the new teacher and are familiar with his or her developing practice and professional growth needs. Post-graduation support would benefit teacher programs as well. By continuing working relationships with new teachers, faculty would have an insider's perspective of the new teacher experience. This would help to inform, improve and strengthen pre-service programs to better prepare teachers for the classroom and for their school communities.

School-Based Mentoring

In addition to teacher preparation programs mentoring their graduates during their early career years, school-based mentors are also needed to support new teachers as they transition into their school communities. New teachers benefit from working with mentors in their schools. While some new teachers have district or complex area mentors, these mentors are not part of the school community and lack first-hand knowledge of the school's culture and dynamics. As part

of the faculty, school-based mentors can help new teachers connect with their colleagues and school resources. They are also readily accessible for consultation and are active participants in the new teacher's workday. School-based mentors should work to build relationships with new teachers that will nurture professional development and inquiry. While school-based mentors help first-year teachers understand the culture of their new learning communities, compliance should not be the goal of mentoring. Mentoring should be grounded in best practices and, in collaboration with all role groups including administration and teacher educators, help to promote professional growth and inquiry.

Gradual Increase of Responsibility

The work of a teacher is multi-faceted. In addition to planning, instruction and assessment, teachers participate in and deliver professional development, contribute to school improvement plans, prepare accreditation reports, sponsor extra-curricular activities, and participate on steering committees and advisory councils. Teachers also serve on data teams, student support teams, grade level teams and curriculum cadres. New teachers would benefit from having a gradual increase of responsibilities at their schools in order to provide time and space for their developing practice. With fewer responsibilities, new teachers would have opportunity to create communication and organizational systems, develop curriculum, strengthen instruction and classroom management practices and form strong relationships with their colleagues and students.

Scaffolded Evaluation System

In Hawai‘i public schools, first-year teachers are evaluated using the same tools and criteria as experienced teachers. The Educator Effectiveness System (EES) is a daunting task that is initiated soon after the start of the school year. Student Growth and Learning measures

constitute half of the teacher's annual effectiveness rating; Teacher Practice measures account for the other half (HIDOE, 2020). Teachers new to the Hawai'i Department of Education are required to attend EES training which may take them out of the classroom during the second or third week of school. While effective teaching is needed in all classrooms regardless of the teacher's years of experience, a scaffolded evaluation system would benefit the developing practice of new teachers. The first-year teachers of this study acknowledged the importance of the EES components but admitted that as a new teacher, the evaluation in its entirety was so overwhelming that it did not benefit their practice and in fact, took time away from their teaching. A scaffolded evaluation system that prioritizes teaching practice would better serve new teachers and be more meaningful to their professional growth.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, I recommend broadening this study to examine the experiences of first-year teachers in other educational settings. For example, this study focused on eight first-year teachers who graduated from a cohorted undergraduate program in elementary education. All the participants were elementary teachers in Hawai'i public schools. A study of secondary teachers or teachers who are teaching in independent/private schools would add another perspective. A comparative study of first-year teachers in different educational settings or who graduated from different types of teacher preparation programs would also contribute to understanding the new teacher experience. Finally,future research may include revisiting these participants in years, a time when research tells us 50% of teachers leave the profession, to learn more about their classroom experiences, whether they will remain in teaching or not and why.

Crossing the Next Bridge

Since Fall 2018, I took a temporary hiatus from cohort coordination to work on developing a new pathway for teacher licensure in the College of Education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. In Fall 2020, I returned to cohort coordination and am currently working with the COE’s first cohort of post-baccalaureate teacher candidates in elementary education. I have crossed the bridge from teacher educator to research practitioner as I use this study to strengthen and broaden my practice. As I meet with my cohort each week and design topics for discussions, I think about what I have learned from this study and the implications for my own practice. Our conversations include examinations of leadership, family, and strategies for managing workload. I am careful to have the candidates document their journey so that they may return to their writing and engage in reflection as a reiterative process

In this time of COVID-19 I have had to find ways to develop trusting relationships in an online environment. In the past, I would schedule cohort days where we would go hiking, have seminars at cultural sites or work with educational partners. These *huaka‘i* or learning journeys were opportunities for us to connect with one another outside of the classroom and see each other from different perspectives. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are restricted to online learning, therefore I have had to think of innovative ways to create virtual spaces and scenarios that nurture relationships. Sharing pictures, artifacts and even food in online meetings have helped us to connect outside the context of course content.

As for the participants of this study, I completed collecting their stories in July 2019 but have continued to stay in touch with all of them. We have met individually and as a group to talk about our practice and to share ideas of how to teach elementary school students online during a pandemic. I was recently a participant in a professional development session led by one of the

participants. I have attended one of their weddings. They have also celebrated with me as I brought this study to a close. I am grateful to have heard their stories, privileged to have shared their experiences and look forward to what lies ahead.

Appendix A: Consent Form

University of Hawai‘i
Consent to Participate in Research Project
Dr. Jamie Simpson-Steele, Principal Investigator
Ronnie Tiffany-Kinder, Student Investigator
Project title: First-Year Teachers: A Phenomenological Study

Aloha! I am a doctoral student from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa asking for your participation in a research study that is exploring the lived experiences of first-year teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade settings. I am doing this research as a requirement for earning my graduate degree in educational leadership and professional practice (EdD).

What am I being asked to do?
If you participate in this project, you will engage in the following activities:
Two (2) focus group interviews. You will join about 7 other participants and a student investigator to discuss your experiences as a first year teacher. The discussion will reach beyond day-to-day events and include social and emotional components that make-up the lived experiences of first-year teachers. Focus group interviews will be held midway through the school year (January 2019) and at the end of the school year (June 2019)
Two (2) semi-structured individual interviews. You will meet with a student investigator to talk about your individual experiences as a first-year teacher and the cultures and communities in which you teach. You will explore your emerging professional identity and the various elements that impact it.
In both the focus group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews you will be asked to revisit journal writings and artifacts created during your teacher education program and reflect on your growth and development from teacher candidate to in-service teacher.

Taking part in this study is your choice.
Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of this project is to understand the lived experiences of first-year teachers in an elementary school setting. I am asking you to participate because you are a former presercice teacher currently teaching elementary school with no prior teaching experience.

What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?
The discussion will be guided by about 8-10 open ended questions. It will take about 1-2 hours. Focus group questions will include questions like: “How do or did you feel about teaching in your school or community? Or “What led you to become an elementary school teacher?”

With your permission, we will audio-record the discussion so that we can later transcribe the discussion and analyze the responses. You will join with about 7 other people who we will interview for this study.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?I
I believe there is little risk to you for participating in this research project. You may become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the interview questions or discussing topics during the focus group interview or semi-structured individual interview. If you do become stressed or uncomfortable, you can

skip the question or take a break. You can also stop the interview, or you can withdraw from the project altogether.

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. The results of this project may help improve teacher education and support for new teachers.

Privacy and Confidentiality:
I will keep all study data secure in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office/encrypted on a password protected computer. Only the principal investigator and student investigator of our research team will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

After I write a copy of the discussions, I will erase or destroy the audio-recordings. When I report the results of my research project, I will not use your name. I will not use any other personal identifying information that can identify you. I will use pseudonyms (fake names) and report my findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

Future Research Studies
Even after removing identifiers, the data from this study will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Questions:
If you have any questions about this study, please call or email Ronnie Tiffany-Kinder at 808-382-5858 or ronnietk@hawaii. You may also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Jamie Simpson Steele, at 808-956-4407 and jamiesim@hawaii.edu You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. to discuss problems, concerns and questions; obtain information; or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit http://go.hawaii.edu/jRd for more information on your rights as a research participant.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to Ronnie Tiffany-Kinder.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page. Keep this copy of the informed consent for your records and reference Please sign the attached copy and mail it to the investigators for their records (see attached)

Signature(s) for Consent:

I give permission to join the research project entitled: "First-year Teachers: A Phenomenological Study." Please initial next to either “Yes” or “No” to the following: interviews for this research.
_____ Yes I consent to participate in audio-recorded semi-structured individual interviews for this research.
_____ Yes I consent to be audio-recorded for focus group portion of this research.

_____ Yes I consent to including journal writing and artifacts created during my teacher education program as talking points in the focus group interviews for this research
_____ Yes I consent to including journal writing and artifacts created during my teacher education program as talking points in the semi-structured individual interviews for this research

OR

_____ No I do not consent to participate in audio-recorded semi-structured individual interviews for this research.

_____ No I do not consent to participate in the audio-recorded focus group interiews for this research.

_____ No I do not consent to including journal writing and artifacts created during my teacher education program as talking points in the focus group interviews for this research

_____ No I do not consent to including journal writing and artifacts created during my teacher education program as talking points in the semi-structured individual interviews for this research

Name of Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI‘I® SYSTEM

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

TO:	Simpson Steele, Jamie, PhD, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Institute for Teacher Education, Elementary Program
	Tiffany-Kinder, Ronnie, MEdT, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Institute for Teacher Education, Elementary Program
FROM:	Rivera, Victoria, Dir, Ofc of Rsch Compliance, Social&Behav Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE:	First Year Teachers: A Phenomenological Study
FUNDING SOURCE:	
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	2018-00821
	Approval Date: October 24, 2018 Expiration Date: December 31, 2999

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On October 24, 2018, the University of Hawaii (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) 2.

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at the OHRP Website www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

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Biomedical Sciences Building B104
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Fax: (808) 956-8683
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Script

Project title: *First-year Teachers: A Phenomenological Study*

Participant Recruitment Script: Email

Aloha! am a doctoral student from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. I am explored the lived experiences of first-year teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade settings. I am doing this research as a requirement for earning my graduate degree in educational leadership and professional practice. The project will result in a better understand and insight into the experiences of first year teachers in order to inform policy makers and program developers.

As a current first-year elementary school teacher, you have been selected to participate in this research. I will meet with each participant individually for two semi-structured interviews and then meet with all participants for two focus group interviews. A summary report will culminate this important study. I appreciate your help and generosity of your time.

If you are interested in sharing your ideas and contributing to scholarship in teacher education and educational leadership, please complete the following forms: participant contact information forms, confidentiality form, etc. I am open to any questions you may have on this exciting journey of inquiry.

Mahalo! I look forward to working with you!

Participant Recruitment Script: Phone Call

Aloha! I am a doctoral student from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. I am explored the lived experiences of first-year teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade settings. I am doing this research as a requirement for earning my graduate degree in educational leadership and professional practice. The project will result in a better understand and insight into the experiences of first year teachers in order to inform policy makers and program developers.

As a current first-year elementary school teacher, you have been selected to participate in this research. I will meet with each participant individually for two semi-structured interviews and then meet with all participants for two focus group interviews. A summary report will culminate this important study. I appreciate your help and generosity of your time.

Would you be interested in sharing your ideas and contributing to scholarship in teacher education and educational leadership? I can sent or deliver forms for you to complete such as a participant contact information forms, confidentiality form, etc. I am open to any questions you may have on this exciting journey of inquiry.

Do you have any questions?

Mahalo! I look forward to working with you!

Participant Recruitment Script: Introductory Presentation (Face-to-Face)

Aloha! I am a doctoral student from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. I am explored the lived experiences of first-year teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade settings. I am doing this research as a requirement for earning my graduate degree in educational leadership and professional practice. The project will result in a better understand and insight into the experiences of first year teachers in order to inform policy makers and program developers.

As a current first-year elementary school teacher, you have been selected to participate in this research. I will meet with each participant individually for two semi-structured interviews and then meet with all participants for two focus group interviews. A summary report will culminate this important study. I appreciate your help and generosity of your time.

Would you be interested in sharing your ideas and contributing to scholarship in teacher education and educational leadership? Please complete these forms such as a participant contact information forms, confidentiality form, etc. I am open to any questions you may have on this exciting journey of inquiry.

Mahalo! I look forward to working with you!

Appendix D: Individual and Focus Group Interview Questions

Project title: First Year Teachers: A Phenomenological Study

Research questions:
What are the lived experiences of first year elementary school teachers working in a public school system?
How do new teachers develop an individual professional identity in a system culture of compliance and standardization?

Project Goals:
The purpose of this projetct is to:
a) describe the lived experiences of first year teachers
b) examine and understand their emerging professional identitites of first year teachers
c) engage in collaborative inquiry strengthen participants‘ professional identities and self-efficacy within the context of their cultures and communities.

Focus Group Questions (Session #1)

1. Tell me about your first day on campus as a teacher.
2. Think back to when you began setting up your classroom. What were your thoughts and feelings?
3. Describe your interactions with colleagues. How do these interactions support or influence your thoughts, feelings and actions?
4. Tell me about your drive to and from school? What do you think about? Do you have any particular routines?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the school community?
6. What was your greatest challenge when you began the school year? How did you overcome it?
7. How do you think your students would describe you? How does this make you feel?
8. What is a metaphor you would use to describe your teacher self?
9. What do you anticipate or hope for over the next few months?
10. What wonderings or questions do you have for yourself or others?

Focus Group Questions (Session #2)

1. What changes do you see in yourself since we last met?
2. Last time we met I asked you to share a metaphor you would use to describe teacher self. What is your metaphor now? (Same? Different? Explain)
3. How would you describe your kuleana as a teacher?
4. What is a gift that you bring to the classroom.
5. Describe your interactions with parents. How do these interactions support or influence your thoughts, feelings and actions?

6. How do you think others view you as an educator? How is this similar to or different from how you view yourself?
7. Fill in the blanks: I used to think.....but now I know.....
8. What were your thoughts and feelings as you closed your classroom at the end of the school year?
9. What wonderings or questions do you have for yourself or others?
10. What are your hopes for yourself for next school year?

Semi-structured Individual Interview Questions (Session #1)

Introduction: *Thank you for participating in this interview. I anticipate it will take about 1.5 hours. Please know that we can take a break at any time and you also have the option to not answer a question or stop the interview at any time without penalty.*

1. Tell me about what lead you to become a teacher.
2. Describe your hiring process and what lead to your decision to teach at the school where you are now.
3. What were your thoughts and feelings the first time you entered the classroom?
4. What school or complex supports have your received? How have they impacted your thoughts, feelings and readiness for teaching?
5. How has your family and/or friends adapted to your new role as a classroom teacher?
6. What three words would you use to describe your first month in the classroom?
7. Teaching often includes highs and lows: Describe a "high" and a "low" that has occured since you began teaching.
8. Tell me about something you have learned about yourself (personally or professionally) in recent months.
9. Fill in the blanks: I am a teacher who believes ..... and feels_____
10. If you could have a conversation with yourself as preservice teacher what would you say?

Semi-structured Individual Interview Questions (Session #2)

Introduction: *Thank you for participating in this interview. I anticipate it will take about 1.5 hours.Please know that we can take a break at any time and you also have the option to not answer a question or stop the interview at any time without penalty*

1. When you were a teacher candidate you were asked to write about your philosophy of teaching (provide writing). Is your philosophy the same or has it changed? Explain how.
2. I would like you to use your senses to describe your teaching experiences. Please complete the following sentences.You are welcome to explain on your responses.
    a. Teaching is the color _____
    b. Teaching is the sound of _____
    c. Teaching smells like _____

d. Teaching feels like _____

3. Can you share a moment or experience that lead you to think, "THIS is why I am a teacher"
4. Can you share a moment or experience that lead you to wonder, "WHY am I a teacher?"
5. What three words would you use to describe your first year in the classroom?
6. Tell me about something you have learned about yourself (personally or professionally) this past academic year?
7. Last time we met I asked you to fill in the blanks for these statemets*: I am a teacher who believes ..... and feels*_____. You said: _____ . Are your beliefs and feelings the same or different. Please explain.
8. What are three words you would use to describe yourself as a professional educator?
9. Imagine your teaching life were depicted in the film. What would be your soundtrack? You can name a particular song or describe a genre.
10. Where do you see yourself a year from now? Five years from now?

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