Firsts: Performing Ways First Year Teachers Experience Identity Transformation

by

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Abstract
This thesis reports on research showing the survival discourse of beginning teaching has shifted from sink or swim metaphors to describe surviving transition shock and classroom management concerns to surviving contract employment. Beginning teachers are neither sinking nor swimming in this liminal state. Rather, it is as though they are on a lifeboat where they cannot feel like a ‘real’ teacher until they can operate with certainty.

Interrogating the experiences of beginning teachers, and the transformation of their identity in their first year (1yr) of teaching, the thesis explores research participants’ firsts as epiphanic or revelatory moments of identity transformation. Participants were followed for three years from upon completion of their teacher education, through their first year of teaching, up to the beginning of their third year in the profession. The major finding was that while contemporary understandings of professional identity highlight the transformative nature of the phenomenon, contract employment had the most impact on these teachers’ identity transformation.

Teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt 2000). It has been reported by the Australian Education Union (AEU) and in the Victorian media in recent years that up to 50% of beginning teachers are leaving the profession within their first five years. The reasons given for this level of attrition include workload, pay, and behaviour management, among the top concerns of beginning teachers. These categories have positioned beginning teachers in a survival discourse for many years, yet there is more to beginning teachers’ intentions to leave than their struggles to survive in the classroom. More recently in Victoria what it means to ‘survive’ has shifted to surviving the pervasive contractual nature of beginning teachers’ employment conditions.
This qualitative study seeks to question what remains concealed with regard to beginning teachers’ experiences through an investigation of the differences between and within individuals, allowing categories of description to emerge from the data rather than pre-determining categories of investigation. Data was collected from twelve participants through individual semi-structured interviews and written communication. A theatre-based research approach to representing the participants’ experiences was employed, culminating in a performance titled ‘The First Time’. The processes of scripting, rehearsing, and performing, were utilised to analyse and represent the data to expert audiences. In an aim to uncover questions that have been buried by answers, the research is oriented as a phenomenographic inquiry. This mode of inquiry seeks to describe, analyse, and understand (Marton 1981) the qualitatively different experiences 1yr teachers undergo in their identity formation and transformation.

The results of this research reveal the destabilising effect of short-term contracts so prevalent in the current context; that status and belonging are central to 1yr teachers’ identity work. Status and belonging are positioned within survival, liminal, and hegemonic discourses; and expressed through artefacts as symbols of belonging. The low status ascribed to contractual work has a clear impact on beginning teachers’ commitment to the profession.
Acknowledgements

I wish to firstly acknowledge the generosity of the twelve participants in this study. Each gave up their precious time throughout their first year of teaching, and they continue to share their experiences with me to this day. I am very grateful for their time, their candour, and their support of this research.

My supervision team have played an important role in this process, by encouraging me to have the confidence to be creative in my approach, and to also maintain an ethical and rigorous stance with regards to the work. I thank my supervisors Dr Joanne O’Mara and Professor Diane Mayer, with Dr Jill Loughlin, for their support, insightful comments, thought-provoking questions, and continued encouragement. I would also like to thank the members of my colloquium panel A/Prof Julianne Moss and Professor Jo-Anne Reid, chaired by A/Prof Mary Dixon, for their continued support and interest in my work.

My family and close friends have provided more than just emotional support throughout this journey. I would particularly like to thank Pam and Graham Ludecke, Peter Minack, and Lucy Nailon, who have constantly afforded me the means, inspiration, and environment conducive to undertaking this work. I seriously couldn’t have done it without you.

I sincerely thank the actors who performed in ‘The First Time’ for their commitment to late night rehearsals, and performances in strange and confronting spaces. Jess Mahney, Beaux Glenn, Arna Pletes, Melissa Learmonth, Ashlea Thompson, Tom Ellis, Laura Brown, Lauren Wallis, Edwina Christie, and Claire Hesse – from the lecture theatre, to a classroom on a 42 degree day, to a space that resembled the House of Parliament, you rose to the challenge, conquered your fears, and drew on your own experiences of being a beginning teacher to represent the experiences of the participants with sensitivity and energy.

I also thank the audiences of the various performances for their support, their valuable feedback, and their encouragement.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognise my colleagues who have provided assistance throughout this process: Georgina Clarke, Julie Dyer, Ingrid Galitis, John Jacobs, Debbie Routley, Christine Sinclair, and Joanne Zivillica.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>First year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEU</td>
<td>Australian Education Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BER</td>
<td>‘Building the Education Revolution’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Casual Replacement Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELP</td>
<td>Higher Education Loan Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEU</td>
<td>Independent Education Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISV</td>
<td>Independent Schools Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Provisionally Registered Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIT</td>
<td>Victorian Institute of Teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Notes on phrasing and formatting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1yr teacher</td>
<td>First year teacher – a teacher in their first year of teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service teacher</td>
<td>Student undertaking a teacher education program/degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate teacher</td>
<td>First two years as determined by Teacher Class Salaries in Victorian Government Schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning teacher</td>
<td>The first 5 years, as determined by stakeholders such as the AEU and literature surrounding attrition rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>The twelve first year teachers. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the work to protect the privacy of these teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Short-term is used to describe employment of less than 6 months. Fixed-term is used to describe a period of more than 6 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolled over</td>
<td>Contract renewed without the school having to advertise, or the teacher having to apply for, the position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>is used to discuss the participant during the scripting, rehearsal and performance period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Also a teacher, bringing their own teaching experiences to the portrayal of their ‘character’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>The ‘reader’ in multiple senses of the word – a reader of the page, and of the stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…’</td>
<td>Single quotation marks are used to set apart key terms – for emphasis, or to signify a special or contentious term, and to indicate quotes with citations less than 30 words that are referenced as per the Deakin University Author-date (Harvard) Referencing Style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…”</td>
<td>Double quotation marks are used for participants’ words, or reported speech, as quotations in text without a referenced citation, e.g. interview data and email communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First in italics</td>
<td>Is employed to signify an experience or event identified and described as a first by the participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words in italics</td>
<td>Author’s emphasis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times New Roman font, indented</td>
<td>Play script text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaded text box</td>
<td>is used to distinguish quotations from other (non-participant) audience members about the performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The term drama</td>
<td>is used to refer to the literature or script, which includes plot, character, dialogue, stage directions etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The term theatre</td>
<td>is used to refer to a broader concept that includes drama in addition to actors, production elements, audience, and of course ‘the’ theatre (location of performance).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Sector, Region &amp; Teaching Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachy</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Catholic, Melbourne Metropolitan, Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassidy</td>
<td>Government, Regional Victoria, Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sari</td>
<td>Catholic, Melbourne Metropolitan, Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tash</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian</td>
<td>Government, Melbourne Metropolitan, Primary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE

Introduction to Part One

What are the experiences of first year (1yr) teachers?

Part One provides a contextual framework for the research through an introduction and a review of the literature, both concerning the nature of 1yr teaching. Part One: Introduction outlines the background to the research, and the theoretical orientation taken to investigate the research question and sub questions concerning ‘the problem’, which include: How do 1yr teachers experience identity formation and transformation? What is the nature of 1yr teaching? What do 1yr teachers describe as the current conditions of their work? What are the discourses surrounding 1yr teachers’ work that impact on the transformation of their identity? Are beginning teachers’ intentions to leave the profession related to their dissatisfaction with teaching? Are beginning teachers’ intentions to leave linked to the nature of their terms of employment?’

Part One: Literature Review is in two sections – the first was developed prior to and during the early stages of the research process with the intention of identifying works of key players in the field of beginning teachers’ identity formation and transformation. The second section was developed during and after the data analysis stage, through which the categories of description
emerged. As such the second section refers to some of the results of the research as represented in the performance titled ‘The First Time’\textsuperscript{1}.

\textsuperscript{1} ‘The First Time’ can be viewed at:

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB1ED0FDEF2AA8836.
Introduction

Background

This research has come about through my interest in personal revelations through transformative moments, and has provided me with the opportunity to work through some of my assumptions about how people see themselves in relation to their work, particularly when that work is new. While the research draws on my own understandings of the power of transformative moments in regards to professional identity, it is essentially the stories of twelve graduate teachers on their own journeys, and the transformative moments that impact on their identity and practice.

Both my own and the participants’ journeys reveal aspects of identity, beginning teaching, and *first* experiences. Revelations within these aspects are indicators of learning about who we are in relation to our work, and how identities are formed and transformed over time. The self, in this research, is not a passive entity, determined by external influences. ‘In forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications’ (Giddens 1991, p. 2). This concept provides the basis for an orientation for my study that focuses on how teachers describe their experiences of identity formation and transformation, and how their descriptions and experiences continue to shape their professional identity, and aspects of the teaching profession.

In this introduction I begin by highlighting revelations that have led to this research. These include my own first experiences as a beginning teacher, my mentoring practice as an experienced teacher in secondary schools and my university practice in the School of Education. I aim to acknowledge that what has come before impresses upon what results; that shifts and changes over time contribute to current ideas, even those that are not immediately
visible. These contributing shifts and changes can provide a foundation for what emerges at a later time. I am intrigued by epiphanies and revelations – the surprise or shock of something new, or something unpredictable. This is what I call a first. I am particularly interested in the way firsts can indicate a shift in an individual’s thinking and identity, and how this shift in an individual can also create a shift that has wider implications within a local or global context. I recognise that there is still much that goes on under the surface, but it is in the description of firsts where transformation within the individual can be more readily identified. First experiences are frozen forms of thought that can transcend time and place when they are revisited in subsequent events, and have been employed as a lens through which the 1yr teachers in this research were encouraged to discuss and describe their experiences of becoming a teacher.

Looking back now I can see that this research journey actually began with my own first when I was a 1yr teacher at a south-eastern suburban school in Victoria in the early 1990s. Like more than half the participants in this study I had completed a practicum at this school during my degree and felt confident in my ability to begin my teaching career there. I was employed during term two to replace a sequence of teachers who had been on long service and ‘stress’ leave and had decided not to return. In those early months I was admittedly oblivious to the context impacting on my identity. I saw my identity at the time as ‘fixed’. It was later in the year I had my first realisation that an aspect of my practice was shaping and transforming my identity, and that in turn my first would have ‘global’ consequences.

The main context that impacted on my individual identity as a beginning teacher was being employed on a short-term contract, term-by-term for three terms, in my 1yr. Each term the position was advertised, and I applied in writing for the position each time. I initially assumed every teacher at the school was employed on a contract similar to mine. However, after applying for my third new contract within my 1yr I realised my situation was different
to the other teachers. They were ‘ongoing’, and did not have to apply to keep teaching at the school. Student enrolments for the following year were declining, so the ongoing staff were given the opportunity to elect to be declared ‘in excess’ and relocated to another school. When some staff elected to move on, I was informed during the summer holidays that I was able to reapply to teach at the school for the first term in the next year. This routine continued for three years and eleven contracts until, due to further declining enrolments and staff unwilling to be declared in excess, I was told I could no longer continue to be employed at the school.

This was the first time I became aware of the wider political implications of the ‘Kennett Revolution’\(^2\) on my job security. Initially I had assumed I would be the one to decide whether or not I would stay at the school. I had plans to develop the then small performing arts program through a variety of curricular and extra-curricular offerings. I formed collegiate relationships with the staff in order to work together to create a variety of opportunities for the students, as I had seen staff do during my practicum. I went into my job full of optimism, and while this only wavered towards the end of the three years, being on a contract impacted on my identity and my practice, which in turn had wider implications. I was torn between persisting through job insecurity in a school I loved, and applying for something more permanent. In deciding to keep hoping that one day I would be offered a more permanent position I realised my job insecurity had an impact on my willingness to plan for the students’ future learning. I found myself consciously holding back ‘just in case’, because I was on a contract and I didn’t want to commit to something wholeheartedly that would likely be taken away from me for reasons beyond my control. At the same time I had

\(^2\) As Premier Kennett himself came to term it, where government funding for the public school system was substantially reduced, with 350 government schools closed, and 7,000 teaching jobs removed between 1992 and 1995. New teaching jobs were subsequently advertised as contract positions during this period.
to ‘perform’ highly in order to keep my job and not be replaced by another applicant. I aligned myself with the other beginning teacher who was also on term-by-term contracts, and we constructed a beginning teacher identity between us where we saw ourselves as different to the ongoing staff based on the notion that we had to earn our jobs. We believed we worked harder, taught better, and provided more opportunities for students than many of the other staff.

At the next school I was employed for five years on two one-year contracts, a two year contract, and then I applied for and was offered an ongoing position in my final year – eight years into my teaching career. Both this school and the previous one were Victorian government schools, though the second had steadily increasing student enrolments and therefore more flexibility in relation to the employment of teachers. At this time – between 1997 and 2001 – approximately 25% of staff at this school were employed on a contract, and approximately 50% of those teachers were 1yr teachers. Despite the highly collegiate staffroom environment the ‘contract teachers’ interacted amongst each other, brought together by their shared experiences in reapplying for their jobs and extension of their contracts at key moments in the school year – namely mid-year and the end of the year, in addition to our annual review. At these times the ‘contract teachers’ would routinely apply for other jobs, just in case their applications to remain at the school were not successful.

Later in my teaching career I was employed in the Catholic sector in an ongoing position. Interestingly, at this time the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) was established in 2002 as an independent body with responsibility for regulating and promoting the teaching profession. This step was taken to further strengthen the support framework for the teaching profession in Victoria. From 2002 less than 10% of the staff at this school were employed on contracts. These were mostly maternity leave replacement positions, with contracts of up to seven years. In 2003 the VIT
introduced their standards of professional practice\(^1\), and launched a pilot version of its program for providing full registration for provisionally registered teachers (PRTs). In 2004 the program was expanded to all PRTs in Victoria, and in 2005 when our school employed three 1yr teachers I knew this program was something I wanted to be involved in at a school-based level, not least because of my own experiences as a beginning teacher. While the program was in its infancy many graduates saw it (and some still do) simply as an assignment, or “like being back at uni”. These shared understandings and experiences among the graduate teachers at this time created a sub-group of staff, defined through their graduate identity, with their own cultural and social capital. As I was working with these teachers making their transition to teaching I also began working at a university in Victoria, in the Bachelor of Education and Masters of Teaching degrees. I was particularly drawn to teaching the final units within these degrees where the focus was on the transition to beginning teaching. These units were designed around meeting the VIT Standards for Graduating Teachers, and now include the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) National Professional Standards for Teachers – Graduate (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] 2011).

Looking back over the time since I began my teaching career there seem to be many changes made, particularly with reference to policies intended to regulate, and increase the professionalisation of, teaching. While I value the sentiment behind such policies as teacher registration, professional standards, and terms of employment, I also recognise that they identify those entering the teaching profession as ‘different’. For example my personal history as a beginning teacher alerts me to anecdotal conversations regarding the economic rationalisation of employing teachers on contracts. While beneficial for schools in managing their budgets and temporary

\(^1\) http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/standardsandlearning/Pages/professional-standards.aspx
staffing shortfall, the over-use of contract employment for extended periods of beginning teachers has far-reaching implications. I cannot help but wonder whether insecure employment conditions have had as much impact on beginning teacher attrition as areas such as behaviour management and workload.

The AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers state that ‘[the Standards] present a common understanding and language for discourse between teachers…’ (AITSL 2011). Beginning teachers are positioned, and position themselves, outside this common understanding and discourse. My research shows that they are ‘different’ to their more experienced colleagues and those with ongoing employment status. Despite the VIT’s proposal that it ‘supports teachers in their first year of teaching with a structured induction program’ (VIT 2013) the purpose of teacher registration is viewed by a number of participants in this study as a form of ‘checking up’ and ‘cracking down’ on teachers, positioning such institutions as the VIT as watchdogs, thereby positioning teachers as inept. Some of the participants in this study also position themselves through the employment of terminology such as ‘just a grad’. It is interesting to note how pre-service and beginning teachers position themselves by appropriating the terminology for their own purposes. This positioning is discussed further throughout this work. Such revelations cause me to continually reflect on my own first experiences in new ways, in response to a variety of contexts.

**Theoretical orientation**

I use my own experiences above as examples of how this study came about, and how I orient the research through revelations that highlight the transformation of individual’s identity in response to, and situated within, contextual factors. I have observed the values and expectations of those entering the teaching profession at a graduate level as different to those of teachers who entered the profession prior to the introduction of contract
employment. As such the current graduate teachers have a differing view of what it is to be a teacher, which I have noted manifests itself in a variety of beliefs among beginning teachers with regard to their commitment to teaching. I propose that the construction of a graduate identity transforms the practice of teaching on a broader level. This led me initially to orient my research in a practice-based approach that recognises the transformative nature of practices. Aspects of practice approaches remain as an investigative lens and are discussed in further detail in Part Two. These aspects include the notions that practice is not just what individuals do – it has aspects that are ‘extra-individual’: it is culturally and discursively, materially and economically, and socially and historically formed and structured; is dramaturgical in character; is embodied (and situated); and is transformative (Kemmis 2009, pp 22-3).

The methodological approach taken in this study is positioned within a paradigm that focuses the research on how the participants experience a given phenomenon, with a specific reference to what these 1yr teachers do in a particular time and place. I have employed a theatre-based research method to capture and analyse these teachers’ experiences. The decisions made in my approach to this research begin with an Aristotelian perspective, that the knowledge of what we do has a great influence on life; that when we are cognisant of the circumstances of the action (what we do) and the objects with which it is concerned (in time and place), we are acting with reason (Aristotle trans. 2009). This research centres on what individuals experience at a particular moment in time, in a particular place, and how what they do shapes, and is shaped by, their individual aspects of their identity such as their roles and aspirations, and the social aspects of their identity including affiliations, interactions, and status. As a result of what these teachers do they transform both their individual and collective identities.
In focusing this research on 1yr teachers’ identity I recognise that professional identity formation and transformation is ongoing, dynamic, involves both a person and a context, and comprises the notion of agency – the active pursuit of professional development. Aspects of professional identity include, but are not limited to, individual’s roles and aspirations, and their affiliations, interactions, and status. The language used in the literature to describe the dynamic nature of identity varies greatly. As Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, p. 178) cite, some terms used to characterise this shaping of identity are the ‘development’ of identity, the ‘construction’ of identity, identity ‘formation’, ‘identitymaking’, ‘creating’ an identity, ‘shaping’ an identity, ‘building’ identity, and the ‘architecture’ of teacher’s professional identities. The language used in practice approaches includes ‘formation and transformation’, ‘production and reproduction’ and/or ‘reproduction and transformation’. This language acknowledges that an understanding of identity can be viewed as an aspect of the self, which is held in tension with aspects of the professional such as social, cultural, historical and political features of practice. In relation to this study I have employed the terms formation and transformation. These verbs have a perfective aspect, which assist to capture the notion of a first as viewed in its entirety through completion. At times transformation is insufficient in encapsulating the ongoing nature of identity. In such cases I employ being and becoming (Britzman 1991) as continuous verbs with imperfective or progressive aspects in order to depict the way firsts can be revisited in a number of ways after the event; how they have different impacts and can shed light on the teacher’s sense of identity and agency at various times and in various contexts.

Further, with regard to language, there are a number of moments where the selection of words used to describe identity transformation, and the experiences of the participants, is employed specifically to address the themes of the research. Most of this language stems from the use of the term firsts to describe experiences that have a sense of newness, and that
subsequently are marked as milestones. Milestones, or rites of passage, also mark a transition from one state or status to another. The *firsts* in this research focus mostly on milestones that have been created, rather than anticipated ones. These milestones were often reported by the participants as epiphanies or revelations. The religious undertones of these words are not accidental. Rather than employ terms such as ‘a-ha’ or ‘eureka’ moments, which are used to convey the excitement at experiencing a sudden understanding of a previously incomprehensible problem, the terms epiphanies and revelations capture the suddenness with which transformation is recognised in both successful and difficult situations. Epiphanies and revelations seem to appear out of nowhere and are subsequently employed to perceive previous situations in a new light, as well as informing future actions. These terms assist to describe the *firsts* in this research as moments of transformation, and the participants’ associated thinking and feelings at particular moments in time.

Embedded within this research is the notion of ‘habitus’ – beginning teachers’ dispositions to act, think, and feel in certain ways within the field (Bourdieu 1977; 1990; 1993). What results in this research is an understanding of beginning teaching as an identity – a field in itself within the field of teaching – as it requires the acquisition of capital in order to perform within it and as a result becomes a producer of cultural capital. Capitals and fields impress themselves into the dispositions of those involved to form a ‘habitus’ or learned capacity to participate appropriately in this or that practice as a ‘player’. These ‘communities of practice’ – situated knowledge and learning in social terms – regarding the social formation of practices and practitioners, are also pertinent to this research. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) draw attention to the role played by communities of practice in the formation and transformation of practices and practitioners. Different participants in a practice enact it in different ways, using their bodies in different ways. This embodiment has profound
effects on practices as the physical performance of a practice also shapes the identity of the practitioner.

Key notions of identity emerge primarily through individuals’ experiences in a particular time and place. The application of *firsts* that are specific, self-selected moments in time is employed as a lens through which transformation of identity is investigated. In sharing *firsts* with others, particularly other teachers, individuals position themselves to interact or to affiliate with others. Every teacher has a *first* to tell. Some are horror stories; others are more like a comedy of errors. However, the essence of a *first* is not in the description of the event itself, it is in the revelation of transformation. *Firsts* allow practitioners to pinpoint transformations in identity that have taken place over time – from past self to present self. Psychological perspectives offered by James (1890) and developed by Mead (1913; 1934) are used to discuss *firsts* in relation to identity through an understanding of the self – the ‘I’ and ‘me’ in relation to roles, aspirations, affiliations, interactions, and status.

The concept of time is a central theme in this research. Participants describe their experiences through *firsts*, capturing a moment in time in order to understand the nature of transformation that takes place. In this regard I subscribe to the view of time given by Atwood (in Cooper & Olsen 1996) as not simply linear but also having dimension, as one can also look down through time, like looking through water. At times specific aspects can surface or submerge, but nothing goes away. Also in relation to this study time is viewed, as Grenfell and James (2004, p 501) describe it, as possessing various facets – ‘at any given moment, there are those elements that are passing through quickly and those with established, semi-permanent positions’. An acknowledgement of these concepts of time also link to the extra-individual aspects of practice in which identity transformation occurs. For example the extra-individual features of practice situated in the specific time of the conduct of this research include the VIT standards for graduating
teachers, provisional registration, and supporting PRTs programs; employment contracts; mentoring and induction; a political climate of performance pay, the ‘Gonski Report’, school reform, Building the education Revolution (BER), quality teaching, nationalisation of the profession in Australia through the AITSL national professional standards for teachers and the development of the Australian Curriculum. Social time is referred to particularly in terms of the rhythms of school such as weeks, terms, seasons, and key annual events such as reporting, job rollovers, and the participants’ VIT application for full registration. Schools have one of the more highly structured cyclic temporal orders among the many institutions of society. The synchronic present is a cross-section frozen at a particular instance where firsts occur. The rate of the passage of time is described by the participants as how time in the world of teaching can feel like it is moving at different speeds.

The problem

Beginning teachers are reported to be leaving the profession in large numbers according to a variety of stakeholders both here in Australia, (for example Mayer 2003; Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 2004; Skilbeck & Connell 2004; Australian Education Union [AEU] 2009; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD] 2009) and overseas (for example

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4 http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/Pages/default.aspx
5 http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review
6 http://www.alp.org.au/agenda/school-reform/
9 http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/
10 http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/
Ingersoll & Smith 2003; The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2005; Burghes et al. 2009; OECD 2011). The actual figures are varied (and some can be viewed as debateable based on how they have been generated). These figures signify the preference for statistical procedures to form an understanding of particular phenomena. However, those working in the teaching profession often develop more of a ‘feel’ for what has been revealed among their colleagues, discovering contradictions between the statistics and their own experiences. Many working in a school over the past decade would probably have observed the ageing of the staff and some high turnover of beginning teachers, and begin to feel there may indeed be a ‘crisis’ in regards to beginning teacher attrition; that the reported figures have some semblance of truth. Staffing reports attempt to list reasons why many beginning teachers decide to leave the profession, in order to address them. However, such an approach suggests there is a single remedy to a collective problem.

This research recognises the power of the social realm within the identities of teachers, in forming and transforming their identities and practices. As such I ask the following research questions: How do 1yr teachers experience identity formation and transformation? What are the experiences of 1yr teachers? What is the nature of 1yr teaching? What do 1yr teachers describe as the current conditions of their work? What are the discourses surrounding 1yr teachers’ work that impact on the transformation of their identity? Are beginning teachers’ intentions to leave the profession related to their dissatisfaction with teaching? Are beginning teachers’ intentions to leave linked to the nature of their terms of employment?’ These questions are devised to uncover variations in meanings, and steer away from a narrow focus on a one-size-fits-all model to lessening 1yr teachers’ experiences of ‘survival’. As can be seen in the literature review in the next chapter, beginning teachers’ experiences are often described as a period of survival.
Many researchers have looked into beginning teachers’ transition to teaching; therefore I have focused on how individuals describe their transformation of identity in their transition to teaching. This research builds on ideas that stem from Lortie’s (1975) work, and his recognition that beginning teachers’ work (and their induction and ‘socialisation’) was problematic, not least because of the abruptness with which full responsibility is assumed. Lortie’s work is regularly cited in relation to the daily tasks of 1yr teachers being essentially the same as their more experienced colleagues, and that therefore it is no accident that some refer to this as the ‘sink or swim’ approach (Lortie 2002, p 60).

Themes from Lortie’s research are followed in works concerning washout & ‘socialisation’ (Zeichner & Tabachnik 1981), personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly 1986; Clandinin & Connelly 1987), ‘becoming’ a teacher (Britzman 1991), ‘shifting and changing landscapes’ (Clandinin et al. 2006; Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009) and a host of work on the more negative experiences of beginning teachers including ‘sink or swim,’ ‘thrown in the deep end’ and that starting to teach represents ‘a steep learning curve’ (Allen 2009). Metaphors continue to be used in contemporary research to describe problematic transitions to teaching – including ‘navigating the waters’ (Broemmel, Swaggerty & McIntosh 2009; Bartholomew 2010), ‘dropout’ and ‘burnout’ (Maslach 2003; Goddard, O’Brien & Goddard 2006; Høigaard, Giske & Sundsli 2011). Others describe 1yr teaching with words such as ‘tension’, ‘fail’, and ‘stress’ (McCann & Johannessen 2004; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler 2005). What seems to be neglected in this body of research is an understanding of the differences between teachers’ experiences of their transition to teaching.

My own experience as a 1yr teacher, and my work with teachers transitioning to their 1yr, suggests that these teachers subscribe to 1yr teaching as a period of survival because that is what they have been led to expect. If the dominant discourse concerning 1yr teaching continues to
position these teachers in survival mode, the experiences of 1yr teachers will continue as ones of survival in a self-fulfilling prophesy. For example, the most recent AEU Beginning Teachers Survey tool (AEU 2008) establishes a bias in their questions that perpetuates some teaching myths. Their question ‘Do you feel your pre-service education adequately prepared you for dealing with difficult parents and colleagues?’ suggests that parents and colleagues are difficult to deal with. Their most cited results are generated from the following question:

![Figure 1. AEU Beginning Teachers Survey tool (AEU 2008) Question 40](image)

There is no category for ‘other’ in the survey tool. As a result the AEU report that beginning teachers top four concerns remain unchanged over two years.
It is no coincidence that the top four concerns are the top four items in the survey tool. I am not contesting the suggestion that beginning teachers do indeed have such concerns about their work. What I am contesting is the way in which beginning teachers’ concerns are gathered and reported, and the way in which these and other reports shape beginning teachers’ expectations of their 1yr of teaching, consequently impacting of the formation and transformation of their professional identity.

Thus it is my aim to uncover questions that have been buried by answers, through a phenomenographic approach. In taking this approach I seek to describe, analyse, and understand (Marton 1981) the qualitatively different experiences 1yr teachers experience in identity formation and transformation. To explore the research questions in this manner I utilised my background in the performing arts not only to present my research to a broad audience but also to investigate approaches to description, analysis, and understanding of 1yr teachers’ experiences through a theatre-based research method in order to highlight the individual and transformative nature of their identity. Stemming from the broader umbrella of arts-based research, theatre-based research approaches include verbatim theatre, ethnodrama, performance ethnography, and other theatre-based methods of research such as Forum Theatre (Boal 2001) and drama therapy, applied
theatre, and theatre in education. What these approaches have in common is to engage audiences in ‘research’ in its broadest sense. In addition to the highly visible performance aspect of theatre-based research I have been exploring theatre-based methods in relation to the description of the 1yr teachers’ experiences and the analysis of the data. I posit the employment of a theatre-based approach as the production of knowledge in action (Barrett & Bolt 2007), recognising that knowledge is derived from doing and from the senses, and that theatre-based research as a relatively new form of generative enquiry has the potential to transform research practices.

The theatre-based research design employed in this study includes key aspects of a practice approach employed as a lens to investigate identity transformation. This theatre-based research project draws on aspects of a practice approach as an investigative lens, within a phenomenographic paradigm, in order to address the overarching research focus: ‘How do 1yr teachers experience identity formation and transformation?’

**Thesis structure**

The thesis structure is presented in five parts, which include thematically related sections or chapters. Part One serves to provide a context for the investigation of 1yr teachers’ practices and experiences of identity transformation. The introduction positions the research in the present time and local space of 1yr teaching in Victorian schools. It acknowledges the origins of my interest of the phenomenon of beginning teaching, and posits a theatre-based research method that draws from practice approaches in a phenomenographic paradigm as a means to elicit description, analysis, and understanding of how 1yr teachers experience identity transformation in the transition to teaching. The ensuing chapter on the literature is framed through an introduction to 1yr teachers, and professional identity. The literature surrounding the categories of description, which emerged from the phenomenographic analysis of the data, is then introduced. These categories
of description capture the range of views present in the literature on beginning teachers and beginning teaching.

Part Two focuses on the methodological considerations applicable to this research. It contains a section overviewing and providing a rationale for the theatre-based research method. The outline of a variety of arts-based research methods and their counterparts are discussed, from which this theatre-based method has emerged. The interview method to generate data is outlined, addressing how this data was progressively considered before employing processes of scripting, rehearsing, and performing as complimentary methods of analysis. The discussion of the theatre-based method addresses the subtle and complex descriptions of 1yr teachers’ experiences, and provides images of those experiences in a way that makes them noticeable (Barone & Eisner 2012). The subsequent section in Part Two outlines the methodology and investigative lenses applied to the research. The individual and extra-individual features of practice approaches provide one such lens for this research. An outline of the phenomenographic paradigm is discussed, with reference to the theatre-based method. The orientation of the research within a phenomenographic paradigm seeks to further question that which may have been buried by answers through an investigation into how 1yr teachers experience identity transformation as situated in a specific time and place.

Part Three concerns the procedures undertaken to conduct the theatre-based research within a phenomenographic paradigm. It begins with an overview of the selection of participants, then moves to a discussion of the interview process designed to elicit variation, and the ethical considerations made in casting actors to represent the participants’ experiences in a theatre-based research performance. Part Three then details the scripting, rehearsal, and performance processes as methods of analysis, framed within a discussion of the ‘Seven Features of Arts-based Educational Inquiry’ (Barone & Eisner 1997).
Part Four identifies differences in the ways the 1yr teacher participants experienced identity formation and transformation. The structure and categories of description were devised wholly from the data, rather than supported by the data. The individual sections are structured to capture the sequence of scenes in ‘The First Time’. Part Four aims to describe, analyse, and understand the experiences of each individual participant’s identity transformation, as framed within a phenomenographic paradigm. Each section is presented in conjunction with the script of individual scenes, and begins by ‘reading’ the representation of the data, then develops into a description and analysis of the variation between participant’s experiences, identifying the multiple conceptions people have for a phenomenon such as identity transformation. The categories of description for each participant were identified during the analysis and orient the discussion of each participant’s experiences. The reader is asked to revisit the footage of ‘The First Time’ scene by scene, at the start of each section in Part Four. The scenes provide a context within which *firsts* are analysed as moments of identity transformation.

Part Five addresses the similarities between participants through the identification of meaning across participants. The discussion concerns the search for structural relationships between meanings through categories that emerged from the data. The discussion is shaped as a post-performance evaluation, incorporating responses from the expert audience, which included the participants themselves as well as other 1yr teachers, teaching professionals, and teacher educators. The conclusion looks back over the events that brought me to this research in light of the findings. It is revealed that like my own experience, the conditions of beginning teachers’ employment can impact on the transformation of their identity. Participants’ initial experiences in their 1yr of teaching are contrasted with their descriptions of their work under a variety of contract positions, and their struggle to obtain ongoing employment. The conclusion provides a
foundation for exploring possibilities for further research. The findings suggest opportunities to investigate the impact of beginning teachers’ conditions of employment on their understanding of identity, and the use of ‘The First Time’ as a tool for stimulating discussion surrounding the work and identity of beginning teachers.

The next section of Part One is a review of the literature. It would be beneficial to watch ‘The First Time’ in its entirety at this point (duration 41:30).

![Figure 3. ‘The First Time’](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB1ED0FDEF2AA8836)
**Literature Review**

This literature review is in two sections. The first section provides an overview of contemporary understandings of professional identity, and identity discourses surrounding 1yr teachers. This first section of the literature review was developed prior to and during the early stages of the research process with the intention of identifying works of key players in the field of beginning teachers’ identity formation and transformation. Through this process it became apparent that despite the abundance of research undertaken to understand beginning teachers’ identity there is still much that can be done for beginning teachers through sustained and varied investigation into how 1yr teachers experience identity transformation. Part of the purpose in this section of the literature reviewed is to understand the relationship between the phenomenon and the different voices speaking about the phenomenon – for example whether they are experienced practitioners looking back at, or whether they are novice practitioners speaking within the moment of, identity transformation. As such I aim to make a case for the continued investigation into the different ways 1yr teachers experience identity transformation through methods that seek to describe, analyse, and understand multiple conceptions of the phenomenon in order to continue to question what can be done for these teachers to assist them in their transition to teaching.

The second section of the literature review was developed during and after the data analysis stage, through which the categories of description emerged. This second section provides an overview of the categories of description prevalent in the literature surrounding the experiences of 1yr and beginning teachers. It references the results that emerged from the data generated for this research.
**Professional identity**

Understanding professional identity can, as Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) recognise, be a challenging endeavour. This is not least due to the fact that understanding something as fluid, shifting, and ongoing, is akin to trying to catch the wind. Understandings are often revealed with the benefit of hindsight, rather than by looking forward into the unknown. Letting go of previously held understandings about the self can be uncomfortable. The fact that professional identity is at once personal, contextual, and multi-dimensional does little to assuage the discomfort at coming to terms with one’s understanding. Yet the authors cited in this literature review have made valuable inroads that contribute to the discourse surrounding the ongoing negotiation of identity and its transformation within experience.

The contemporary researchers referenced in this literature review contend that identity formation and transformation is an ongoing process that involves both the interpretation and reinterpretation of lived experiences. Central to this notion is that an individual’s identity is formed and transformed over time and through interaction with others. The view that a professional identity is not fixed, that it is unpredictable (and often messy), fluid, ever-changing and evolving, forming and transforming in relation to time and place, and is a constant process of becoming, can be one of the first hurdles a 1yr teacher faces in their transition to teaching. Upon receiving a job offer many participants in this research made the statement “I am a teacher now”. As seen in the analysis and discussion chapters the term ‘real’ teacher was often employed in many instances to describe their identity as a paid, autonomous member of the teaching profession. Many had an idea (or ideal) of the kind of teacher they thought they would be, and many were challenged to change their idea of this teacher in light of their experiences. It seems relatively easy for someone who has experienced identity transformation to understand that the development of a professional identity will shift, change, and continue to do so, because we have already
experienced it. Experienced practitioners can look back and recognise moments where they felt their identity shifting, and in doing so can also look forward and predict that this process is likely to continue. However, 1yr teachers do not have the luxury of being able to look back in order to recognise that what they hold as their idea of ‘teacher’ will change throughout their career. They tend to hold strong and often idealistic notions of who they will be as a teacher. This creates a paradox; while teacher identity as ‘becoming’ reflects the ongoing and flexible nature of identity construction – in the sense of identity formation as never complete – the strength of some teachers’ views about teaching and learning, as well as their role within it, could imply rigidity in their conceptions of who they are, and who others are, as teachers (Trent 2011, p. 530).

Understanding professional identity is important in the successful transition to 1yr teaching, as it can be valuable for beginning teachers to come to know who they are in relation to their work (Clarke 2009). Yet understanding who we are at any particular moment can be difficult. Teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt 2000). What may result from a teacher’s perception of his or her identity, operating within teaching contexts, is the realisation that teachers are not passive inhabitants of the context, but that they can be active agents in transforming the context. Some of the more contemporary understandings of professional identity highlight the transformative nature of identity. These understandings focus on the notion that identity is ‘shifting’ (Roberts 2000; Clift 2011; Anspal, Eisenschmidt & Löfström 2012), and ‘dynamic, not stable or fixed’ (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004, p. 122). The nature of identity has been described as ‘multi-faceted and dynamic’ (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009, p. 177) and explained by Alsup (2006, p. 6) as ‘holistic – inclusive of the intellectual, the corporeal, and the affective aspects of human selfhood.’ The shapes of these
understandings are informed by the processes of ‘fashioning and refashioning’ (Miller Marsh 2003, p. 8), of shifting landscapes (Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009), of borderland discourses (Alsup 2006) and of ‘being and becoming’ (Britzman 1991). Concepts such as changing landscapes, borderland discourse, the ‘in-betweenness’ of becoming a teacher, and liminality in beginning teaching all attempt to get at the heart of the feelings encountered in understanding the transformative nature of teacher identity.

**Being and becoming**

Britzman (1991) introduces the idea of what it is to ‘be’ a teacher through a discussion of ‘becoming’ a teacher. She describes the tension between being and becoming as culture shock – a reaction to the overwhelming complexity of teachers’ work in relation to the formation of their identity. She contends that culture shock occurs in conjunction with the ‘startling idea’ that forming a teacher identity means suppressing aspects of the self and becoming someone that you are not. Other researchers (Alsup 2006; Day et al. 2006; Dawe 2007) agree that teachers balance a number of dimensions in their work including a personal dimension of the teachers’ life outside the school; a professional dimension including social and policy expectations of what a good teacher is and teachers’ own educational ideals; and a situational dimension such as the direct working environment of the teacher. Through the way these dimensions interrelate, different professional identities are formed. The key words here are ‘balance’ and ‘different’. The literature stresses the importance of developing a balance between personal, professional and situational or contextual dimensions that inform identity. If the interaction between these dimensions becomes unbalanced, practitioners may develop the notion that the professional and situational dimensions take precedence over the personal (Day et al. 2006). It is also valuable to understand that a teacher’s identity can be different at specific
moments in time, and that their identity is also different to other teachers’ identities.

Britzman (1991) states that learning to teach is a time of scrutiny into what one is doing and who one can become. I would also add scrutiny into who one was, in order to recognise and highlight the importance and also the problems associated with ‘becoming’ a teacher. Indeed beginning teaching in particular is a time of formation and transformation – of aspiring to become a ‘good’ teacher, adapting to a new environment, developing affiliations with colleagues, learning about students, interacting with the wider school community and so on. However, the ‘scrutiny’ into what one has done, is doing, and who one can become, can be a difficult thing to undertake. How does a 1yr teacher begin to think about their teacher role? Is there time for scrutiny for a beginning teacher who may be overwhelmed by the demands of the job? What methods does a 1yr teacher have at their disposal to undertake such introspection? These questions propose the notion of understanding identity transformation as problematic for 1yr teachers. I suggest that centering on specific experiences that can be described as firsts is an effective lens to investigate beginning teachers’ experiences of identity transformation, and in doing so the teachers themselves can gain access to an understanding of who they were, who they are, and who they are becoming.

The self in identity

Before a scrutiny into who one is becoming can occur, one needs to understand the notion of identity as central to their practice. Core understandings of identity pertinent to this study include those proposed by key players such as Mead, Lortie, and Lave and Wenger. Mead (1934) views the self as an ‘I’ representing the inner, reflective self, and a ‘me’ referring to the outward, socialised aspect of the self. The ‘me’ is learned in interaction with others and within contextual factors. The ‘me’ includes both knowledge
about the context and also a sense of who he or she is – a sense of self. The ‘I’ is the active aspect of the self, which acts creatively but within the context of the ‘me’. The ‘I’ and ‘me’ form the basis of role taking, which involves the self engaging in a reflective dialogue with itself in order to act in a role. It is the means by which the self is able to structure and react to its own experiences (Simpson & Carroll 2008). Literature attempting to grapple with the multi-faceted nature of individuals’ identity often stems from Mead’s (1913; 1934) understanding of the self. One of the main concepts in Mead’s work of the self as ‘I’ and ‘me’ – the nature of the self as revealed by introspection – provides a foundation for this research in exploring the power of teachers’ first experiences as a lens to understand identity transformation, as the telling of a first introduces an ‘I’ (past) by a ‘me’ (present). The self – appearing as ‘I’ – is the memory image of the self, the ‘old me’, allowing the ‘new me’ to understand the transformations that have taken place since the event described. The concepts of the ‘old me’ and ‘new me’ can be viewed not only as key to understanding identity in general, but also as key to understanding the 1yr teachers in this study, in regards to the descriptions of the firsts they used to represent themselves. A more detailed discussion of how the participants’ experiences were represented through an ‘old me’ and a ‘new me’, demonstrating their understanding of their ‘self’ in relation to their work, is discussed in part Three: Personal signature of the Researcher/Writer and Part Four: Prologue.

The self is a social structure (Mead 1934, p. 173) and reflective thinking shapes the actions of the self by enabling individuals to develop and sustain a role. Role is read as the ‘actions’ performed in the social setting. In these instances roles are the social norms and forms of behaviours that belong to teachers in both a local setting and the broader understandings of teachers and teaching. As such the process of role taking involves individuals seeing themselves as others might see them and regulating their behaviour accordingly. Individuals undergoing the process of becoming a professional need to experience the process of role taking in order to develop a sense of
professional identity (Allen 2009). Additionally, role taking is seen to involve an individual’s anticipatory socialisation (Lortie 1975) or prior conceptions of what being a professional entails and the individual’s efforts to regulate their behaviour within the role (Allen 2009).

Lortie’s work in ‘Schoolteacher’ (1975) is regularly cited in the literature by those attempting to understand why people come to teach. While many changes have taken place in education since the era of mid-1960s to mid-1970s in which Lortie’s work is situated, the concept of ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie 2002, pp. 61-5) becomes particularly relevant in relation to the development of teachers’ professional identity. Lortie draws attention to prospective teachers’ observation of teaching practices as assisting in their professional preparation, and often as the reason individuals decide to become teachers. As students these individuals construct their own notion of what it is to be a teacher through observations of their own teachers, and they later use these observations to (begin to) construct their professional identity. Grossman et al (2009) follow up this idea suggesting that the ‘art’ of such professional preparation involves the construction of a professional identity.

According to Lave and Wenger (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 111) ‘[m]oving towards full participation in practice involves…an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner’. Lave and Wenger describe situated/social learning from experience as ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. Learners such as pre-service and 1yr teachers participate in communities of practice where the development of skills and knowledge of the profession lead to ‘socialisation’ within that profession. This mode of thinking moves beyond the historical forms of apprenticeship, where a trainee can obtain mastery with little or no prior skills through learning by doing, to a more insightful way of describing how theory and practice need to be integrated for learning. Legitimate peripheral participation is not an operational method. It is an analytical perspective, one that, in the investigation of pre-service and
1yr teachers’ experiences, may reveal how teachers come to form their professional identity – an identity of full participation.

Newcomers to the profession are often caught in a dilemma. On the one hand they need to engage in the existing practice, which has developed over time: to understand it, to participate in it, and to become full members of the community in which it exists. On the other hand, they have a stake in its development as they begin to establish their own identity in its future. (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 115)

This statement highlights the paradox mentioned earlier in 1yr teachers’ understanding of the transformative nature of their identity in relation to their practice.

Understanding identity involves ‘interpretation and reinterpretation…[that it] is continually being formed, informed and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interactions with others’ (Cooper & Olsen 1996, p. 80). These words and phrases assist to explain the fluid nature of identity, capturing how understanding identity and identity transformation take place at both an individual or personal level, and also at the broader level in regards to the transformation of the practice of teaching. Mockler (2011) contends that an understanding of what it is to ‘be’ a teacher is essential to understanding teachers’ work today. Teachers’ work, incorporating the decisions they make about approaches to aspects such as curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment is ‘framed by and constituted through their understanding and positioning of themselves as a product of their professional identity’ (2011, p. 517). Mockler’s statement regarding the positioning of the self as a ‘product’ of professional identity highlights how an individual’s identity formation and transformation produces transformation in teaching practices as well. Other understandings of identity central to teachers’ work and lives emerge from the work of Beijaard, Gee, Miller Marsh, Clandinin and Conelly, and Alsup.

Beijaard’s (1995) work centres on identity as important to longevity in teaching, and that future research on teachers’ professional identity needs to
pay more attention to the relationship between relevant concepts like ‘self’ and ‘identity’, the role of the context in professional identity formation, what counts as ‘professional’ in professional identity, and ‘research perspectives other than the cognitive one that may also play a role in designing research on teachers’ professional identity’ (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004). Beijaard’s work investigates teachers’ identity through a retrospective perspective – that of experienced teachers looking back, and of reviewing the literature on teachers’ identity, highlighting the notion that an understanding of identity as fluid and ongoing is important to more recent concerns regarding teacher attrition.

Gee (2000) proposes there are four ways to view what it means to be a certain kind of person. Rather than discrete categories, they are ways to focus attention on different aspects of how identities are formed and sustained, and to formulate questions about how identity is functioning for a specific person in a given context or across a set of different contexts. These four ways are viewed as nature-identity – a state developed from forces in nature; institution-identity – a position authorised by authorities in institutions; discourse-identity – an individual trait recognised in the discourse/dialogue of/with ‘rational’ individuals; and affinity-identity – experiences shared in the practice of ‘affinity groups’ (Gee 2000, pp. 100-1). Gee’s understanding of identity picks up on the notion that a teacher’s identity can be different at any given moment in time, and that each category contributes to or performs in relation to the others in the formation and transformation of a professional identity.

Identities can also be thought of as ideological representations of the self. They are negotiated through social interaction and therefore are perpetually in a state of flux (Miller Marsh 2003, p. 10). Miller Marsh advocates for explicitly teaching pre-service teachers about the concept of discourse in order to examine shifts in identities as they are constructed in a sociocultural discourse (Miller Marsh 2002). Similar to Gee, she contends that teacher
thinking is an ongoing dialogue among one’s personal history, present conditions, beliefs, values, and the social, cultural, historical, and political forces that surround groups of individuals in a given time and place (Miller Marsh 2003, p. 5). She also recognises that the threads comprising this dialogic web of relations are constantly shifting as they come into contact with one another. Ergo if teacher thinking is conceived as being dialogic in nature, it is worthwhile to understand that beliefs of teaching are shaped by the contextual factors present in a specific community and become inscribed in the thoughts and actions of individual teachers (Miller Marsh 2003).

Clandinin (2000), working with Connelly (Connelly & Clandinin 1994; Connelly & Clandinin 1999), and others (Clandinin et al. 2006; Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009) over the years, describe the shifts in teachers’ thinking and identity as a result of ‘changing landscapes’. Their predominantly narrative research focuses on the shifts globalization, immigration, demographics, economic disparities and environmental changes can cause in the lives of teachers working on school landscapes shaped by these contextual factors. Their work is relevant to this research in recognising the impact educational reform can have on the ways these shifting landscapes shape each teacher’s knowledge and each teacher’s identity – her or his ‘stories to live by’ (Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009). These stories to live by focus on the multiplicity of stories, and the tensions these shifts can bring to an understanding of identity. Other comparable investigations propose a variety of lenses through which to view teachers’ understanding of identity transformation within times of change. One such investigation into teacher identity and school reform acknowledges that teachers’ identity can be shaped by school reform and political contexts (Lasky 2005). The researcher here focused on vulnerability, asking participants how they understood vulnerability in their day-to-day teaching. Miller Marsh (2002) used activities surrounding a book – Yolanda’s Genius – as a lens to come to understand the relationship between discourse and
identity in teacher education students, while Søreide (2007) aimed to shed light on how public narratives about teachers construct teacher identities – how public policy texts about teachers and school generate certain understandings of teacher identity through the expectations they produce. Pedagogy is another lens used to investigate teachers’ professional identity formation, including teachers’ perceptions of themselves as subject matter experts (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt 2000) and comparisons between trained and non-trained maths teachers (Roberts 2000), as well as the broad area of teacher education (Trent 2010). A different approach was taken by Hong (2010) who explores teacher attrition and related issues as a function of the individual teacher’s perceptions of him/herself as a teacher and of the teaching profession. Hong attempts to identify several factors – commitment, emotion, value, micro-politics and efficacy – that may constitute pre-service and beginning teachers’ professional identity and their decision to dropout. Beginning teacher attrition has been a major focus of identity research and 1yr teacher research in this century.

Alsup (2006) suggests that an understanding of teachers’ ‘borderland discourses’ – an integration of personal and professional subjectivities – is vital to the developing teacher, who must negotiate conflicting positions and ideologies while creating a professional self. In times of educational change teachers can be left feeling frustrated when caught between the choice of giving up their ideologies to play out a required role that conforms to top-down forms of educational and institutional change and becoming rebels who can burn out and leave the profession. She suggests finding a middle ground where teachers craft their discourse so that administrators, the public, and even politicians will listen and enact some positive change (Alsup 2006, p. 195). Alsup places the responsibility on teacher educators to assist graduates to develop professional identities that leave them with a sense of satisfaction, and that also result in good teaching and systemic improvement.
1yr teachers’ identity

Given the abundance of research that has been conducted into the transition to the first few months of teaching (for example Kagan 1992; Stokking et al. 2003; Allen 2009; Rots & Aelterman 2009) one can assume that both researchers and beginning teachers are thinking a lot about who one is being and becoming as a teacher during this time. In this particular phase ‘becoming’ has a different quality to other moments of epiphany. The notion of ‘becoming’ emerges through literature concerning 1yr teachers’ shocking realisations, challenges, and conflicts. It is during the challenging time of change from ‘student’ to ‘teacher’ that 1yr teachers begin to understand their developing roles and requirements through their experiences of identity transformation. Clarke (2009, pp. 186-7) describes the importance for the individual to engage in ‘identity work’ as indispensable if teachers wish to exercise professional agency, and thereby maximise their potential for development and growth. If an individual’s understanding of identity is as something fluid, then it also behoves the individual to understand that they will take on different roles within their practice, and that their aspirations will also shift and change. As Britzman (1991, p. 31) states, ‘learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing and who one can become’. Yet comprehending who one is becoming at any given moment in time is a complex process, because identity is multi-faceted, and often an individual can enact many roles, and aspire to many different things, at once. Comprehending who one is becoming in the transition to 1yr teaching can be especially difficult when coupled with all the other moments of transition a 1yr teacher undertakes.

Preconceptions of identity

Sometimes responses to moments where identity transformation is recognised appear to the 1yr teacher to be a solely intuitive process, which,
through trial and error, become part of regular practice. As Delpit (1995, p. 151) observes we all construe actions, knowledge, and experiences through our own cultural lenses, and ‘these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply the way it is’. Because the situation to which the teacher must respond seems unfamiliar, and is often something that is unforeseen, ‘getting through’ difficult 1yr experiences can strengthen notions such as ‘anyone can teach’ or that teachers are ‘born to teach’. These conceptions about teaching often lead pre-service teachers to believe that they know how to teach and as a result they therefore regularly resist aspects of teacher education programs that ask them to reflect on teaching. For them, teaching is something you do, not something you think about or study. Quite often, pre-service teachers do not see learning to teach as problematic. They frequently see themselves as ‘born’ or ‘natural’ teachers who, through trial and error in the practicum classroom, will develop a repertoire of teaching techniques. This process is informed by what worked for them (Mayer 1999). Yet in order to make a successful transition to teaching 1yr teachers, based on the literature reviewed earlier, need to develop an understanding of importance of the shifting nature of their professional identity.

Researchers over time (for example Zeichner & Gore 1990; Gee & Green 1998; Borg 2004) continue to agree that discourses of ‘apprenticeship’ are largely responsible for the many preconceptions that pre-service teachers hold about teaching, particularly in relation to their emerging professional identity. Many teachers connect their own teaching practices with that of a previous (outstanding) teacher, and link their desire to enter the profession to their observations of an influential teacher (Rust 1994; Mayer 1999). Here it is noted that some forms of learning take place through unconscious or subconscious imitation, which provides beginning teachers with a frame of reference for forming aspects of their professional identity (Kennedy 1999). The majority of teachers in Lortie’s study said that, while not surprised at the nature of their tasks, teaching was more difficult than expected, more
demanding and energetic, and encompassing more responsibility than they had anticipated, based on their observations as a student.

An understanding of the fluid nature of one’s identity for the 1yr teacher occurs through their reflection on their preconceived notions of what it is to be a teacher, aspects of their self, and in response to their new roles. Kim and Greene (2011) emphasise the importance of teachers’ reflection on their core qualities, in determining how they reflect on their identity. Reflection has been identified as an important and influential aspect of a teachers’ practice (for example Schön 1983; Russell 1989; Loughran 2002). Kim and Greene contend that reflecting on personal qualities in relation to professional practice provides a ‘critical point of intersection in the process of exploring the point where one’s identity as a human being intersects with one’s professional development’ (2011, p. 110). This statement identifies the importance of moments of realisation in reflecting on the dynamic nature of identity. Teachers often view their core qualities as the foundation of their professional identity. Yet these core qualities should not be considered essential, formulaic or prescriptive qualities required in order to ‘be’ a teacher. Misconceptions about core qualities can often be linked to teachers’ apprenticeship of observation (Lortie 1975) where years of being an observer of teaching practices can lead to an understanding of teaching as a repertoire of teaching techniques delivered by someone who is born to be a teacher, or a natural (for example in Mayer 1999; Alsup 2006). These constructions can negate the importance of understanding identity as a process, as ever changing, and as constantly emerging. It is agreed by the majority of authors cited already that teachers’ identities develop through a variety of means. By critically reflecting on their core qualities during pre-service teaching practitioners can come to an understanding that their core qualities may, like their identities, shift and change over time.
Relationship between role and identity

As mentioned earlier the term role refers to the social norms and forms of behaviour concerning teaching. Korthagen (2004) links teachers’ shifts in their understanding of roles to the changing nature of education. The way teachers see their roles is to a large extent shaped by the events and individuals in their lives. However, Korthagen also notes that encouraging an understanding of identity during pre-service teacher education and early in-service experiences can be problematic if teachers hold a certain idea of themselves as a teacher. These perceptions are difficult to alter once they have taken shape. In these early stages of becoming a teacher professional identity often takes the form of a ‘Gestalt: an unconscious body of needs, images, feelings, values, role models, previous experiences and behavioral [sic] tendencies’ (Korthagen 2004, p. 84), which mutually establish a sense of identity. Korthagen recognises that fundamental changes in teacher identity do not take place easily, and that identity change can be a difficult and sometimes painful process. This is recognised particularly in beginning teachers with a negative, or unrealistically positive, self-concept. Previous studies by Hong (2010; 2012), and Fry (2007; 2009), cited below have investigated emerging professional identity by drawing on a variety of notions of self-concept. Generally speaking an individual’s perception of their ‘self’ is constructed through a number of characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, as well as other self-assessments regarding attributes such as role/occupation, skills, personality and pastimes. Teachers’ personal beliefs are closely linked to their professional identity. This is because

the ‘self’ is crucial… the way we perceive ourselves influences our choice of action and judgment. Thus, understanding teachers’ professional identity is important for gaining insight into the essential aspects of teachers’ professional lives such as their career decision making, motivation, job satisfaction, emotion, and commitment. (Hong 2010)

Similarly, Fry (2009) notes that some teachers may have inherent dispositions that help them to be more efficacious and resilient teachers than
others. This possibility suggests some beginning teachers might become successful teachers regardless of their preparatory experiences. Teacher educators cannot instil desirable, inherent personality traits of ‘good’ teachers into all pre-service teachers. This adds to the debate that teachers are ‘born not made’. While I disagree with this notion, I do believe it is difficult to separate the teacher from the person – the professional from the personal. Personal characteristics such as confidence, organisation, resilience, and the ability to empathise contribute largely to an understanding of identity, and the success of teachers in the profession and their retention.

It has been recognised (Manuel & Hughes 2006; Yost 2006; Høigaard, Giske & Sundsli 2011; Putman 2012) that if identity is a key factor influencing the teacher’s sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment and effectiveness, then it becomes necessary to investigate the positive and negative influences of these factors on identity development. Of particular importance are the contexts in which the positive and negative influences occur and the consequences that these experiences have for practice (Anspal, Eisenschmidt & Löfström 2012, p.198). A review of literature, in the last decade in particular (Lasky 2005; Tang 2011; Craig 2012), reveals the difficulties many graduates face upon entering the profession in coming to terms with the shifting nature of both education and their identities as shaped by contextual factors. Researchers such as Cherubini (2009) below focus on how a new teacher is made aware of the potential conflict they may face between establishing their own teacher identity and conforming to the traditions associated with the local institution, as well as within teaching as an often conservative institution on the whole. It has been noted that

new teachers, in periods of and discovery, contend with the uncertainties of the classroom, discrepancies between ideals and reality, and the frustrations of classroom management. The construction of this reality situates beginning teachers in survival mode. (Cherubini 2009, p. 88)
I selected this quote in particular as it demonstrates the continued usage of ‘survival’ language often used to describe beginning teachers’ experiences in relation to their evolving professional identity. Whether beginnings are easy or painful, survival remains a prominent theme (Liston, Whitcomb & Borko 2006, p. 351). A further discussion of 1yr teachers in survival mode is conducted in the section titled ‘Moments of becoming’.

**Context and identity**

During the period of transition from pre-service to 1yr teaching, practical experiences focus teachers’ thinking onto understanding their teacher role (Samuel & Stephens 2000; Simpson & Carroll 2008; Clift 2011). In addition to individual’s reflection on the transformation of their identity, researchers have investigated the variety of roles 1yr teachers take on within specific contexts, situated in specific times and places during this key transitional period. For example Chong and Low’s (2009) study on teacher identity explores pre-service teachers’ motivations to teach and the perceptions they have of the profession at three key stages – the beginning and end of pre-service teaching and the end of the 1yr of teaching; a study by Liston, Whitcomb and Borko (2006) links the experiences of beginning teachers back to their teacher education by focussing on the emotional toll of first-year teaching and how teacher education programs can attend to the emotional dimension of learning to teach; and a study by Thomas and Beauchamp (2007) followed graduates into their 1yr of teaching and asked them quite broadly to ‘reflect on your identity as a teacher’. These studies recognise that teacher roles are distinct from their identity as roles describe teachers’ performance of specific functions required, whereas identity speaks of how one feels as a teacher and identifies with teaching. Yet it is through an understanding of the variety of roles teachers experience that an understanding of their image of themselves as teachers can be considered, encouraging anticipation of new roles that are shaped by changing contexts.
Contextual factors strongly influence the shift and changes in identity that professionals experience, therefore the contextual shift from university to the school as a workplace strongly influences the 1yr teacher’s emerging identity. Day (2002) contends that in the modern world of teaching attention to the importance of teachers’ identities has been limited by increased measures of public accountability. He recognises that identity is influenced not only by core qualities, but is also an ‘amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance’ (p. 689). Identity development for teachers involves an understanding of the self and a notion of that self within an outside context, such as a classroom or a school, necessitating an examination of the self in relation to others. A teacher’s identity is shaped and reshaped in interaction with others in a professional context (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009). Pre-service teachers, for example, undergo a shift in identity as they move through programs of teacher education, and assume positions as teachers in a variety of school contexts. In addition, further identity shifts may occur at the beginning of a teacher’s career as a result of interactions within schools and in broader communities. It is through interactions in the workplace that pre-service teachers come to understand the realities of the school environment and begin to establish situational identities (Allen 2009). For them, the meaning and identity of ‘the teacher’ is created through a process of verbal and social interaction with others in the school setting (Mead 1934). Pre-service teachers’ preconceptions of teaching acquired at university are transformed in response to the interactions they have with others in the local context. This understanding aligns with the view that reality and meaning are social constructions and that individuals are not in any real sense separable from their environments (Mead 1934). Given that individuals contribute to the meaning that arises in a particular setting, individuals and settings mutually determine each other (Allen 2009).
More recent contextual factors that have been identified as having an impact on teachers’ identity in the literature include educational reform. For example: the impact of external forces such as stakeholders’ perceptions of the role of teachers in the context of education reform (Lasky 2005); how teachers position themselves in relation to others – micro-political induction (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin 1993); positioning in a time of educational reform (Cohen 2008); and the changing nature of education and impact on identity (Grimmett et al. 2008). Britzman recognises the importance of continued negotiation between context and identity – as ‘becoming’ – is not limited just to what happens to teachers. She also takes into consideration what teachers make happen because of what happens to them. Constantly changing contextual factors such as educational reform can cause beginning teachers to develop coping strategies as a safeguard against being forced to perceive themselves in ways contrary to their self-image. However, individuals are also able to develop, adjust, or even radically change their self-image (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt 2000), particularly in response to contexts that can shape their identities. Gee (2001) recognises that identity suggests a ‘kind of person’ within a particular context; while one might have a ‘core identity’, there are multiple forms of this identity as one operates across different contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009). Teachers’ professional identity generally pertains to how teachers see themselves based on their interpretations of their continuing interaction with their context (Canrinus et al. 2011). Therefore the shift from university to the workplace can cause 1yr teachers to see themselves differently in response to the new roles they undertake as teachers rather than as students.

What I have found most interesting among this literature are the potential ways 1yr teachers can develop an understanding of their self, how they can scrutinise what one is doing and who one can become, how they form an identity, and can become aware of the tensions impacting on the transformation of their identity. We can see above that many authors hint at moments of understanding – of an awareness of identity at a particular time.
and in a particular place – as ways beginning teachers can come to understand their professional identity.

**Categories of description: individual**

During the process of data analysis a number of categories of description emerged, capturing the range of views present within the group of 1yr teacher participants. These categories fall under two main themes: teacher’s individual aspects of identity including their roles and aspirations; and teachers’ extra-individual aspects of identity including affiliations, interactions and status.

**Moments of ‘becoming’**

Moments of identity transformation can be recognised through events or actions. These take place in a specific time, and within specific contexts. They can be a critical period of time or ‘phase’, or an actual event. Liminality (Turner 1994; Pierce 2007) refers to a critical period of time or phase that describes transition and transformation, and can include concepts such as rites of passage. Atypical teaching episodes (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004) and critical incidents (Tripp 1993; Tripp 1994) define specific events that indicate transformation from a past self to a present self. Beginning teachers describe feelings of liminality, rites of passage, and critical incidents as central to their process of ‘becoming’ a teacher. These moments of becoming a teacher contain and produce artefacts as tangible symbolic representations of the process of becoming, that assist with feelings of belonging. I perceive a gap in the literature in this area. There is little recognition of the importance of artefacts – particularly induction related artefacts – in beginning teachers’ identity transformation. My findings on this area are discussed in Part Five: Artefacts as symbols of belonging.

The experiences of 1yr teachers in the classroom, staff room, in their
interaction with parents, and in adapting to the established culture of a school are varied. However, a proportion of the literature (Stokking et al. 2003; Gravett, Henning & Eiselen 2011; Haggarty & Postlethwaite 2012) concerning the transition to 1yr teaching proposes that new teachers see the first year, like pre-service education, as a period that needs to be ‘got through’ in order for the ‘real’ teaching to begin. In this sense the 1yr of teaching is likened to a rite of passage for future teaching. The 1yr becomes an achievement through which the teacher can reflect on their professional practice and make preparations for future years, despite this period being referred to as something ‘akin to a fraternity hazing’ (Berman 1994, p. 49). Aspects of socialisation such as shock and wash-out have been well documented, as can be seen in the literature referenced in the sections below titled ‘Rites of passage’, ‘Wash out’, and ‘Burnout and dropout’. Their use of negative terminology is usually linked to issues of attrition. The aspects above are identified as outcomes of the process of socialisation and suggest that there are specified stages that need to be experienced in order to follow a well-worn pathway to becoming a teacher. Such suggestions, often perpetuated by those in the profession who have experienced them, signal to 1yr teachers that their successful transition to teaching relies on surviving these stages. Some periods in a teacher’s professional life, for example periods involving educational reform, may affect teacher identity, both on a personal level and on a professional level, because of the heightened emotions involved in any form of change. More recently there has been an increase of research into teachers’ emotions in relation to the formation and transformation of identity – particularly in regards to beginning teachers (Shultz & Zembylas 2009; Karlsson 2012; Timoštšuk & Ugaste 2012). It has been recognised that emotions express the tensions associated with ‘becoming’ a teacher such as conflicts between what [beginning] teachers desire and what is possible in reality (Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok 2012). The intersection of desires or expectations with actualities can manifest in the heightened emotions (either positive or negative) of the teacher. We can see in Lachy’s scene that his personal or ‘core’ qualities
allow him to cope with, and feel a sense of achievement toward, the unexpected event of having to take an extra period one, on his first day of teaching.

In this section I aim to draw attention to the number of ways researchers have focused on moments of ‘becoming’, as they emerged from the data. These include the discussion of events, actions, or artefacts (Wenger 1998, p. 200) and atypical teaching episodes (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004). Concepts such as changing landscapes (Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009), borderland discourse (Alsup 2006), the ‘in-betweeness’ of becoming a teacher (Sinner 2010), and liminality in beginning teaching all suggest that going through an awkward liminal phase is a kind of initiation rite (Turner 1994; Pierce 2007). Discussion of these tensions attempt to get at the heart of the moments and associated feelings encountered in understanding the transformative nature of teacher identity. Reflecting on critical incidents (Tripp 1993; 1994) – the interpretation of the significance of events that can be routine or exceptional – can provide access to deeper levels of personal reflection in relation to the formation and transformation of professional identity. Attention to an event such as to atypical teaching episodes, critical incidents, and liminality demands reflection on specific moments in time and place in order to understand the transformations that have taken place.

**Liminality**

Teachers’ early careers are marked by many phases of exploration and stabilisation including completing teacher education and the interim between that and 1yr teaching. One phase of exploration particularly relevant to this research project can be described as a liminal phase in ‘becoming’ a teacher, where one experiences rites of passage – any state where one moves from one to another – which indicate and constitute transitions between ‘states’. Turner (1994) posits that states of transition include separation, margin (limen) and aggregation, and considers the idea
that if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it potentially can be seen as a period of scrutiny for central values of the culture where it occurs – one where normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are undone. The 1yr teacher anticipates some periods of liminality as rites of passage that need to be undertaken in order to become a teacher, while other periods are revealed retrospectively. Rites of passage in the transition from pre-service to 1yr teaching can be positive such as graduating, getting a job, and induction; while others can have more negative implications, for example those concerning classroom management struggles, coping with workload, and the nature of beginning teachers’ work in regards to conditions of employment. The expectations, liminal moments, and rites of passage experienced by beginning teachers assist them to construct a set of beliefs about their collective identity.

The beginning teachers in this study experienced liminal periods in regards to affiliations and interactions – for example making the transition from student to teacher, or ‘fitting in’ with established routines and procedures. Their experiences of being ‘at once no longer classified and not yet classified’ (Turner 1994, p. 6) speak of the awkward feelings encountered in recognising important moments of transformation, as ‘undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements into new patterns’ (Turner 1994, p. 9). Turner’s concept of liminality is useful in understanding beginning teaching as a rite of passage or transitional stage. Liminality helps explain how the rite of passage known as beginning teaching involves the suspension, even temporary loss, of professional identity (Pierce 2007).

The transition from pre-service to in-service teaching can be viewed as a liminal period where the reality sinks in that beginning teachers are responsible for learners in their own classes. Feiman-Nemser (2001, p. 1026) captures this idea succinctly: ‘new teachers have two jobs – they have
to teach and they have to learn to teach’. No matter how good a pre-service program may be, there are some things that can only be acquired on the job. The pre-service experience lays a foundation and offers practice in teaching. Feiman-Nemser contends that the first encounter with ‘real’ teaching occurs when beginning teachers step into their own classroom. Then learning to teach begins in earnest. As can be seen at the end of Maggie’s representation she states: “Then, in the moment, I didn’t feel as much like a ‘real’ teacher. I felt like I was kind of getting away with something I shouldn’t be.” This is where an understanding sinks in, that her experiences now are, and will be, vastly different to her experiences of pre-service teaching.

**Atypical teaching episodes – liminality and rites of passage**

One could argue that in this day of education reform where little appears stable or fixed all teaching episodes might be described as atypical. However, in relation to identifying moments of identity transformation the atypical or unpredictable experiences of beginning teachers assist to signal the need for critical reflection. The notion of phronesis – the intertwining of theory and practice into practical wisdom – is described by Field and Latta (2001) as a compelling way to think about what counts as experience in education. Experiencing phronesis arises when something happens that is beyond being anticipated. For example, a pre-service teacher in Field and Latta’s study described her attention to a teaching moment during a lesson.

> I realized halfway through that it was not working. I felt comfortable to abandon [the lesson] and move on… I thought to myself – it is not important. The reaction from the class caused me to make that decision. Something just clicked as I was teaching. (p. 890)

This teacher’s thinking, deciding, and the ‘something that just clicked’ indicates attention to the present situation – a critical moment in time. In addition to her intuitive response the teacher’s prior experience (described earlier in the article) contributed to her confidence to ‘abandon the lesson’. This teacher became ‘sensitive to variation and more aware of what works
for what purposes in what situations’ (Darling-Hammond 2000, p. 170) in response to a previous experience and attention in the moment.

Beginning teachers inhabit a liminal space in their experiences of phronesis through the attempt to reconcile theory – often learnt during pre-service education – with the reality of teaching. Pierce likens 1yr teachers’ experiences of liminality to what he terms ‘professional puberty’ – a kind of probationary period for teachers (Pierce 2007, p. 43). He suggests that this period is actually imposed on teachers through the culture of the school, through which the 1yr teacher soon realises that they are not entirely welcome to come inside the new culture. Such liminality was certainly experienced by the participants in this research, which they found puzzling because they assumed what was signalled to them by other teachers’ actions and responses was pregnant with significance. As beginners they sought signs of approval from others, and found that often their perceived lack of skill positioned them outside the established culture of the school. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2009) outline a stage-based model of skill acquisition (in nursing) which, while contentious, assists to highlight liminal periods associated with the transfer of knowledge from theoretical to practical, as is often experienced through moments in the transition from pre-service teaching to beginning teaching. Drawing on the understanding that the relationship between theory and practice and between reason and intuition has concerned our culture since our Western way of ‘being human’ was defined in ancient Greece (Aristotle trans. 2009). Dreyfus and Dreyfus recognise that practice without theory cannot alone produce fully skilled behaviour in complex coping domains such as teaching. Through an understanding of theory as dependent on practice, the idea of experience-based intuition as phronesis emerges in a variety of liminal moments in their model of skill acquisition. These are namely as a ‘novice’ where theoretical knowledge is combined with intuition; as an ‘advanced-beginner’ where practice improves after experience coping with real situations; and in their understanding of the ‘competent’ stage where the number of potentially
relevant elements of a real-world situation that the learner is able to recognise becomes overwhelming. For example ‘the first few times a [teacher] encounters an unusual need for taking action and responsibility, it tends to be noteworthy and memorable’ (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 2009, pp. 11-14). This is certainly evident in the experiences of Richard, Sari, and Tash, where unforeseen classroom events remain as memorable firsts.

**Critical incidents**

Many critical incidents recognised by teachers are strongly related to experiencing shock. However, not all critical incidents need to be so. Tripp (1993; 1994) uses both typical and atypical incidents to define and analyse critical incidents. Linking to Britzman’s notion that ‘becoming’ is not limited just to what happens to teachers, critical incidents could also be defined as what teachers make happen because of what happens to them. Tripp believes that typical events are ones that the teacher expected to happen because it seems to always be happening. He suggests that it is worthwhile recording and analysing the order of incidents to see what it is that tends to produce the event and uncover some possibilities as to the cause. In investigating what Tripp considers atypical events we can see links to epiphanic or revelatory ‘turning points’. These are unique exceptions or counter-instances where the analytic process is reversed and the teachers reflect on why the event is uncommon or did not happen as expected. Typical events can be seen as reaffirming confidence and competence, while atypical events may challenge a teacher’s previously held beliefs and self-concept. A typical critical incident that reaffirms her confidence and competence was experienced by Janet when she reports feeling like “yeah, it’s all mine. I can do this” after her first day of teaching. Whereas, Beth experienced an atypical event when her expectations of the year seven students were challenged, which in turn challenged her notion of the kind of teacher she thought she would be. Both typical and atypical events here provided an opportunity for each participant to critically analyse the event

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and their understanding of identity transformation. Critical incidents in this study revealed participants’ understanding of identity transformation. Incidents were described as both typical and atypical, and each individual’s critical incident reported as a first revealed a variety of categories of description between individuals, though many could be viewed as stable and generalisable between individuals. Many individual experiences of turning points were described as retrospective rites of passage.

**Rites of passage**

Practitioners who have experienced the same or similar noteworthy and memorable encounters can construct the idea that these encounters are rites of passage events. Rites of passage are typically defined as ‘states’ of becoming and transformation that tend to reach their maximum expression in small-scale, relatively stable and cyclical societies, where change is bound up with rhythms and recurrences (Turner 1994). However, in some instances rites of passage can signify entry into a new status – a society or group – through experiencing rites of passage valued by that group. This can also be seen as a form of initiation.

There are some less than positive aspects to becoming a beginning teacher that have been constructed as rites of passage. These include, in addition to initiation, shock, wash-out, stress, and burnout. In regards to initiation Schempp et al (1993) recognise the transformation of both an individual’s identity and the delicate social balance as an inductee joins an established group. Acceptance of the inductee in this instance depends on the individual being viewed as a positive addition. Berman’s (1994) study on the teaching internship as a rite of initiation admits it takes longer for colleagues to recognise the 1yr as a ‘teacher’ than it does the students. The 1yr teachers in Berman’s study viewed themselves as ‘anonymous equals’ in relation to the veteran teachers, ‘enduring an absence of status’. Pierce (2007) reinforces the negative connotations of becoming a beginning teacher by
describing the newcomer’s experience as a ‘dramatic threshold or liminal phase’ among colleagues that can be ‘disorienting and discouraging’. A more contemporary term to describe the complex and transformative nature of beginning to teach is socialisation. Teacher socialisation in the school as an organisation can be a contributing factor in what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) term ‘praxis shock’.

An individual upon encountering the unfamiliar can experience culture/practice/reality/transition shock. In recent literature (Stokking et al. 2003; Shoval, Erlich & Fejgin 2010) shock is described as an abrupt transition that hinders the beginner’s ability to find the mental strength to deal with a new situation. A beginning teacher needs to not only get on with the job of teaching, but also needs to understand how things are done at this school. This intense period of reflection and adjustment can feel like an aside to the main issue of teaching for the beginning teacher. However, this period of reflection and adjustment is recognised as an important aspect of socialisation and acceptance. ‘Praxis shock’/practice shock/transition shock refer to teachers’ confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being a teacher that puts their beliefs and ideas about teaching to the test. This shock challenges some beliefs, and confirms others in relation to induction or initiation into the profession (Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002, p. 105).

More recently shock has been identified as a contributing factor towards teacher attrition, and the need for increased mentoring to assist retention (Haggarty & Postlethwaite 2012). Important factors that emerged from research into reducing practice shock are: effective internship and mentoring; preparation; the autonomy of the beginning teacher; and widening the beginning teacher’s experiences to beyond the classroom – such as being involved the school context as a whole (Stokking et al. 2003, p. 346). The importance of addressing shock remains today as many hold the view that organisational socialisation constitutes an essential task for teachers (Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002). Shock can be seen as an important
phase in the experience of liminality whereby the process of transformation results in increased knowledge, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging (Canrinus et al. 2011). Yet the perpetuation of the myth of shock as a rite of passage continues to be regarded by beginning teachers as an essential aspect of their practice, possibly because moments of shock are more visible than other events that mark the transition to becoming a teacher.

The shock experienced by 1yr teachers in the transition to site-based learning either during or after their teacher education can lead to what has been described as the wash-out effect (Zeichner & Tabachnik 1981). When beginning teachers struggle for control and experience liminal feelings of frustration, anger, and confusion, the process they go through is more one of survival than of learning from experiences. Novice teachers report that they come to value advice from their colleagues in their schools, over their teacher education, as colleagues are deemed ‘realistic’ role models – the people who ‘do know’ how one should go about teaching (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon 1998, p. 159). In an earlier investigation aimed at exploring the transition from being a university student to full time teacher, Corcoran’s study (1981) explored what it was like to make the shift from being a student on a university campus to being a beginning teacher in a public school classroom. Her study focused mostly on experiences of intense shock, where beginners were paralysed by the discovery that they did not know all that they needed to know and were unable to draw on either previous education or on the wide range of potentially helpful resources that surrounded them in the present. In the education of pre-service teachers, some of the most important content or subject matter comes from the day-to-day work and interactions between pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers. Often a dissonance is created between the ideal and the real, between a plan and its enactment in local sites, or between what the university thinks new teachers should know and what ‘real’ teachers find most important (Cochran-Smith 2003). In response to such dissonance many beginning teachers may come to value their intuition over their prior theoretical
understandings. Cassidy, for example, demonstrates paralysis when she says that “I’m struggling and I can’t be in that classroom – it’s too hard!” She feels she cannot teach at all in this unfamiliar context for which she now feels totally unprepared. Her previous experience appears to have been washed out by the shock of the new.

**Wash out**

The wash-out effect, described earlier by Corcoran as paralysis, also opens up a discussion on the impact of teacher education on beginning teachers’ work, though in doing so it reduces the analysis of experiences of teachers themselves, and the impact of experiences on the formation of their professional identity. As seen already in the literature referenced there is no denying that beginning teachers often go through a dramatic shift from learning about teaching to teaching in their own ‘real’ classrooms. The area of the effectiveness of teacher education is a robustly discussed one (for example more recently Flessner 2012; Hodson, Smith & Brown 2012; Knight 2012; Lopes & Pereira 2012). Research in this area is problematic because, as Britzman points out, it is not just the university that fashions the pre-service teacher’s pedagogy; the pre-service teacher’s life history, both in and out of classrooms, offers definitions of what it is to learn and to teach (Britzman 1991). While it is not my primary intention to investigate the socio-cultural context of beginning teachers in relation to their formation of a professional identity, I do expect to be unable to separate the teacher’s in-service experiences with their personal history. As Corcoran discovered, the sooner the beginning teacher comes out of the paralysis stage, the sooner beginning teachers can make use of the connections between their teacher education and the new situation. However, paralysis should not have to be something that has to happen in order for a beginning teacher to ‘become’ a teacher.
Wash-out is the term used by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) in describing how educational notions developed during pre-service teacher education are ‘washed out’ during professional experiences. Comparable findings were reported in a review by Veenman (1984), who also pointed to the problems teachers experience once they have left teacher education. Similar indications of a lack of transfer from teacher education to practice continue to be discussed into the next decade by Feiman-Nemser (1990) and Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998). More recently Shoval et al (2010, p. 86) reiterate the long held belief that beginning teachers are expected to act as a seasoned veteran and take full responsibility for teaching, despite the resources the beginner possesses in terms of experience. In attempting to overcome these inadequacies, the new teacher may begin looking for survival solutions. Many beginning teachers still have needs based on the fact that teaching is an isolated profession (Lortie 1975). Beginning teachers need frequent opportunities to share and solve problems with experienced teachers as well as other 1yr teachers (Merrill 2006). Isolation in the profession, where beginning teachers are expected to take on duties the same as more experienced teachers (Renard 2003), can contribute to the placement of the beginning teacher in survival mode. Schlichte (2005) suggests that collegial isolation can be a contributing factor to burnout, and is discussed later in the chapter.

Beginning teachers resorting to survival strategies may experience a wash-out effect on the principles and skills acquired during the teachers’ education (Zeichner & Tabachnick 1981). It is interesting to note that the use of the term ‘wash-out’ in relation to identity implies a practitioner upon beginning ‘real’ teaching becomes a pale remnant of who they once were, which holds a sense of disappointment in being considered lacking or in some way decayed, limiting their ability to experience phronesis.

**Burnout and drop out**
As seen in ‘The First Time’ Amelia’s colleagues assume that she is on the path to burnout when they say “are you up all night marking?” thus perpetuating the myth that beginning teachers often burnout, while also creating a source of tension for Amelia by implying burnout is ‘normal’. Sebastian too was aware of the burnout discourse when he stated “I just realised you’ll crash and burn if you keep going like that.” A large proportion of the literature concerning beginning teachers’ experiences focuses on negative consequences of burnout such as stress-related dropout (Friedman 2000; Maslach 2003; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler 2005; Goddard, O’Brien & Goddard 2006; Hoigaard, Giske & Sundsli 2011). Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and is defined by Maslach (2003) through the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and a sense of inefficacy. Yet Goddard et al (2006) question whether beginning teachers in particular are susceptible to experiencing burnout because they exhibit symptoms of burnout that may have arisen during their prior period of tertiary preparation, as opposed to the work environment and the demands that are placed on beginning teachers being so aversive that burnout develops exceedingly rapidly. Goddard et al ask whether teachers are burnt out by the conditions of their work, or whether some teachers predisposed to burnout? They suggest that if either of these propositions is correct, a subsequent question might be whether a ‘high-burnout’ cohort of beginning teachers is overly represented in the significant early career turnover statistics observed in this profession.

While burnout is often the result of a problematic relationship between the person and the work environment, which is regularly described in terms of imbalance or misfit (Maslach 2003; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler 2005; Goddard, O’Brien & Goddard 2006), it has been linked to a discussion of attrition, particularly in terms of stress related dropout/attrition (McCann & Johannessen 2004; Duck 2007; Rieg, Paquette & Chen 2007; Hong 2010; Le Maistre & Pare 2010). Burnout can also be touted as a warning from other teachers in the school. Many 1yr teachers find themselves working long
hours and becoming involved in numerous extra-curricular school activities. In some situations their colleagues’ reactions are to “be careful not to burnout”. So the site-based understanding of burnout adds to that in the literature linking burnout to attrition. Site-based understandings of burnout relate more to the saying ‘the flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long.’ There is an aspect of ‘socialisation’ or induction – the way we do it at this school – in such a warning. In these instances beginning teachers can encounter significant difficulties and experience increased tension when working in schools where they are indoctrinated into cultures that have a sink or swim mentality. For example, Richard is welcomed to “the club” after experiencing an atypical teaching episode, suggesting that the school culture values these more dramatic and visible experiences as indicators of becoming a teacher.

In more recent studies discussed below we can still see a focus on the dramatic or more visible ways in which teachers form and transform their professional identity, particularly in studies focused on early 1yr teaching experiences. McCann and Johannessen’s study (2004) report beginning teachers’ more negative experiences of liminality as ‘dry-heaving anxiety’, feeling like ‘something was missing’, thinking ‘I don’t know if I can do this by myself’, ‘I am not in control of this class whatsoever’, or ‘I don’t think I’m equipped to deal with this for much longer’. Much of this anxiety can be due to the fear of the unknown as anxiety is often a reaction to new or unfamiliar teaching situations (Romano & Gibson 2006; Romano 2008). Learning from these situations is a key aspect of identity transformation. Yet these moments of ‘becoming’ often hold tension between the beginning teacher’s ideals and the realities of teaching. It is interesting to note here that this learning from experience is often related to feelings of anxiety, and that anxiety leads to reflection on the part of the teacher into the event and their response to the event. The use of the phrases above to describe teachers’ experiences is interesting in itself – many of these phrases have very negative contexts, implying that outcomes such as burnout are highly
dramatic and ‘visible’. Such terms and phrases used to describe beginning teachers experiences can contribute to the foundations of beginning teachers’ discourse.

*Firsts*

Many of the above ‘moments of becoming’ could be considered firsts. Firsts in this study are powerful transformative moments that belong to the individual but are also shared. They represent different selves to others, and while they are self-reported and therefore subjective, it is not the ‘event’ as such, but the thinking around the event that is important here. The event is the ‘being’ – the reflection is the ‘becoming’. Firsts fracture time/identity into a before and after. Reflecting on who we are at a particular moment in time is difficult, whereas looking back at who we were allows us to consider who we are becoming. In Szesztyay’s (2004, p. 132) study on teachers’ ways of knowing, participants suggested this attention can be ‘the super ego watching’, ‘a pause in the act of teaching’, ‘getting perspective’, and ‘stepping back’. Some of the triggers were new and unexpected elements such as ‘responding to a novel situation’ or ‘teaching a new grade level’. Attention to firsts such as these can be recognised upon reflection. These aspects can be seen in Sandra’s representation, where she describes “that moment to stop, reflect...” and gain some perspective before the “action” continues.

A form of reflection on the teacher’s work takes place when the teacher notices the first. It is not a first unless there is some attention to it – some sort of epiphany or revelation. The reflection that takes place in the moment of action causes the event to become significant. There can also be attention or reflection after the event where all the minutiae become enormous issues that need dissecting. After a first the reflection that takes place is generally in the form of ‘what I could have/should have done, and will/not do again’. There is a desire for a repeat performance – to have the opportunity to go
back and repeat what has been done, or build on it with more knowledge. Schön, in his extensive work into reflective practices (1983; 1990; 1991), would call these reflective processes ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’. By reflection in relation to teachers’ firsts I also mean ‘attention’ – an alertness, a revelation that something is happening and is about to change whatever comes afterwards. This prospect of change supports the notion that identity is not fixed, that it is fluid and transformative, and is about reflecting on the continual process of ‘becoming’.

**Categories of description: extra-individual**

The extra-individual features that shape, and are shaped by, identity transformation that emerged from the data include cultural-discursive, social, and material-economic categories of description. Residing within and across these categories are notions of apprenticeship and socialisation, initiation viewed as rites of passage, and affiliations. The material outlined in this section links to Part Five: Discussion. This section of the literature review provides an overview of the ways professional identity is transformed through first moments of understanding that occur in relation to others, such as colleagues, students, and the wider school community. As mentioned earlier, a first is a self-selected moment that serves as a reference for reflection. Firsts in this study were employed to encourage the 1yr teacher participants to reflect on, and sometimes compare subsequent situations of ‘becoming’ a teacher. The participants’ firsts also pointed to the ways these teachers perceived the transformation of their ‘self’ in relation to others, and to the context they were working in.

**Socialisation**

There has been a large amount of work on beginning teachers’ socialisation in the 1980’s and 1990’s (for example Dann, Müller-Fohrbrodt & Cloetta 1981; Zeichner & Gore 1990; Lacey 1995). Such works focus on beginning
teachers attempting to fit into established social groups found in local institutions which impact on 1yr teachers’ understanding of their emerging professional identity. In the 1980’s and 1990’s, socialisation was seen as something that was ‘done to’ beginning teachers, often resulting in dramatic outcomes such as transition shock. These early works on socialisation form the basis for subsequent contemporary research into beginning teachers’ experiences (Kardos et al. 2001; Cherubini 2009), which acknowledge that the beginner takes on more of a negotiating role in their induction into their new profession. This negotiation takes place by continually constructing and revising visions of self through self reflection and interaction with stakeholders, or communities of practice.

Rather than ‘being socialised’, contemporary researchers recognise that beginning teachers now take a more active and adaptive role in their transition to teaching. Cherubini (2009) traces the changes from ‘enculturation’ in the 1970’s and 1980’s to a focus on beginning teachers’ ‘navigation’ through phases of socialisation; to a shift in the late 1990’s of the focus of new teacher socialisation upon the organisational leaders of the school; to an understanding of professional identity at the turn of the century. More recent frameworks that conceptualise teacher learning and development draw on the notions of teachers as ‘adaptive experts’ in becoming a professional (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005), and that teachers in their first three years build on their teacher education experiences along a professional learning continuum that includes developing a professional identity (Feiman-Nemser 2001; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko 2006, p. 352). Teacher socialisation occurs through an accumulation of experiences, yet these experiences need not be exceptional incidents – they can also be routine phenomena, as seen in Tripp’s work on critical incidents. Tripp describes a critical incident as something that has been produced by the way we look at a situation. Incidents happen, then the incident becomes a critical incident when we interpret the significance of the event (1993, p. 8). Reflecting on critical incidents that shape teachers’
identities is an effective approach to understanding the complex nature of teaching and where the teacher fits in a network of negotiation roles and acceptance within the teaching community. Lara describes the significance of her “epiphany about lunchboxes” as the moment when she gained a greater understanding of her role and her place within the prep team. However, despite her epiphany, this incident still caused Lara anxiety as the feeling that she needed to be like the other teachers remained. School culture, as identified by Cherubini (2009), continues to impact on the ‘socialisation’ of beginning teachers through ‘enculturation’ – the role culture plays in validating the career path of a teacher such as Lara, and its foundational impact upon her professional and formative identity development.

The early months and years of in-service teaching are crucial in identity formation (McNally 2005, p. 1). Anxiety can be caused by 1yr teachers’ concerns with forming an identity as a teacher – making the transition from student to pre-service teacher to in-service teacher. In Berman’s (1994) study one individual describes his anxiety in preparing for a first teaching moment:

Getting that first class period of actual teaching behind me was the biggest relief imaginable. I had been preparing for that day for an entire month, and although I experienced much fear and anxiety, it felt great to finally join the ranks with the real teachers. (Berman 1994, p. 46)

While in the classroom new teachers may feel more like a ‘real’ teacher outside the classroom and among colleagues, graduate teachers define themselves in lesser terms, such as ‘just a grad’ or ‘only a 1yr’. Something within school culture inhibits and silences them and reminds them they are mere newcomers (Pierce 2007). Implied in the theory of teaching is that without effective classroom management, and being able to manage a class without the assistance from colleagues, no learning can take place. Consequently there is little chance of being regarded as a competent member of the teaching profession (Britzman 1991). Teachers’ socialisation takes place through affiliations and interactions with colleagues, and also in
the classroom. Students can shape teachers’ work through their interactions in the classroom (Zeichner & Gore 1990). Students of all ages are expert at inducting new teachers and making them aware of the way in which the school operates, and what is expected of their teacher – through overt or covert means – particularly in relation to classroom management. This can conflict with the teacher’s own aspirations.

I still have the image in my mind that there is a code of behavior [sic] and belief that I must adopt once students start calling me teacher and that doesn’t always fit with the person I am. (Vinz 1995, p. 173)

As in Lara’s case, her interactions with students, and their responses to her attempts to be like the other teachers, shaped her understanding of identity as being a particular kind of person at a specific time, in response to the situation at hand. There are a variety of social groups that can shape the identity of the beginning teacher, through either an explicit or implicit process of negotiation. As Clandinin, Downey and Huber recognise:

[t]hose of us who create ‘teacher’ as part of our identity must negotiate the particular implications of our professional identity in relation to students, peers, the general public, our intimates, and ourselves. (Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009, pp. 141-2)

Interactions

Teachers’ practice is also located in the social realm, and as such identity can also be viewed as ‘how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others’ (Lasky 2005, p. 901). Timoššuk and Ugaste (2012, p. 2) understand the formation of teacher identity as a ‘continuous learning process, where each professional experience is re-thought against a background of interactions of emotions and knowledge’ and where an experience can be both deeply individual and one which is experienced with peers.

As discussed in Part Three: Procedure the research participants described their firsts, and were also asked who they told their firsts to in order to describe how their identity has transformed not only through their
experiences and reflections but also through their relations with others. Mead (1913, p. 376) contends that ‘the self acts with reference to others and ... there is then another “me” criticizing, approving, and suggesting, and consciously planning, i.e., the reflective self’. Not only is there another ‘me’, but in interacting with others, this ‘other me’ gets to seek approval (or disapproval) from colleagues, family, students, and the school community. Professionals indicate that sustained interaction with colleagues helps form a socially constructed image of themselves. This interaction also increases their allegiance to the profession (Daley 2002).

It is reported by Long et al (2012) that pre-service teachers are often unsure about how to negotiate their identities as professionals. Indeed, if given the choice, many preferred to remain ‘invisible’ as learners. Teachers such as Janet, who says “you don’t want to look like an idiot!” understand that they need to ask a lot of questions as a ‘grad’ but would prefer to appear like their more experienced colleagues. Such teachers, under pressure and without immediate support, can be seen to resort to a number of pre-professional stances that they think will help them negotiate their status as teachers. ‘They felt that they were required to be not only ‘invisible’ but also invulnerable from the start like normal teachers!’ (Long et al. 2012, p. 621). Janet’s desire to be like a ‘real’ teacher speaks of the invisibility 1yr teachers assume until they feel ready to join the ranks of their colleagues, or gain similar experiences.

Experienced colleagues have been recognised as apprenticing new teachers. Gee and Green explain that

people’s activities are part of larger “communities of practice”; that is, groups of people who affiliate over time and events engage in tasks or work of a certain sort... Such communities of practice produce and reproduce themselves through the creation of a variety of social processes and practices. Within social processes, and through interactions constituting and constituted by social practices, they ‘apprentice’ new members. (Gee & Green 1998, p. 147)

At times this apprenticing of new members occurs through the experiences
of rites of passage (Berman 1994), often through informal interactions. Aspfors and Bondas (2013) describe teaching as a fundamentally social practice, and that ‘caring’ for beginning teachers is an important aspect of their introduction to the profession. However, their findings indicate that it seems care for beginning teachers is not a matter of course in the increasingly hectic and intense everyday life of schools today. Interactions with colleagues who are in the position of caring for 1yr teachers can be limited by physical constraints such as isolated classrooms. There appears to be a case for locating beginning teachers in spaces alongside their more experienced colleagues so that everyday interactions can occur in order to support those starting out. This concept is discussed further in Part Five: Induction.

**Affiliations**

In coming to understand their identity in relation to the new context 1yr teachers look to their colleagues. This is a perspective of identity that contends ‘we are what we are because of the experiences we have had within certain sorts of affinity groups’ (Gee 2000, p. 101). Both positive and negative experiences of professional culture can provide the 1yr teacher with an understanding of their social roles in the specific local context. Professional culture is the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevail among colleagues. A new teacher’s encounter with professional culture will depend on ‘the group of colleagues with whom she works, how they interact, and whether they welcome novices in their professional exchanges and pay attention to their needs and concerns’ (Kardos et al. 2001, p. 256). Fuller (1969), for example, identifies the beginning teacher as one whose concern with survival and personal adequacy leads him/her to emulate the practice of expert teachers. Likewise, Berliner’s (1986) model of teacher development views the beginning teacher as consciously learning the tasks of teaching and developing strategies by following the practice of colleagues.
(see also Allen 2009). As seen in the representation of Lara’s experience she seeks signals from her colleagues about how they interact with students, what instructional approaches they promote, what topics they deem appropriate or out of bounds for discussion at meetings, and how they use their planning time. It is crucial that these signals be clear because, ultimately, teachers’ early experiences determine not only their long-term performance in the classroom (Rust 1994; Feiman-Nemser 2001) but also their decisions about whether to stay in teaching (Kardos et al. 2001).

Unlike Schaefer’s (2013) experience of isolation, Tash experienced a ‘discourse of support’ at her school where experiences of liminality were shared and it was understood that colleagues’ shared experiences create a conducive environment of support. Feeling as though she felt the same way as her more experienced colleagues also assisted Tash to ‘fit’ (Liu 2005) into the curricular program she undertook as a specialist teacher, as this required different sets of skills and knowledge, and also reflected different underlying perspectives and beliefs about teaching and learning at her school. Tash’s affiliations with the other specialist teachers at the school encouraged her to accept and embrace her identity as one that was different to her preconceived notion of a classroom teacher, allowing her to feel ‘normal’.

Affiliations with colleagues can impact on the 1yr teacher’s sense of agency. In their recent study into teacher attrition Sass et al (2010) state that teachers who perceived greater administrative support were more inclined to believe they could make a difference in their students’ education. Affiliations can also assist the 1yr teacher to feel a sense of belonging, and it is proposed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) that belonging is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to the motivation to leave the profession. An important question for their study was whether teachers’ feeling of belonging mediated the relationship between social relations and value perception on the one hand and job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession on the other hand. Their results indicated that a positive
social climate and social support are positively related to teacher satisfaction and motivation. They cite emotional support and positive relations with supervisors, colleagues, and parents as also promoting a feeling of belonging. Hence, ‘the relation between positive social relations (with principals, colleagues, and parents) and job satisfaction at least in part, is mediated through a feeling of belonging’ (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2011, p. 1031).

**Part One Summary**

Part One introduced the foundation of this research as residing in the current discourse surrounding beginning teacher attrition. A number of categories of description emerged from my own personal experiences as a beginning teacher and in the literature to suggest there is more to beginning teachers’ attrition than their struggles to survive. While survival remains a predominant theme among the discourse concerning ‘becoming’ a teacher, a more contemporary understanding of identity transformation as something fluid, shifting, and continuous is seen as increasingly important for beginning teachers. Investigating such understandings requires a method that is congruent with the aim of the research. In Part Two a discussion of the theatre-based research method, and phenomenographic mode of inquiry, connect with and compliment the dramatic, epiphanic, and revelatory nature of identity transformation outlined in Part One.
PART TWO

Introduction to Part Two

Part Two begins with an overview of arts-based and theatre-based research practice. The ideas of key players in both fields are outlined with reference to their influence over this study. In the section titled ‘Employing a theatre-based research method’ I make a case for the application of a theatre-based research approach to the investigation of 1yr teachers’ experiences of identity transformation through their *firsts*. The areas of identity transformation, 1yr teachers, and audience are discussed in the proposal of the theatre-based research method as appropriate to investigate the phenomena through a phenomenographic paradigm, employing investigative tools derived from a practice approach. The methodology and theoretical orientation are then outlined, and posed as effective procedures to investigating 1yr teachers’ experiences of identity transformation.
Theatre-Based Research Method to Representing the Data

*Overview of arts-based and theatre-based research methods*

Arts-based research is the careful investigation into dimensions of the social world by the arts-based researcher through a reconfiguration and representation of selected facets of what the research uncovers, with those facets now transformed into aesthetic substance upon their embodiment within an aesthetic form; and the production of disequilibrium within the audience of the work as they vicariously re-experience what has been designed (Barone & Eisner 2012, p. 20). Arts-based research can take the form of a variety or combinations of arts, which can include drama and theatre, dance, visual art, film, literature, and music.

Barone and Eisner (1997; 2012) have been advocating for arts-based educational research for many years. Barone’s own work on the possibilities of literary nonfiction combined with Eisner’s interests in the role of the arts in the development of cognition have led to an agenda for arts-based research that employs expressive qualities of form to convey meaning (Barone & Eisner 2012). They contend that educational research that is arts-based is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and the writing. Their ‘Seven Features of Arts-Based Educational Inquiry’ include the following: 1. The Creation of a Virtual Reality; 2. The Presence of Ambiguity; 3. The Use of Expressive Language; 4. The Use of Contextualised and Vernacular Language; 5. The Promotion of Empathy; 6. Personal Signature of the Researcher/Writer; and 7. The Presence of Aesthetic Form (Barone & Eisner 1997). These features have been employed to frame the stages of data generation, scripting,
rehearsal and performance, and analysis, and are discussed more fully in Part Three: Scripting, Rehearsal and Performance.

Theatre-based research is located under the umbrella term of arts-based research. The process is the primary focus of this theatre-based research, which is different to research-based theatre. Research-based theatre centres on the outcome of the creation of an aesthetic object, and is therefore research guided by aesthetic features. Yet in both the arts are viewed as a way of human knowing and being – of imagination, aesthetic knowledge, and translation and expression of ideas. The realisation of the potential for the arts comes through their ability to foster the development of creativity and imagination and their ability to facilitate social change (Ewing 2010). Theatre-based research approaches include performance ethnography, ethnodrama, verbatim theatre, and Forum Theatre. As my own theatre-based research approach is an eclectic one, I recognise below some key practitioners’ ideas that have influenced my theatre-based research approach through their inclusion or exclusion. Inclusions centre on the importance of audience, while exclusions concern the privileging of the aesthetic outcome.

**Performance ethnography**

Performance ethnography is best understood as a variety of approaches to representing ethnographic studies, though it is not merely the dramatic representation of ethnographic data. It can be a forum for dialogic exchange and a catalyst to critical thinking and reflection (Oberg 2008). In representing the experiences of others further interpretation is required by both the researcher – in the selection of material, structuring it and combining text with visual representations; and the audience – in the viewing of the performance. An interpretive effort is necessary because words always express relationships, span contexts larger than the immediate situation from which they arise, and hold tensions between what is intended
and what is signified (Britzman 1991, p. 13). Performing lived experiences can provide audiences with a form of engaged discourse (Alexander 2005) which asks audience members to articulate the shift in their way of thinking and seeing – what they know differently, what they will do differently. Within this research is a consideration of how audience members can literally translate performative experience into knowledge and translate knowledge into doing.

Early forms of theatre-based research emerged from ethnography (Conquergood 1985) and anthropology (Turner & Schechner 1986). Conquergood (1985, p. 2) describes performance ethnographers as those who ‘compliment their participant observation fieldwork by actually performing for different audiences the verbal art they have studied in situ’. Conquergood also discusses performing these stories to a variety of purposes. Performing to an academic audience is used to complement a theoretical argument about the ‘epistemological potential of performance as a way of deeply sensing the other’ (Conquergood 1985, p. 3), and to non-academic audiences in order to explore the way the performance of a story can ‘pull an audience into a sense of the other in a rhetorically compelling way’ (ibid). In both instances Conquergood experienced resistance from his audiences, and has investigated the moral and ethical dimensions of performing the stories of others. These are referred to in relation to the procedure of developing a theatre-based performance of 1yr teachers’ experiences in Part Three: Procedure, titled ‘Ethics’.

In their anthropological work Victor and Edith Turner (Turner 1980; Turner & Turner 1982; Turner & Schechner 1986) discuss the dramatic nature of specific cultures and the possibilities of performing the experiences of that culture in order to form an impression of how members of various cultures ‘experience’ one another. Victor Turner (in Turner & Schechner 1986) analyses ‘social dramas’ using theatrical terminology to describe disharmonic or crisis situations. These situations, which include arguments,
combats, and rites of passage, are inherently dramatic because participants not only do things, they try to show others what they are doing or have done; actions take on a ‘performed-for-an-audience’ aspect. Turner’s (1994) work also employs the use of theatre terminology to describe and understand epiphanic moments, and liminality. In a particularly interesting instance Turner and Turner (1982) participated in what they saw as a performance ethnography event where a graduate student cast the Turners’ anthropology department in a simulated or fabricated Central Virginian wedding, in order to ‘step into the shoes’ of members of the wedding party and guests. These, and their earlier performative approaches to ethnography, lead to the rendering of ethnography in a kind of instructional theatre. Both Conquergood’s and Turner’s work contributed to the emergence of an understanding of performing research.

Conquergood and Turner turned to theatre when they encountered dissatisfaction with existing forms of representation of their ethnographic data. The presentation of field notes and other, often narrative, data as performance has been identified as a valuable method of transcending the literary constraints of more traditional ethnographic studies. The performance ethnographer combines text with visual elements such as movement and settings in order to make real the stories of the study (McCall 2003). Performance ethnography often employs the people of the study as themselves in the performance (Jones 2002; Bird et al. 2010). In other performances the researcher performs an embodied experience of the cultural practices of the other, in the literal sense of the saying ‘walk a mile in someone else’s shoes’. This practice has the intent of allowing the participants in, and audience of, the performance the opportunity to come to know culture differently – a strategic method of inciting culture – to stir up feelings and provoke audiences to a critical social realisation and possible response (Alexander 2005, p. 413).
Ethnodrama

Ethnodrama is a dialogue in which performers and audience engage in an equal exchange (Conquergood 1985; Mienczakowski & Morgan 2001; Cozart et al. 2003). Mienczakowski’s theatre-based research work emerges from a background of both performing arts and education. He explains that ethnodramas differ to other forms of performance ethnography in that it is the explicit intention of ethnodrama to become a public voice with educational potential. As qualitative research, ethnodrama has followed both hermeneutic and critical research processes and has been translated into a format amenable to academic reinterpretation, theatrical performance, and consumption by those who contributed to its data. As a result, it is markedly different from some other forms of ethnographic research, particularly those anthropological researches that do not seek their subjects of study as the objects of their deliberations (Mienczakowski 1995). The lure of ethnodrama for Mienczakowski is its realisation of large audiences through the use of performance conventions. Research is placed centre stage for audiences who might never seek to read a research report or view a documentary style report on the phenomenon, but are interested enough in an issue to be encouraged to participate in a performance event (Mienczakowski 2009, p. 328-9). He points to the benefits of theatre-based research methods in addressing the limitations of traditional research, as ‘once written [traditional research] becomes temporally bound and prone to fundamental readings’ (Mienczakowski 1995, p. 366). Mienczakowski proposes ethnodrama, as an extension of Forum Theatre (discussed below), as an alternative to traditional research as ethnodrama ‘renegotiates its meanings with every performance by intentionally updating its authenticity, repeatedly seeking validation from those about whom it is written, and responding to a consensus of informed opinion by changing the research report/script accordingly’ (Ibid).
There are two distinct beneficiaries of both performance ethnography and ethnodrama. First are the practitioners, through experience of coming to know culture differently by ‘stepping into the shoes’ of others (Turner & Turner 1982; Jones 2002; Hewson 2007); and second are the recipients (audiences), through developing an understanding of culture in the viewing of, and reflection on, the performance of the lives of others (Denzin 2003; Sallis 2003; Anderson 2007). Both performance ethnography and ethnodrama have had success in depicting, and researching, the fields of education and teacher education. The use of the symbolic, the metaphoric, and the kinaesthetic to communicate complex ideas emerging out of a qualitative researcher’s immersion in a field may provoke responses from audiences ranging from the sceptical (how could this be research?) to the dismissive (this lacks rigour). Yet a growing body of qualitative researchers have found that more conventional approaches to research have limited their capacity to capture the complexity, contradictions, and nuance of the lived experiences of their participants and have turned to forms of arts/theatre-based research such as performance ethnography and ethnodrama as they seek to explore and represent the ineffable or the ambiguous (Sinclair 2012).

Denzin (2003) approaches theatre-based research from the perspective of (auto)ethnography, which he maintains speaks of the performance turn in the human disciplines, an anthropology and sociology of performance where interpretive ethnographers staged reflexive ethnographic performances, using field notes and (auto)ethnographic observations to shape performances. Denzin posits the rethinking of performance (auto)ethnography with relation to where the dividing line between performativity and performance disappears. He suggests that we live in a performance-based, dramaturgical culture where the dividing line between performer and audience blurs, and culture itself becomes a dramatic performance. Ethnodramas focus on crises and moments of epiphany in the
culture. Suspended in time, ethnodramas are liminal moments. Ethnodramas ‘open up institutions and their practices for critical inspection and evaluation’ (Denzin 2003, p. 83). Denzin investigates the ‘how to’ through his own construction, performance and critical analysis of his ongoing autoethnography of a Saldaña small town in Montana. He acknowledges that the phenomenon being described is created through acts of representation and presentation, and argues that the contemporary performance ethnographer is moving towards a more presentational style of performance where the audience is recognised as an integral part of the process of performance, by way of sharing the emotional experience.

Saldaña (1999, 2003), like Mienczakowski, has a strong performing arts background and as such approaches the field of theatre-based research by viewing the similarities between the playwright in theatre and the qualitative researcher writing a report. Both, he contends, aim to create a unique, engaging, and insightful text about the human condition. Saldaña’s focus concerns not only the creation of the aesthetic object, but also the employment of a theatre-based method as an analytic process. He states the construction of an ethnographic performance text began not as an artistic vision, but as an analytic process – for example, reduction of the data for core content examination; linking participant data for triangulation; and using codes for category development (Saldaña 1999, p. 61). Saldaña’s work explicates how theatrical conventions such as monologue and dialogue can be adapted for qualitative data analysis, and function as guidelines to insure a three-dimensional portrayal of a participant in the ethnodrama. In his later work (Saldaña 2003) he also likened the process of plotting to the conceptual framework of the research, and the participants as characters. In addition Saldaña considers the inclusion of the researcher as a character in the play. This notion prompted my own consideration of a presentational style of performance where the characters as the interviewees address the audience as the interviewer.
**Verbatim theatre**

Performance ethnography’s heritage has a discernible and recent history. Within this history also lies the form described as verbatim theatre. The term verbatim refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play (Hammond & Steward 2008), where the exact words of interview participants are shaped by the dramatist to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors are employed to portray the individuals whose words are being used. The heritage of verbatim theatre can be traced back to the BBC documentary radio ballads of the 1950s. The subsequent presentation of oral history techniques on stage has further extended a methodology through which ethnographically based oral history techniques have been used to develop narratives that accurately and faithfully depict given social phenomena.

The basic principles of verbatim theatre can be seen in the scripted dramatic works of playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht, Caryl Churchill and Dario Fo where social, political and cultural issues are played out in order to provoke the audience into considering differing points of view. Often these works are derived from lived experiences and can be considered under the umbrella of verbatim theatre, which acknowledges and often draws attention to its origins in lived experiences (Hammond & Steward 2008). The primary purpose of verbatim theatre is the employment of techniques in order to reach the end result of a performance – thereby considered as research-based theatre. In this sense verbatim is a technique, rather than a form. The technique of verbatim theatre in this research has been employed predominantly in relation to the data, in order to honour the words and experiences of the participants in an ethical and moral manner. The ethical responsibilities involved representing participants’ verbatim data and experiences are discussed further in Part Three: Procedure, titled ‘Ethics’.
Forum Theatre

A theatre-based method of inquiry primarily concerned about connecting with the audience is Forum Theatre devised by Augusto Boal (Boal 1985; Boal 1992; Trinity College Dublin 2008) in response to the persuasive pull of Freire’s (1974) critical pedagogy. Boal describes himself and his method as an agent for social change. Boal’s method allows audience members to become participants in the action on stage. Usually used in the form of ‘workshops’ rather than as performance, Forum Theatre presents scenarios to small homogenous audiences creating a pedagogical theatre where the audience all learn together. Traditionally the play, or ‘model’, presents a mistake or failure, which spurs the audience into finding a solution or a new approach to the problem. Boal’s work has emancipatory aims for those who may be silenced by hegemonic discourses. Boal recognised that we have physical traits based on our social and work experiences, a kind of ‘muscular alienation’ (Boal 1985, p. 127), a telling way people of a particular profession physically present themselves. Dwyer (2004, p. 200) furthered the work of Boal in testing the underlying assumption at work in Forum Theatre, that enactment is worth more than speech, as if bodies ‘speak more’, and more accurately, than mere words. His focus was on the audiences’ response to Forum Theatre events as an effective method of data generation. The sentiments, rather than the process, of Forum Theatre have been employed in this research, where the aim is to bring to light the experiences of those living the phenomenon.

As I have shown approaches to performing research are varied. They are connected yet distinctly different to each other. The main connections can be summarised by Barone and Eisner’s (1997) understanding of ‘what is research?’, which emphasises the ways arts-based educational research helps audiences notice, understand and appraise. Other connections between the various approaches outlined in this section lie in the emancipatory and educational purposes of performing lived experiences, the
ethical and moral stances of the theatre-based practitioner, the
acknowledgement of the audience, and the exploration and representation
of phenomena that can be, by its nature, hard to grasp. This overview
outlines some of the theatre-based research approaches I have employed in
the shaping of the theatre-based play script and performance ‘The First
Time’. The purposeful selection of these aspects assisted me to ethically and
conscientiously work with the participants’ data to represent their
experiences, through an eclectic theatre-based research approach, to an
expert audience.

**Employing a theatre-based research method**

In this section I detail how I have framed and ‘read’ the lived experiences of
the participants through the processes and performance of theatre-based
research. While arts-based research methods emerged from a dissatisfaction
with, among others, the constraints of operationalism, and the legacies of
positivism and behaviourism (Eisner 1997) my own consideration of an
arts/theatre-based method was not through any dissatisfaction. On the
contrary I believe there is a time and place for a variety of research
approaches depending on what is being investigated and to what purpose. I
employed a theatre-based method to conducting the research because I
believe the connections between what phenomena are being investigated
and how they are investigated needed to be harmonious. The employment
of a theatre-based method of inquiry to this study aims to draw attention to
the appropriateness of the method towards the phenomena being
investigated, namely the lived experiences of the participants’ identity
transformation. The study of lived experiences (van Manen 1990) examines
how we come to construct and organise what has already been experienced.
Lived experience hints at a process whereby we attribute meaning to what
has happened to us (Britzman 1991, p. 9). With these thoughts in mind I
began the research process with the understanding that the primary aim of
research is the generation of knowledge, and the aim of educational
research is the generation of knowledge for the improvement of the quality of educational practice. Educational research serves its most important function when it enhances people’s lives. Arts-based research approaches generate knowledge that enable an audience to notice what had not been seen before, to understand what had not been understood, to gain a deeper appreciation of complex situations that contribute to the end to which educational research is committed (Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 85).

The purpose of the theatre-based research play script and performance ‘The First Time’ is essentially as an analytic process, in which performance is an aspect of the process. These processes begin with data generation, then scripting as a process designed to allow the researcher (and other readers) to view the data from a critical distance. The process of inquiry through a theatre-based method in this instance occurred within the process of composition and vice versa. Its purpose is more than the creation of an aesthetic object, as it has been employed as a method of inquiry in itself; involving experimenting with ways of analysing and presenting, or representing, the interview texts (for example Denzin 2003; Ackroyd & O’Toole 2010; Barone & Eisner 2012).

It was my initial intention to employ scripting as the primary tool to understand the data. Like Mienczakowski (2001) and Saldaña (2003) my background and identity as a performing arts practitioner played a large role in the selection of the theatre-based method. Theatre and dance have formed part of my core identity, and as such I ‘read’ the world through these, I ‘see’ aspects of theatre and dance in everyday occurrences and objects where others might see an algorithm, or a business model. This is my way of understanding things that are often hard to grasp, and is one reason why I felt compelled to explore a theatre-based research approach to social phenomena. In the early stage I saw the performance as a tidy conclusion to the process of scripting as analysis. However, the rehearsals, and particularly the performance, became more significant tools for analysis than I had
anticipated. The power of the performance was revealed through my understanding that the process of description occurs on both the page and the stage, using language as written and spoken to represent the participants’ experiences. The process of analysis in theatre-based research occurs in relation to both the written and performed work, where each scene in ‘The First Time’ signifies a category of identity transformation, through which the differences between and within each individual’s situation is considered.

I believe the play script still serves as an effective tool for data analysis, particularly when developing an understanding of the process of data reduction. Initially I was dissatisfied with the term ‘data reduction’, believing it to be counter-intuitive to ‘reduce’ the participants’ descriptions of their experiences, while also understanding the importance of honing in on their meaning. The process of scripting allowed me to reconcile these thoughts by creating a snapshot of each participant’s first as representative of their experiences. Later, the performance revealed more nuanced understandings of the participants’ experiences as viewed through the eyes of the teacher-actors and audiences.

Because of its ability to communicate research findings in an emotive and embodied manner, theatre holds particular potential for research, which often engages complex questions of the human condition (Rossiter et al. 2008). In analysing 1yr teachers’ stories it was important to provide detail about how the stories were expressed. In committing words to the page the writer leaves it up to the reader to interpret the words via cues from the author and in light of the reader’s own experiences. Through my own process of writing it became evident that addressing the embodied aspects of these teachers’ practices in an appropriate format would add to existing forms of knowledge about beginning teachers’ practice. In addition to analysing the impact of the time and location in which the stories were told, who they were told to (including myself), and the language used, the theatre-based research processes also acknowledge the embodiment of the 1yr teachers’ practice –
the emotions and meaning conveyed through their gestures, inflection, tone and emphasis. There are two interrelated notions of embodiment being considered in this research – the embodiment of 1yr teachers’ practice, and the embodiment of the performers representing the participants’ experiences. Both serve to highlight the body as the place of knowing. Performing this research draws on the embodied practices of the participants as described in the interviews – what they do as an indication of what they think – and is represented in performance through the embodied practices of the actors who are themselves teachers. The teacher-actors are discussed further in the section in Part Three: Procedure, titled ‘Casting’.

**Identity transformation**

Drama and theatre have a long tradition of being employed to capture and promote the transformation of identity. The playwright employing theatrical methods poses questions that encourage the audience to consider their own lives in light of those presented or represented on stage. Throughout the history of European drama, performances reflect the ‘alternating humility and arrogance of the human mind in its… contemplation with itself’ (Wickham 1972). As with many practices, the theatre itself has reflected and rejected the social, moral, political and religious identity of the population. As such the extra-individual features of cultural and social practices and identity have shaped and were shaped by both the subject matter in the performances and the attitude to drama and theatre at the time. Drama and theatre, like aspects of identity, constantly transform over time in a process of birth, growth, decay, and rebirth. Performing moments of identity transformation – of being a certain kind of person at a particular moment in time – encourages further consideration of the discourses surrounding practices that involve connections and relationships among 1yr teachers. These practices include building or undermining particular kinds of solidarities, and contributing to or diminishing social integration among those involved and affected (Kemmis 2010, p 18).
Throughout history drama portrays epiphanies situated in specific times that impact on the transformation of identity, which in turn cause audience members to vicariously consider their own identity and practices. Drama and theatre mirror the social, moral and cultural values of society. In doing so drama and theatre also stimulate changes in these values. Ewing (2010, p. 204) proposes drama as a ‘corrupting medium’ that distorts the certainties of established truths and identities, that shows both commonalities and differences, and provides us with the shock of recognition that we are involved in the stories and complicit in their manufacture as much as their performance. Therefore, in addition to employing theatre-based research as a methodological process, this research acknowledges the transformative nature of theatre as a form of communicative action – a creation of public discourse in a public sphere. It is also a form of transformative learning (Ewing 2010, p. 33) that involves experiencing a deep structural shift in core thoughts, feelings and activities. This shift in consciousness alters our way of being in the world and can change our large-scale beliefs.

**Firsts**

Theatre-based research methods are employed to develop works around a specific controlling insight or issue. Within a phenomenographic paradigm it is important to ensure all participants are talking about the same phenomenon. In this research 1yr teachers’ *firsts* are a lens through which the teachers’ identity transformation and related discourses are investigated. These *firsts* are revelations in multiple senses. They are epiphanic moments (Denzin 2003) belonging to the participants that reveal aspects of their practice and identity. *Firsts* are also temporal in that they are frozen in a particular moment in time and place. And *firsts* are highly dramatic anticipated or unpredictable liminal moments. These *firsts* as revelations speak to the heart of practices as embodied, as shared discourses of in-being (Heidegger 1985, p. 161) that shape, and are shaped by, what practitioners
do in specific moments in time. The aim in employing *firsts* was to unearth questions that have been clouded by perceived ‘problems’ of beginning teachers as identified in the literature, as *firsts* are individual, allowing variation to emerge between participants’ experiences in the understanding and categorising of meaning of the phenomenon.

**Intended audience**

My intention in employing a theatre-based research method was to explore an integrated and complementary approach where the processes of creating and performing the theatrical work are interwoven with the processes of conducting and disseminating the research. I aimed to challenge the notion of ‘writing up’ my research by investigating the subject matter in a manner that generated more questions, and that encourages the ‘reader’ or audience (referred to as the audience of both the page and of the stage) to consider their active response to the material. The aim of employing a theatre-based method is not only as an expansion of the traditional means through which research into teachers’ lives has been undertaken, it also involves the expansion of the avenues through which the results of research are made available to a relevant audience; of how this theatre-based research method might broaden and complement traditional ways of thinking about and doing educational research (Eisner 1997).

My own theatre-based research method aims to encourage the audience to grasp the nature and significance of the phenomenon in a previously unseen way. Critical engagement through arts processes can help us to see things from a different perspective and can suggest connections between different phenomena that were not previously recognised (Ewing 2010, p. 47). In this way a theatre-based inquiry is in essence an artistic endeavour, that attempts to somehow capture individuals’ experiences of a certain phenomenon of life that is both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and eloquent (van Manen 1984, p. 6). Whether on a
stage or in a physics laboratory, the representation of the world is based on the practice of selection and explanation to form a mirror of reality (Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 89). Mienczakowski (2009, p. 322) contends that audiences of all live performance works ‘witness, engage with and gain interpretive cues (subtle and coded) from fellow audience members’ during a performance. He describes the act of being part of an audience as one that ‘arguably, generates a subtle overlaysing and emotionally reflexive interpretation and emphasis to the meaning of an ethnographically derived performance work’ (Ibid). One interesting aspect of working with a theatre-based research method is that people outside the research team can interpret data. The audience’s interpretation of the data can encourage the researcher to consider the data in a different light, one that acknowledges a diverse range of personal histories (and perhaps biases) other than their own. This theatre-based research assists the audience to examine a variety of possibilities before reaching a conclusion (Dewey 1933) in order to consider multi-faceted experiences of 1yr teachers and to identify the underlying assumptions governing their actions (Griffin 2003).

**Orienting the theatre-based research approach**

The philosophical and theoretical orientations that frame arts-based research are often situated in the sphere of qualitative generative inquiry that has the potential to extend understandings of a particular phenomenon as well as extend the borders of research. Essentially arts-based research is a human discipline and as such Denzin and Lincoln (2000, in Denzin 2003, p. 80) suggest the performance turn in human disciplines is located in the seventh moment of qualitative inquiry – a ‘postexperimental phase of the future’ where practitioners examine how far reflexive performance has come in order to imagine where to go next. Yet Barrett and Bolt (2007, p. 7) contend that an interdisciplinary arts-based research approach creates conditions for the emergence of new models of understanding objects of inquiry through the interaction of ideas from different areas of knowledge. My study centres
on the different ways 1yr teachers experience identity transformation. It is about what particular individuals do at a particular time, and in a particular place, as captured through their \textit{first} experiences. As such employing specific lenses identified within practice approaches, through a phenomenographic paradigm, focuses the research on two key aspects – the experiences of the participants, and the temporal and corporeal aspects of their description of their experiences. These are discussed in further detail below.
Methodology and Theoretical Orientation

The consideration of methodology is to contemplate ‘how?’ How can a theatre-based research approach be oriented to question that which remains hidden about the world of 1yr teachers? How might such a method assist to investigate the ways 1yr teachers describe their identity transformation? The key concepts employed in this work to address such questions are revelations, descriptions, variations, and representations.

My consideration of methodology and related method began by seeking an approach that would focus the research on how 1yr teachers describe what they do, and how what they do shapes, and is shaped by, their practice and their identity. The discussion in this section reveals a conceptual orientation for the research, which grants priority to the material and argues that the method should be congruent with it (Dunne 2005, p. 378). Initially I began with the consideration of a relevant ‘framework’ (a term I subsequently became dissatisfied with due to its allusion to a rigid structure) within which to orient an inquiry into 1yr teachers’ experiences. A practice approach was considered at the time to be an effective orientation to focus the study on what particular individuals do in specific times and places. However, upon further consideration of the nature of the study where the focus was more on the reported experiences of the participants, rather than their practice per se, resulted in an investigation within a phenomenographic paradigm. Before this shift occurred, a number of aspects of a practice approach were recognised as viable lenses to focus the research on the experiences of 1yr teachers. These lenses remained as central aspects for data generation and analysis of the participants’ firsts, and are described below, followed by a discussion of the phenomenographic approach to this inquiry.
Investigative lenses

This study asks participants for a retrospective reflection on their lived experience. Firsts are retrospective, but they are more than just looking back at a particular moment. They also look back from a specific context in which they re-emerge. The 1yr teachers in this study were asked to describe their past firsts in response to the present moment. In making use of firsts we can see a way of how to describe and reflect on experiences that have already been lived. In a Heideggerian sense a first is ‘that which shows itself in itself’, a revelation whereby the object announces itself by an internal idea or representation (Heidegger 1985). Firsts in this sense are seen as an announcement through which an understanding can be reached of what is told, what was done, and what is known. A first can be considered an appearance or a presupposition whereby something beyond itself is being indicated. A first in this study indicates how individuals think, how they position themselves, their sense of agency, and understanding of their identity. Firsts are a revelation of what is important at a particular moment in time. Often the most compelling stories are those that help us understand better what is most common, most taken-for-granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly (van Manen 1990, p. 19).

A number of aspects of a practice approach remained as investigative lenses, focusing the inquiry into firsts as epiphanic moments of liminality on specific aspects of the participants’ experiences of identity transformation. One lens includes aspects such as the temporal, corporeal, and dramaturgical nature of practices. Another lens includes the way practices are reproduced and transformed over time through solidarities and forms of social integration. Also relevant as an investigative lens is the notion that a practice approach recognises that practices prefigure identity, and practice ‘grasps’ the world pathically (van Manen 2007, p. 20). A pathic understanding highlights relations and situations through corporeal, temporal, and actional knowing, and is situated within an empathic and...
sympathetic approach to understanding 1yr teachers’ practice. The embodiment of practice is also central to this research, in that the act of practice depends on the sense and sensuality of the body, personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent situations, thoughtful routines, and other aspects of knowledge. This aspect of embodiment was particularly relevant to the representation of the data in the theatre-based research performance, as the teacher-actors’ ‘tact for knowing’ resulted in a sensitive and evocative portrayal of the participants’ experiences.

A key concept in practice theory approaches is drawn from the Aristotelian notion that the knowledge of what we do has a great influence on life; that when we are cognisant of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned, we are acting with reason (Aristotle trans. 2009). Green suggests the guiding principles of praxis, phronesis and aporia are complex matters for further inquiry, which can yield insight into what it is that 1yr teachers do, ‘characteristically and creatively…remaking themselves, their practice and the world, each time anew’ (Green 2009, p. 12). Praxis and phronesis intersect when teachers ‘make and purposefully remake their professional identities in particular places and circumstances’ (Reid & Green 2009, p. 170). Dunne emphasises that phronesis is closely related to ‘judgement’ (Dunne 2005, p. 376). The epiphanic and revelatory qualities of the participants’ firsts bring about phronesis.

Translated as ‘practical wisdom’, the key to phronesis is its concern with action. It is the capability to consider the mode of action in order to deliver change. Aristotle (trans. 2009, p. 106) describes practical wisdom as the ability to think about one’s actions both for individual purposes and for the greater good; to have ‘calculated well with a view to some good end’. Essentially someone who can reflect on their actions has practical wisdom. It is both an ideal and an action, and can also be expressed through a first. Aporia is the useful expression of doubt, and in this study the experience of
aporia is articulated through a *first*. Green describes aporia as ‘moments of undecidability and decision, moments where one must act, even if the way forward is not clear, or – more radically – is uncertain’ (2009, p. 12). Teaching is full of these messy, uncomfortable and unpredictable revelations. Recognising and reflecting on these moments is key to gaining phronesis through praxis. Aporia also has links to Turner’s (1994) discussion of liminality and the rites of passage that occur in this awkward transitional stage. Turner describes three stages of transition: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation. Separation signifies the detachment from what is known, the liminal period is marked by uncertainty – where the new realm contains little that is familiar, and finally the individual returns to a stable state. Aporia occurs in the liminal period. Aporia also closely links to understanding identity as not a fixed or stable state but rather a continuous process of becoming.

Kemmis (2010, p. 3) states that practice has a number of extra-individual features. When inquiring into the *firsts* of 1yr teachers it is important to acknowledge the contexts that shape, and are shaped by, their identity. In the context of the broader social and political world of teaching, some of the extra-individual features recognised in relation to this project are the contractual nature of beginning teachers’ work, the period of national reform (DEEWR 2011), and the promotion of quality teaching (DEEWR 2010). Schatzki (2002, p. 62) reminds us that contexts can prefigure – enable or constrain – what occurs in them. Therefore, it is recognised in this research that teachers’ identity is formed and transformed both through their actions and the context in which these actions take place.

Employing aspects of a practice approach as an investigative lens has allowed me to not only direct the focus of my research into beginning teachers’ *first* experiences that express, and impact on, their professional identity transformation, but also to analyse the data and shape it into the performance of these teachers’ experiences where the field of practice is
shared by research participants, teacher-actors, and audience. The sharing of the data through performance invites the audience to consider the embodiment of practice – as lived, as a shared practical understanding through the entwining of forms of human activity with the character of the human body (Schatzki 2001). The theatre-based method heightens the notion that the participants’ experiences are in the present – that their knowledge or understanding shapes and is shaped by a specific time in a specific place. As individuals perform a practice, they give what they do meaning and significance in the cultural-discursive dimension; demonstrate solidarity, legitimacy and belongingness in relation to others in the social dimension; and demonstrate practical efficacy and various kinds of satisfaction in the material-economic dimension.

The transformative aspect of practice involves changing existing states of affairs in the components of semantic space (‘sayings’), physical and material space and circumstances (‘doings’), and social space (‘relatings’). Its concerns are always to produce greater or lesser modifications in people’s understandings, physical circumstances and social relationships (Kemmis 2009, pp 22-3). Practices prefigure identity as ‘being’ – being a certain kind of person, in a particular place at a particular time. These moments of being, in the process of becoming, are captured in participants’ firsts and analysed through their experiences of being a role (or multiple roles), as aspiring to be..., as affiliating/interacting with...(such as experiences with affinity groups), and as having status – occupying a position in the social hierarchy.

**Phenomenographic inquiry**

In considering the phenomenon of identity transformation under investigation phenomenology was recognised early on as a valid paradigm to shape the analysis and discussion of 1yr teachers’ identity transformation. This was namely a ‘phenomenology of practice’ (van Manen 2007) that encourages the exploration of a variety of possibilities for investigating
relations between being and acting. However, it became evident upon further consideration that an inquiry into the identity of 1yr teachers might be better oriented as an inquiry into how 1yr teachers describe their experiences of identity transformation. Where phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon, phenomenography is the study of how people experience a given phenomenon. As such the orientation of this study shifted to an inquiry into how individual 1yr teachers describe their experiences of identity transformation through their firsts.

The discussion in this section focuses on the intersection of the philosophical positioning of the research and the approaches taken to conduct the research. The space of intersection connects the philosophical paradigm of phenomenography with aspects of a practice approach as an investigative lens to inquire into how individuals experience identity transformation in 1yr teaching, specifically to consider how beginning teachers use firsts to reflect on their experiences and identity. The inquiry considers how people experience a given phenomenon and what particular people do in a particular time and place. The purpose of the orientation of the inquiry is to promote the continued questioning of the nature of teaching, and the nature of 1yr teaching in particular. My personal brief was to construct an animating, evocative description of 1yr teachers’ actions, behaviours, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld (van Manen 1990).

Within a phenomenographic paradigm the set of categories or meanings derived from participants’ descriptions to frame the analysis of experiences are not determined in advance, but ‘emerge’ from the data (Marton 1981; Ornek 2008; Åkerlind 2012). Phenomenography seeks a description of experiences that highlight notions of identity. This research draws on the understandings that to be human is to know what one is doing and why one is doing it as theorised by existentialist philosophers (for example James 1890; Merleau-Ponty 1964; Heidegger 1985); that all human beings
continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities; and as a feature of doing what they do agents are normally able to provide discursive interpretations of the nature of, and the reasons for, the behaviour in which they engage (Giddens 1991, p. 35).

Phenomenography investigates qualitatively different ways in which people experience something or think about something. Both phenomenographic and phenomenologic approaches share the importance of a description of the meaning of the expressions of lived experience – an intermediate (or mediated) description of the lifeworld as expressed in symbolic form. When description is thus mediated by expression then description seems to contain a stronger element of interpretation (van Manen 1990, p. 25). Both phenomenographic and phenomenologic approaches share an understanding that each approach to research is ‘a poeticising activity’ (van Manen 1984, p. 2). The focus of eliciting responses from individual participants is not primarily to be able to ‘report’ on how teaching is seen from their particular perspective, but to ask the question of what is the nature of this phenomenon as an essentially human experience. How is this (beginning) teaching? Is this what it is like to be a (beginning) teacher? Is this what it means to (begin to) teach? Is this what the (beginning) teaching experience is like?

The emphasis of a phenomenographic approach is on difference, which is a theory of variation concerning the relation between the agency of the individual and the situation. Marton (1981, p. 186) stresses the importance of difference between individuals and within individuals in a phenomenographic approach, where the object of the study is not the phenomenon itself (as in a phenomenologic study), but the relationships between each participant and the phenomenon (Bowden & Green 2005). People experience a phenomenon such as identity transformation in different ways. Phenomenographers seek to identify multiple conceptions or variations people have for the phenomenon. Variation is acknowledged in
this study through both the insights of the phenomenon as experienced by the 1yr teachers and in the ways of seeing something as experienced and described by the researcher. The aim of this phenomenographic approach is to develop a collective analysis of individual experiences (Åkerlind 2005). The analysis seeks to identify categories that are stable and generalisable between individual situations even if individuals move between categories on different occasions.

As identified in the literature there are a number of approaches taken to understanding teachers’ work and lives. With particular reference to 1yr teachers the discourse often centres around the difficulties beginning teachers face, and more recently that these difficulties have an impact on the teachers’ willingness to remain in the profession. There are also a number of approaches researchers have taken to asking ‘why?’ Some questions seek to provide statistically driven, reductionist answers in the hope that solutions can be found. The AEU in particular set out to answer why 50% of beginning teachers say they will leave the profession within five years, through selecting a wide and varied range of questionnaire respondents from across Australia. Their data reveals a number of areas of concern belonging to beginning teachers. As seen in the Introduction chapter, these areas are nothing new, and I am not contesting their existence. However, I remind myself here, in light of the orientation of this research, that beginning teachers, and 1yr teachers in particular are not merely a homogenous group with statistically proven tendencies. If the reasons and solutions remain narrow, the discourse also narrows. Statistics can become the common basis for understanding beginning teachers’ work and lives, and as a result the deficit discourse surrounding beginning teachers has become the norm. Through a phenomenographic approach what remains concealed can be brought to the fore through an investigation of the differences between and within individuals’ experiences, allowing categories of description to emerge from the data rather than pre-determining categories of investigation.
Consideration of data generation: Capturing the act of remembering

A phenomenographic paradigm places importance on description, analysis, and understanding of experiences (Åkerlind 2005). The generation of appropriate data within this approach is not just what individuals experience, it also has aspects that are ‘extra-individual’. Extra-individual actions and interactions that make up a practice are always shaped by mediating preconditions – Discourses with a capital ‘D’ (Gee 2000) – that structure how practice unfolds in ‘sayings’, ‘doings’, and ‘relatings’ (Kemmis 2009, pp 22-3). In order to inquire into such Discourses prospective 1yr teachers I had a prior relationship with (see Part Three: Procedure, ‘The Research Participants’) were invited to share their experiences of actions and interactions with me. In this way I aimed to view data generation as the antithesis of data collection. Data generation expands on and prompts the questioning of the phenomenon as a means of discovery.

In such an inquiry that asks questions in order to question (rather than answer), the interview approach employed had the intent of moving beyond a consideration of what answers might be given, to how the experiences of 1yr teachers were told, interpreted, and then ‘written’. van Manen’s consideration on writing resonated at this stage, and also prompted some further thoughts as to how the participants’ experiences of the phenomenon in this study could be represented and represented in order to address the ‘problem’ of the written word. The ‘problem of writing’ lies in the tension held between presentation and representation – between understanding in the moment and understanding mediated by words (van Manen 2006, p. 718). Planning for the interviews involved visualising the participants’ words as spoken-written-written about. In doing so I re-considered the tension between presentation and representation, and recognised the tension more as a balance where one is held in a direct relationship with the other. Understanding that the immediate and transcribed presentation of lived
experience in the interview – words as spoken and written – would be translated into a representation, created a stronger weighting on the presentation spectrum of the relationship. In consideration of representation I believed the participants’ words, and thus their experiences, would be further served if they were spoken-written-written about-embodied, restoring the balance between presentation and representation allowing both to continue to work in congruence. This was achieved through the employment of *firsts* as a lens through which participants’ experiences were described, written about, and embodied in the representation.

As mentioned earlier a *first* is a particularly powerful tool that captures a remembered moment in time and also that generates data in the sense that it expands on and questions the idea of insight and knowledge. The uniqueness of a *first* is in the attention it gains to indicate something is important, in the revelation that knowledge is known or perceived, in the revisitations and reflections it encourages in connections to other events, and in the recognition that calling it a *first* means there will probably be another – perhaps not the same, but a similar event or experience – indicating the presence of critical thinking about the future. Whether the incident is recognised as important before, in, or after the moment, and whether it is typical or atypical, it is the attention to the incident, and the defining of it as a *first*, which makes it a wonderfully succinct and meaningful event for personal reflection and for analysis. After experiencing a *first* the tendency is to see it in everything. It is not as though the situation did not exist before, but once attention is drawn to it, it becomes more easily recognisable. After a *first* there may be an anticipation of a recurrence and preparation for the next time – so a *first* is a powerful moment on which subsequent experiences are built. As a lens for investigating 1yr teachers’ practice *firsts* are an insight into how teachers describe what they do, and how what they do reveals aspects of their identity, and the discourses that shape these identities.
And so, the research centres on 1yr teachers’ *firsts*. In order to describe, understand, and clarify the human experience, I aimed to generate a series of intense, full, and saturated descriptions of 1yr teachers’ *firsts*. The process began with the purposive selection of participants – individuals who could provide relevant descriptions of their experiences, who have the experience of being a 1yr teacher. Further, these teachers needed to be in their 1yr of teaching at the time of the interviews in order for me to inquire into what happens in this time and this place – creating a sense of unity of time and place between the event and the ‘present’, rather than the experiences of teachers looking back on their 1yr from a different time and place, and with a greater perspective. More on the selection of participants, the interviews, and other procedural aspects are discussed in Part Three.

The theatre-based research play script and performance ‘The First Time’ brings to light each individual’s transformation of their identity in specific moments in time. The construction of the play script as a text serves to highlight participants’ moments of epiphany in the culture of 1yr teaching, assisting the data analytic process through the description, scrutiny, and understanding of participants’ relationship with the phenomenon. In bringing this work to expert audiences (audiences who have an investment in the practices of 1yr teachers, and to whom the research is relevant) the performance itself encourages the continued questioning of the nature of 1yr teaching, through the mutual exploration of teachers’ dispositions to act, think, and feel in certain ways within the field (Bourdieu 1977) at a given moment in time. In the performance the expert audience is addressed by the characters who invite a form of mutual understanding about the representation of past selves through looking back at the teachers’ *firsts*. The theatre-based research performance, nestled within a phenomenographic paradigm, also serves to prompt the audience members’ reflection of their own experiences. In this way the ‘dramaturgical character of practices’ (Kemmis 2010, p 18) is accentuated by the performance so that the experiences portrayed in the performance may be recognised in the life and
identity of the practitioners in the audience. Past self characters were created in juxtaposition with present selves in order to highlight individual transformation of identity. In doing so, audience members were invited to participate in an interaction that encouraged an understanding of identity through interpretation and reinterpretation (Cooper & Olsen 1996).

**Summary of Part Two**

Through outlining the key aspects to arts-based research approaches the discussion in Part Two proposes that theatre-based research enables the generation of knowledge that allows an audience to notice what had not been seen before, to understand what had not been understood, and to secure a firmer grasp and deeper appreciation of complex situations such as identity transformation. Theatre-based research is proposed as an effective method that enhances the analytic process through dramatic conventions, and acknowledges the voice of the audience. This research method is put forward as a vehicle to generate social change and become a public voice with educative potential. The section titled ‘Methodology and Theoretical Orientation’ concludes with an overview of the positioning of theatre-based research within a phenomenographic paradigm, and how this orientation informs the generation of data. The procedures to conducting the research within these approaches are discussed in more detail in Part Three.
PART THREE

Introduction to Part Three

A phenomenographic approach has served the design and procedure of this research. Procedures within this approach include familiarisation with the data and compiling the data to address the research question. Data reduction led to identifying the nature of the phenomenon and began the process of classification. Then a contrastive comparison of categories occurred. This included a description of the character of each category and similarities between categories (Ornek 2008). The goal of this phenomenographic research was to investigate variation in the meaning of a phenomenon. This goal informed the selection and interviewing of participants, the ethical considerations of generating data from participants’ descriptions of their experiences, and the shaping of these experiences into a theatre-based research performance as a means of data analysis. The procedures undertaken to achieve the phenomenographic goal are described in this chapter.
**Procedure**

*The research participants*

A sample of twelve graduate teachers (graduating class of 2010) was drawn from a four year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree at a Melbourne university. Over the four years of this B.Ed. pre-service teachers undertook six core Education Studies Major subjects. Two of these subjects were taken in the final or fourth year of the B.Ed. and were specifically designed to assist pre-service teachers to make the transition to teaching. In these subjects pre-service teachers audited their teaching practice against the VIT Graduate Standards for Professional Practice, and planned for further professional development, ultimately readying themselves for the job application process through the development of an interview portfolio. I formed a professional relationship with many pre-service teachers as their tutor for these two Education Studies Major subjects in 2010, where pre-service teachers were encouraged to see their tutors as mentors, and develop a professional conversation with their mentor about their progress and planning for future teaching. As a result of these professional conversations I gained some detailed knowledge of each of the pre-service teachers I worked with throughout the year.

Following the completion of their B.Ed. in October 2010 I received and replied to emails from a group of over 40 graduates. These communications were regarding the graduates’ job applications, interviews, and success or frustrations in obtaining a teaching position for 2011. Of these graduates 25 regular communicators were sent a personalised email invitation to participate in this project once ethics approval was granted on December 7th 2010. The 25 graduates invited to participate were those who had communicated to me that they had accepted a teaching position, or who planned to teach in 2011. Twelve graduates responded to my invitation, and they make up the participants for this project. I recognise that this sample
may be considered limited by the fact that participants are drawn from one undergraduate cohort for a university in one country. However, like Åkerlind (2005) some limitations of the sample were required to make the research manageable within the scope of a doctoral thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher, Teaching Category, Age bracket</th>
<th>Sector &amp; Region</th>
<th>Previous practicum at employed school</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2011</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2012</th>
<th>Condition of employment 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janet Primary 26-29</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
<td>Family leave replacement (between 6 months and 7 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>New school, 1 year fixed-term contract</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract, rolled over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachy Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>Family leave replacement (between 6 months and 7 years)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Catholic Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2007-2010</td>
<td>1 year maternity leave replacement contract</td>
<td>1 year maternity leave replacement contract</td>
<td>Ongoing – on unpaid leave, teaching in the UK, 2-term contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassidy Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Regional Victoria</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 month contract, successfully applied for 2 year fixed-term in April</td>
<td>2 year fixed-term contract</td>
<td>2 year fixed-term contract, rolled over for another 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sari Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Catholic Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2010</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Secondary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, ongoing semester 2</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tash Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2009</td>
<td>6 month short-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract</td>
<td>Rolled over to ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Primary &gt;25</td>
<td>Government Melbourne Metropolitan</td>
<td>Yes 2008</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>1 year fixed-term contract, rolled over</td>
<td>Rolled over to ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Overview of participants and employment conditions
The main consideration in selecting participants for this research was that the teachers were 1yr graduates. I invited participants I knew through the university as I felt the prior established relationship we had would assist in creating an open conversation space suited to generating responses related to the research focus. The participants were selected on the basis of convenience and typical sampling, resulting surprisingly in a group equally balanced between primary and secondary teachers, with minimal variations in age. There was a slight variation in the geographic location and type of school the teachers were employed in, and a mixture of employment conditions.

This is a fairly typical gender mix indicative both of the pre-service teacher population and gender balance of graduate teachers in Victoria where, in 2010 the percentage of male teachers in government schools was 25.6% and females was 74.4% (DEECD 2011). This figure is characteristic of all teachers in Victoria, with male teachers continuing to account for 27% of the teaching population (Victorian Institute of Teaching [VIT] 2011). The majority of participants were, upon graduation, under the age of 25, most having begun their degree in the year following their completion of secondary school. This is typical of the undergraduate cohort at the university at the time. However, more recently a higher percentage of graduate teachers present as career change practitioners than represented in this cohort, with 40% aged 25 and over, and 26% aged 30 and over (DEST 2007, p. 7).

Most of the participants were employed on a six-month contract which they were assured would be rolled over for another six months. Three participants had fixed term employment for one year, and one participant applied in March 2011 for, and was successful in obtaining, a two year contract. There has been some discussion in the Australian media recently voicing concern over the increasing number of graduate teachers on short term, yet despite the uncertainty of their tenure these participants expected
to be offered at least two years employment at their current school. All were very excited about just getting a job. At the beginning of 2011 most of the participants seemed largely unaware of the less positive aspects of being employed on a short-term contract.

A high proportion of participants were employed in Victorian Government schools. The two teachers in Catholic schools had prior connections there. Many of the participants’ practicum experiences were undertaken in government schools close to the pre-service teacher’s home. These factors may have some impact on why the proportion of employment in a government school is high among these participants. In relation to this research project the Australian Government’s Building the Education Revolution program (BER) has provided an interesting context for a number of participants such as Cassidy, Richard and Maggie, as they moved into new BER flexible learning spaces part way through their 1yr of teaching.

More than half of the participants were employed in a school where they undertook their practicum experience, and in Amelia’s case she had been a student at the school she was employed at. Three participants are originally from regional Victoria, though only Cassidy decided to teach outside of Melbourne. Despite incentive packages for teachers to fill vacancies in rural Victoria and hard to staff metropolitan schools, the majority of these participants elected to seek employment close to where they resided at the time of their applications. Many participants cited minimising travel time as the reason for seeking employment close to their current home, while Cassidy looked for a teaching job in an area that her family was relocating to. Most participants vacillated between planning to teach for one or two years and then travel, and planning to settle into the one school for a number of years. On the one hand they were afraid if they didn’t travel while they were young, they would get caught up in working, buying a house and settling down. On the other hand they wanted to develop their teaching practice and their relationship with the school and the school’s
community over a number of years. After two years of teaching Amelia is the only participant following through with travel plans, and said this was only possible upon being offered ongoing employment to ensure job security upon her return.

It soon became evident that the participants had a variety of experiences related to their specific context. While there are some notable similarities between participants’ experiences as discussed in Part Five: Discussion, the importance to this research was the variation within and among participants – the individual nature of participants’ experiences of identity transformation within a variety of contexts. Each participant’s experience has been represented in this project to describe, analyse, and understand variation, through the play script and performance.

My prior interactions with the participants allowed our present relationship to develop into a continuation of the professional discussions we began in 2010. It was also reported by the participants that this relationship was of benefit to them, in that they had the opportunity to discuss their professional practice with someone who is interested in their work. This was evidenced through the length of the interviews throughout 2011, where often each interview went far beyond the predicted hour. In considering my positioning within the study, and in the interview process in particular, I was drawn to Roulston’s (2010) article, which discusses the ‘romantic perspective’ as one that recognises the place of the researcher in the study; where the interviewer (IR) is open about their interest in the research topic, and will readily express this within the interview setting when called upon by the interviewee (IE). The interviewer-interviewee relationship in the romantic interview is one in which genuine rapport and trust is established by the IR in order to generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing. This generates IE’s self revelations and ‘true’ confessions which produced in-depth interpretations of participants’ life worlds (Roulston 2010, pp. 217-8). Some phenomenographers assert that the interviewer/researcher
can use their own experiences as data for research and analysis (Saljo 1996; Uljens 1986 in Åkerlind 2005) and others assert that the focus of data generation is more the joint exploration individual experiences of the participants (Marton 1981; Sin 2010).

My role as tutor/mentor allowed me to establish a positive rapport with the participants back when they were pre-service teachers. This was done through actively listening to their personal history and what brought them to teaching as a career, consulting with them individually and in a group setting regarding their individual development as a teacher to date, and assisting them to formulate a personal plan for their transition to teaching. It needs to be recognised that this relationship at this time was driven by my responsibilities as their tutor and their responsibilities as a student. This relationship transformed during the months between October and December 2010, where the current participants (and other pre-service teachers) contacted me to discuss their experiences in their transition to teaching. The transformation that took place in our relationships seemed to me to be a shift from their reliance on my advice as a tutor/mentor, to engaging in more collegial conversations. While the pre-service teachers were encouraged to see and relate to their tutors as mentors during their final year of study, the fact remains that the ‘mentor’ still had to assess the student’s work, which imposed professional limitations on the type of relationship formed. Once the final assessment and the B.Ed. was completed, graduates who chose to contact me did so more in a more informal manner. There was a distinct change in the language they used, which in turn shaped my responses and our relationship to one of mutual benefit. Our relationship continued in this vein throughout the research period, and continues to this day.

**Interviews**

Three semi-structured interviews with each participant were scheduled over a period of twelve months, and in some cases, upon participant’s requests,
additional interviews were scheduled. Participants were interviewed individually, face-to-face (live or via skype) within the period from late December 2010 to early December 2011. These interviews were conducted before the start of the 2011 teaching year, at the end of the first term, and during the second half of the teaching year. These times were selected to capture a range of firsts over a period of time in order to investigate identity transformation. Three interviews were deemed an appropriate number to capture a range of experiences while not being onerous to the participants. To conclude the interview period an informal group discussion took place over dinner in December 2011. Data was also derived from email interactions, which took place between interviews within the twelve-month period, and continued after the final interview up to the end of March 2013. The nature of the emails included participants’ follow up information after interviews, and preparation for upcoming interviews. Many participants were enthusiastic about conveying information they forgot to mention during the scheduled times, or subsequent experiences pertaining to themes that emerged from our previous discussions. In 2011 these were particularly focused on subsequent firsts, the changing nature of their employment conditions, and their VIT Application for Full Registration. Participants responded via email with regards to upcoming events such as the Wordles to be used in the third interview. In 2012 participants provided email responses to the script and validation rehearsal, and reflections on the performance. In February 2013, prior to the conclusion of the data collection period (March 2013), the participants responded to a final email regarding their current employment.

The interview design encouraged participants to reveal their own experiences of identity transformation in their 1yr of teaching and their understandings of being a 1yr teacher. I approached the interviews from an empathetic perspective where it was not merely the neutral exchange of asking questions and getting answers but served to acknowledge myself as an interviewer with a particular interest in participants’ experiences based
on my own experiences as both a teacher and as a teacher educator; and that I needed to interact with the participants and acknowledge that I was doing so (Fontana & Frey 2005, p. 696). I approached the interviews from a perspective of having my own practical wisdom – phronesis – that comes from having been a 1yr teacher. As such I know that teachers not only love telling stories about their practice, they find it an important aspect of their practice. Both the good and the bad are told and re-told. In the telling and re-telling of their first stories teachers interact and affiliate with teachers and others in the broader field of their practice, and explore their roles and aspirations as a teacher.

Having been a 1yr teacher myself at the beginning of the period where employment contracts were introduced, I have a particular interest in the implications of such working conditions for beginning teachers. In two decades nothing seems to have changed in order to improve the conditions under which beginning teachers are employed. Due to the decentralisation of public schools through the Education (Self-Governing Schools) Act in 1998, where individual schools bore the responsibility of managing their own funds and hiring their own staff, employing more teachers on contracts has been economically rationalised. Contract employment is justified by schools on a number of levels, from replacing ongoing teachers on up to seven years family leave, to citing a ‘try before you buy’ stance. Yet the impacts of these conditions of employment go beyond the individual schools, and individual teachers. Implications reach far into the discourse surrounding what it is that teachers do, how they are perceived in the wider community, the value of education, and what happens in our schools. Reflecting on my own personal experiences, and my professional positioning in the field of education, provided a starting point to planning the interviews.

The interviews were developed according to both the interviewee’s conversation and responses to some predetermined questions. Each
interviewee was encouraged to further explain their understanding about the phenomena, and was sometimes prompted to do so. I made it clear to the participants from their first interview that they should feel free to think aloud, be doubtful and also pause, backtrack and change the topic as they saw fit in describing their experiences (Ornek 2008). It was important for me to demonstrate that I was interested in encouraging the participants to express themselves clearly in order to seek to reveal their beliefs, values, reality, emotions and experience of their firsts as indicators of identity transformation.

I employed individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews to allow participants to self-select moments that were an insight into their experience of identity transformation. I acknowledge that my involvement encouraged participants to consider their practice in ways they might not normally have done, and that as such I am complicit in shaping their reflective process. Despite this the stories themselves remain the central focus of the research as indicators of what these teachers say, do and relate to. Three main tools were employed to generate data that elicits variation. The same tools were used across all participants’ interviews. These tools were the employment of firsts, a Wordle task, and a Word Task. Participants were pre-prepared to describe their firsts upon consenting to participate in the research. Their Plain Language Statement informed participants that

Interview questions will be starting points for discussion and will include describing the ‘first time …’ – such as the first time you had a job interview, met your class/es, or had a parent/teacher interview. You will then be asked to reflect on how this event serves as a transition in your perception of yourself as a teacher.
The Wordles were developed through the use of the Wordle Create program\textsuperscript{13} – a computer-based tool for generating ‘word clouds’ from text provided. It is a visual representation for text data, typically used to depict keyword metadata (tags) on websites, or to visualise free form text. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text.

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.wordle.net/create
The Word Task was developed in order to elicit depth and detail pertaining to the contexts of their experiences. Their familiarity with the VIT Standards for Graduating Teachers, and Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration provided the words for the activity, where the participants were asked to ‘organise the words so they represent their relevance to you as a teacher’. The procedures for developing the Wordles and Word Task are described in ‘Interview 3’. Participants’ Wordles and Word Tasks can be seen in Appendix 3.

Most interviews began, after an initial period of settling in, with asking participants to give a situated example by describing a first, or in later interviews responding to the Wordles – ‘What words would we see now and why?’ Open questions such as ‘What does this first mean to you?’ and responses to the Word Task – ‘What does this word mean to you?’ were employed to encourage rich detail, along with unstructured follow up questions prompting the participant to explain more about the events. Working within a phenomenographic paradigm, in order to elicit variation, it was important to ask the same questions regarding firsts as situated examples, as well as the same Wordle and Word Task processes, to ensure
all participants were talking about the same phenomenon. The open and unstructured questions focused on asking ‘what’ in order to encourage participants to express themselves clearly and reveal their understanding, rather than ‘why’ which some phenomenographers believe elicit only casual explanations (Marton 1981; Sin 2010).

I was very conscious of the impact of the interview location when deciding where the interviews took place. I wanted participants to feel comfortable, and we needed to meet in a location that was free from distraction and quiet enough to audio record the interviews for transcribing. Interview data was audio recorded on an iPod, which was in full view of the participant but did not draw their attention, and at times notes, photographs and video were taken during the interviews. Location, and other pertinent aspects of specific interviews are also discussed further below in relation to Interview 1, Interview 2, and Interview 3. Over the three or four interviews participants were asked to describe their *firsts*, which most of the participants had been asked to consider before the interview. Two Wordle documents were created from Interview 1 and Interview 2 to encourage participants to reflect on and discuss the transformations that had taken place in the early stages of their teaching. In between interviews participants communicated with me through email. Interview 3 consisted of a Word Task to assist participants to reflect on our discussions throughout the year with particular reference to their VIT application for full registration. Spontaneous probes and follow ups (Rubin & Rubin 1995) during the interviews focused on the importance of the event as well as who the participants had told/would tell the story to and the purpose of telling their story. In many cases each participant’s *first* had been told to another prior to it being told to me in our interview.

Teachers’ identities are formed, transformed, and reformed through the way they describe their experiences. We can see this in their Discourse as defined by Gee as
a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and ‘artifacts’ [sic], of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’, or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’. (Gee 1996, p. 131)

The *first* stories of participants’ teaching explore the Discourse of teachers that prefigure their identity. Within a phenomenographic paradigm capturing these Discourses prioritise the search for meaning, as well as providing structure for categories for analysis. The ways the participants used language, and particularly tone, in the interviews provided the basis for a description, analysis and understanding of how different people experience a phenomenon in different ways.

The interview in this study, like the play script and performance, is viewed as a representation, or as Denzin (2001, p. 25) puts it ‘a perfectly miniature and coherent world in its own right’. Seen in this way, the interview functions as a narrative device of sorts, which allows each participant to tell stories about themselves. The process of transcription transforms the interview into a translation of what was said. The translation of a reflective awareness of an experience into a ‘languaged expression’ (Polkinghorne 2005) can further distance the evidence of an experience from the experience itself. Polkinghorne recognises that experience is more complex and nuanced than can be expressed in literal language, and I heeded his words with respect to the participants’ languaged expression of their *firsts*. Rather than re-language their words, I remained aware that information and nuance is lost when oral data are transcribed into written text. As such it was important that the recorded interviews were listened to in conjunction with the written transcript, rather than relying on the transcript alone for analysis. Samples of the recordings were also given to the teacher-actors to assist the recreation of the participants’ nuances. The use of interview data in shaping the play is discussed in the section titled ‘Scripting, Rehearsal and Performance’.
I selected an interview approach in order to hear what the participants said about their experiences, with a focus on their remembering of the first and the telling of the retrieval of their remembered feelings and actions. My previous experiences in employing interviews as a research method allowed me to not only listen, but to observe the interviewee’s gestures, facial expressions and head/eye/body focus. In this way the interviewer is positioned as both researcher and audience. As a researcher I was hearing what the participant was telling and perhaps not telling. As an audience I participated in the act of recreating or imagining the event as it was played out given the clues from the teller in their voice through volume, pitch, tone and inflection; and body language through gesture, posture and facial expression. There were elements of recall and re-enactment from the participant giving clues to the researcher about how this event was played out. Also in the recall there were often embellishments or editing so the event had already been stylised by the teller in order to highlight meaning. These aspects and embellishments assisted in the shaping of the interview data into ‘The First Time’.

**Interview 1**

Both the reasons for joining teaching and how pre-service teachers feel towards teaching at different points in time contribute towards the development of a teacher’s professional identity (Chong & Low 2009, p. 60). I conducted Interview 1 before the participants began teaching to explore the beginnings of their experiences in identity transformation from university student to in-service teacher. Interview 1 also served to re-establish our relationship under different circumstances. Interview 1 took place between December 2010 and January 2011, after job offers had been made. As mentioned earlier I had been in communication with this group of pre-service teachers regarding their job applications and interviews. Our interview discussion was based around a description of their job application,
interview and induction processes, and what they perceived in these first moments as contributing to their shift from pre-service to in-service teachers.

I devised some open and semi-structured questions about the job application and job interview processes, and induction programs the participants were involved in once they had been offered a job. The questions were framed in the form of a timeline from completing university to the moment we met, with some questions encouraging participants to think ahead to their first week of teaching. Interview 1 was held at the university, except for one skype interview. The reason I selected the university location was because it was a geographically central and familiar location to all participants. I had a previous relationship with the participants at this site, so this location seemed appropriate in the interest of conducting interviews in which genuine rapport and trust is established by the interviewer in order to generate intimate and self-revealing conversations (Roulston 2010). I indicated that the discussion might take up to an hour. Most of these discussions went much longer.

I asked participants to bring a copy of their teaching philosophy, either from their interview portfolio or professional resume. Most brought this, and I made a copy to keep. My intention here was to consider whether artefacts represented their selves at a particular moment in time. I asked participants to look back at their teaching philosophy, and the other artefacts many brought along, in subsequent interviews as prompts, in order to engage them in a discussion of what they viewed of themselves as a teacher at this time, and how their subsequent experiences transformed their understanding of their identity.

Interview questions and discussion centered around key moments of transition to becoming an in-service teacher, such as preparing selection criteria responses for job applications, job interview experiences, being offered a teaching position, negotiating contracts and teaching areas, and
school-based induction. For each key moment I asked participants to describe to what extent “I feel like a ‘real’ teacher”. I used the term ‘real’ as pre-service teachers often discuss their future in terms of “when I’m a real teacher…” The participants usually made a statement to the effect of ‘not much’ or ‘really like’ a real teacher, then went on to explain the reasons why they felt this way, without prompting.

These interviews revealed the teachers’ excitement upon being offered a job, coupled with their expressions of vagueness as to what their job actually entailed. At this stage the participants had little contact with the school or their prospective students, and many participants expressed uncertainty as to what they would encounter on their first day. In response to the unforseen, most spent considerable time preparing resources and focusing on the more tangible aspects of their practice. Some showed me photographs of the way they were setting up their room, while others described their planning for first term. Cassidy described the lack of information she was given, and the frustration she felt at the lack of communication available to her regarding the start of the school year. I came away from many of these interviews infused with the participant’s excitement, which I tried to capture when transcribing, through the use of punctuation, notation, and emoticons.

I conducted and transcribed verbatim all the interviews myself to increase familiarity with the data. Attending to these processes personally allowed me to make notes on emotional tone and meaning. I aimed to transcribe each interview within a fortnight of conducting the interview, which I found beneficial in attending to meaning. While transcribing I highlighted sentences and sections that were more meaning-laden, managing to delay a search for structure until the entire interview process was compete. In familiarising myself with each participant’s Interview 1 in preparation for their Interview 2 I employed the strategy of ‘noticing’. The ‘Discipline of Noticing’ (Mason 2002) in relation to this research project is twofold. The participants were asked to ‘notice’ aspects of their practice through noticing
their *firsts*; and in the initial stages of data analysis I also employed ‘noticing’ to analyse the data in a systematic and methodical manner without being mechanical, allowing for some serendipitous noticing, which is encouraged in a phenomenographic study. Noticing is an act of attention and is not something that can be done all of a sudden – it has to happen through the exercise of some internal or external impulse or trigger (Mason 2002, p. 61).

The primary focus of this phenomenographic research is on each individual participant’s experiences as unique to that person and their context. Later, noticing similarities and differences between participants was useful in identifying categories of the understandings of 1yr teachers’ practice, and also revealed categories within individual participant’s practice upon further analysis. When I was transcribing the Interview 1 data I noted in each individual transcript what I considered to be key moments where the participant’s revealed aspects of the self, and an expression of identity transformation. Some participants explicitly described transformation while other descriptions were more implicit. Often these moments were revealed as ‘events’ and in the early stages of transcribing I found myself noticing the more ‘sexy quotes’ (Rubin & Rubin 1995, p. 237). This hampered my analysis as I was merely looking at the stories, rather than the meaning associated with the stories, and can be a common pitfall for early career researchers. To overcome this I began prioritising meaning over entertainment value, through asking myself ‘What might/does this story represent, and how does it inform an understanding of the participants’ experience of identity transformation?’

After Interview 1 there was considerable email communication with the participants prior to Interview 2. In these communications participants often listed and described their *firsts*, and while these were usually on a superficial level, they allowed me to prepare for the next interview with each individual.
Interview 2

These interviews took place in the first term of the 2011 school year. I met most teachers at their school at the end of the school day or during their planning time, with the exception of three participants – I met Cassidy at my home on the weekend when she came to Melbourne to visit friends, and Janet was interviewed via skype as she was only available late in the evening, due to her 1yr of teaching coinciding with her wedding. Lachy did not want to meet at his school. He wanted to keep his involvement in the research from the principal and other teachers as he felt they would think he was gossiping about them. He described them as “paranoid and cliquey”, and thought it best that we not meet at his school. I found the skype interviews a reasonable substitute for an in-person interview as it allowed us to look at each other. However in both instances the technology failed us. During Janet’s interview the vision was several minutes behind the sound so her gestures and voice did not match. During Lachy’s interview we lost the connection twice and had to reconnect, which was slightly awkward. Many of the other in-person interviews were interrupted by staff, announcements, and in one case we could hear a very distressed parent in the conference room next door.

Despite these hindrances, Interview 2 tended to last for up to two hours of sustained descriptions of participants’ experiences, and in-depth discussion of transition and transformation. All the participants were very keen to discuss their experiences to date for an extensive period of time. A number of them remarked that this was the first time they had been able to reflect on their practice to date, as they had been so busy just getting into the rhythm of teaching full time. This was particularly evident in my discussion with Sandra where she likens her practice to an action movie. Amelia and Sebastian both mentioned how valuable it was to participate in this research project as it allowed them to reflect on their practice. They mentioned that their teacher friends were jealous and wished they had the opportunity to
reflect in such a manner. This could indicate that beginning teachers in their first term would like to be able to spend a considerable amount of time reflecting, possibly with someone who is not a member of their school community.

The main focus of the discussions was about participants’ *firsts*. A discussion about *firsts* combines the use of anecdotes, critical incidents, and autobiography into one moment, with the additional recognition that this event has never been experienced before. A *first* tells something about the actor in the telling and in the self-separation of the incident. While I realised that my analysis would not be able to access the full meaning of the moments identified until subsequent interviews had been completed, at this point I began to notice how the key *firsts* for each participant answered questions such as ‘What is this event actually telling the audience?’ In the deeper analysis of the participants’ *firsts* I began to focus on the contexts that appeared to have shaped their *firsts*, the importance of their *firsts* to them, and the way their *firsts* shaped their subsequent practice and sense of identity. These points informed the categorising and structuring of the theatre-based research play script, analysis, and discussion.

I prepared fewer open questions and requests for situated examples in order to allow for deeper discussion in Interview 2. All participants were asked the same two questions: ‘Describe a *first*’ and ‘What does this event mean to you?’ Some participants had generated a list of *firsts* while others recalled many teaching moments they saw as *firsts*. I asked each participant to select one to discuss further, and also asked them ‘Who did you tell this to?’, and ‘What was the purpose in telling it?’ The telling of a teaching *first* indicates to the teller’s audience much about the individual in the way they select *first* stories to share, describe how they dealt with the event, and who they choose to share their *firsts* with. There are often many experienced teachers working with the beginning teacher who have “been there before” and vividly remember their 1yr and first times. They, through their words and
actions, heighten the experiences the beginning teacher has, through questioning – “How did your first day go?” “How was your first parent/teacher interview?” “Was this the first time that a student told you...?” As a result the 1yr teacher’s attention is drawn to these moments and they begin to wonder what these moments signify. The way a first is responded to says something about the kind of teacher a beginning teacher is becoming, both to themselves and those teachers around them. In addition, firsts such as teachers’ interactions with students, parents and the wider community can cause them to view themselves in these situations through the eyes of others.

The way a first is told and retold says much about the teller, and also about their audience. In selecting an audience for describing a first a beginning teacher is making a judgement about their dealing with the event. Telling their story to another beginning teacher has different implications than if the story was told to an experienced teacher. Telling their story in response to a question about the event from another has different implications to that of choosing to volunteer the information. Sometimes the telling is a request for assistance, or confirmation that they are not alone in experiencing such an event. Other times the telling develops from a desire to offload or debrief. Occasionally the telling stems from a need to establish authority or determine competence. In the re-telling, the editing and embellishment that takes place can also say much about the teller. In all these situations the storyteller is placing their identity in the open and seeking to understand the meaning of the experience.

Teachers often conduct their work in isolation from their colleagues, spending the majority of their time in their own classroom. In this sense the telling of a story – recreating it for an audience, describing the emotions and personal revelations – may be more important to teachers than to those in a profession where these moments occur as shared with others. It is not only the actual experience that is the focus of the first, but the emotions, actions
and reflection that take place as a result of the experience that makes a first so powerful. Emotions, actions, and reflection along with selection of audience, language and tone can allow the storytellers to position themselves in a particular way. Their stories may reveal aspects of their agency, or lack of. By asking each participant who they would/did tell their first to I also gained an insight into the importance of interactions and affiliations for each teacher. Although my focus is on beginning teachers, the notion of firsts is a universal one, and transcends age and experience. In telling other staff about their firsts beginning and experienced teachers can be aligning themselves with others, setting up a foundation for interactions and affiliations to develop.

Looking over Interview 1 and Interview 2 by participant in preparation for Interview 3 I generated the two Wordles, and the Word Task. The Wordles served to exemplify each interview and provide a basis for discussion around the question ‘What words would we see now and why?’ The Wordles also served as a form of member checking, designed to allow the participants to fill in, expand, or challenge their previous descriptions. The Word Task was designed to elicit variation from the same task among all participants, and indicate areas of the participant’s experiences that shape who they are at this particular moment in time – nearing the end of their 1yr of teaching.

After Interview 2 it became clear that the participants’ conditions of their employment were not what they had initially described. Many upon being offered a job believed they were being employed for a year, when subsequently it was revealed that they had been employed on a six-month contract which was either rolled over, or was advertised and the participant had to apply for. Initially I felt caught between wanting to remain impartial, and my concern for the participant’s welfare. I made the decision not to offer advice unless it was requested, which I found difficult, particularly in
Beth’s case where she had totally misunderstood her job offer. Beth’s understanding is examined further in Part Five: Discussion.

**Interview 3**

This interview focused on encouraging participants to reflect, rather than describe as they had done in the previous interviews. My aim was to elicit depth and detail based on their previous data that demonstrated how their descriptions and reflections represent their identity at a particular moment in time. Participants were encouraged to use their own words in the earlier interviews, but to add depth I also asked them to consider the professional language of their practice through the Word Task. The Wordles and Word Task also serve to capture a snapshot of the time of Interview 3. These tools were not designed to generate more data, but to reveal connections between the participants’ earlier experiences and their current experiences.

The procedure of creating the Wordles involved preparing the transcript text by saving the original transcript as a separate Word document, and removing all my questions and responses, leaving just the participant’s responses. I copied the text and pasted it into the online Wordle Create program. I changed the layout to display 25 maximum words to the layout. From this I was able to identify and record commonly used words such as conjunctions and prepositions that did not reveal anything particular for each participant. I then went back to the transcript document and used the ‘find and replace’ function to search for these words, removing them from the document if they were used in a more colloquial sense or as a verbal filler and replacing them with a space. Common words that were removed in these instances were: like, just, going, think, really, get, things, and way. This process was repeated about three times for each participant’s transcript. Finally I changed the layout to display 50 maximum words, and formatted the font, colour scheme and ‘half-half’ word orientation so all the documents had a consistent appearance. The Wordle program displays the
most frequently used words in the largest size. Each participant’s Wordles can be seen in Appendix 3.

I introduced the participant’s Wordles early in Interview 3. We discussed the prominence of certain words, the differences between their two Wordles with relation to their experiences, and what words we might see now as we neared the end of their 1yr of teaching. I found the Wordle an effective tool to focus the discussion on reflecting on the participants’ prior firsts as moments of identity transformation. Reflecting back encouraged a deeper consideration of the meaning of their events in light of more recent experiences.

For the second activity, the Word Task, I developed a list words from the VIT Standards for Graduating Teachers, and Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration (see Appendix 1.2). At the time of Interview 3 all participants were working on their VIT application for full registration. This requirement centres on a number of reflective tasks concerning teachers’ professional knowledge, practice, and engagement. The activities pertaining to the task are usually enacted throughout the teacher’s 1yr, and then written up into a document that is submitted to the principal and often a small panel of staff, including the teacher’s mentor. The teacher is then informed of the status of their application. Teachers have up to two years to complete their application, and most complete it at the end of their 1yr of teaching. Many of the participants wrote to me prior to this interview saying they had begun the process of writing up their application. Attitudes towards this process vary greatly among both PRTs and school administration. The general consensus among these participants was that their application was yet another thing imposed on them, taking them away from the job of teaching.

For the Word Task the commonly used words in the VIT Standards were printed and cut out, and participants were asked to “organise the words so they represent their relevance to you as a teacher”. Participants were able to
add titles or grouping names to their arrangement, and to relegate some words to the ‘bin’ as not relevant at the time. The ensuing arrangement was videoed. The final arrangement of words was then photographed. The final photograph for each participant can be seen in Appendix 3. This activity was devised to clarify participants’ previous descriptions of their 1yr teaching experiences and to note the changes in the way they described their practice later in the year, as compared to their earlier descriptions. The activity was also devised to assist in analysing the data, allowing a focus on both meaning and categories. The same Word Task was given to each participant in order to elicit variation through ensuring that all participants were talking about the same phenomenon. The Word Task activity generated some additional data, and encouraged participants to clarify, elaborate, and contradict their previous descriptions of their practice.

Some participants requested a fourth interview. In these cases the format followed that of Interview 2. After their final interview many participants expressed disappointment that the research process was over. They were excited at the prospect of getting together with the other participants for an end-of-year dinner and de-brief. Most of the participants knew each other from university, and some were close friends. Many continue to remain in contact with each other, and myself, through social networking.

**Group dinner**

At the end of 2011 the participants attended a group dinner, where they were seated in front of a placemat (Appendix 2) containing samples of their own and each other’s data across all interviews. These placemat samples were intended as prompts to focus the conversation on each participant’s experience of their 1yr of teaching, and served as an additional point of member checking. The group dinner was the first time all participants were brought together. The intention of this informal format was to confirm common themes among the participants over the year, as part of the analysis.
of participants’ ways of seeing themselves in relation to others, and how their own and others’ language, practices, and knowledge shapes the way these 1yr teachers come to understand who they are in relation to their work. The conversation served to confirm the range of views present within the group collectively. This conversation was not recorded or transcribed. Instead, I made notes immediately after the dinner on the main themes that emerged from the conversations. These themes were the discourses surrounding 1yr teachers’ work and identity, 1yr teachers’ experiences of mentoring and induction captured through moments in time that reflect the nature of 1yr teaching, and the conditions of 1yr teachers’ work. Comments made during the dinner were clarified in a follow-up email to each individual. The themes confirmed during the dinner conversation are examined in Part Five: Discussion. Further conversations with participants up to the conclusion of the data collection period have been incorporated into Part Four: Analysis and Part Five: Discussion. The participants also came together as a group at the validation rehearsal in March 2012. The validation rehearsal is discussed further in the sections titled ‘The Presence of Ambiguity’, and ‘The Use of Contextualised and Vernacular Language’, later in this chapter, and was one of the main ethical considerations in representing the participants’ experiences.

Ethics

Ethical considerations for the researcher in performing stories of others through theatre-based research processes include being accountable, caring, valuing individual expressiveness and having empathy for those studied. To protect the participants and minimise any harm the following ethical
considerations\textsuperscript{14} have been put into place and has been approved by the university HREC – Project Reference Number HEAG(AE)10-111.

One of the main considerations in conducting this study was my relationship with the participants. A researcher plays an integral role in the conduct of qualitative research which allows the gathering of intricate details about the situation such as thought processes and emotions (Fry 2007). By developing a professional and collegial relationship with the participants I was able to get to know and understand more fully the participants’ meaning. Interviews such as these where participants are asked to self-reflect can be uncomfortable. The participants knew me prior to the research and therefore felt some degree of comfort based on our prior relationship. The Plain Language Statement sent to participants clearly outlined the potential for them to experience discomfort or distress in recalling their experiences, and that strategies were in place to support them should this occur. These strategies included creating an effective and supportive interview environment, where there would be no ‘right or wrong’ responses required; the selection of a convenient and private time and location for the interview; encouraging participants to bring artefacts for discussion; providing sweets; and letting participants go off topic or leave questions unanswered. The participants also had the right to stop the interview at any time.

The other main ethical consideration was that the participants’ stories were to be represented in a play and performance. Denzin (2005, p. 952) describes an ethical and moral stance for the performance ethnographer that transcends traditional ethical models of do no harm, and the maintenance of anonymity. He argues that the researcher needs to be accountable, caring, value individual expressiveness, and have empathy for those studied,\textsuperscript{14} Pseudonyms have been used for all participants, and members of the school communities.
thereby focusing also on possibilities when considering ethical approaches to performing the research. Above all it has been my aim to ensure that I, and the teacher-actors, always respect the differences between our own stories and the stories of those we were presenting (Denzin 2003). After many years of schooling most of us have an idea of what teachers and students look like. There are (often stereotypical) actions and reactions that we recognise as belonging to classrooms, a vocabulary of educational habits that is inscribed in and on the body as the subject lives through certain experiences (Hewson 2007, p. 3-4). Boal recognised that we have physical traits based on our social and work experiences, a kind of ‘muscular alienation’ (Boal 1985, p. 127), a telling way people of a particular profession physically present themselves. Dwyer, following Boal, tested the underlying assumption at work in Forum Theatre, that enactment is worth more than speech, as if bodies ‘speak more’, and more accurately, than mere words (2004, p. 200).

With these thoughts in mind I considered carefully the implications of employing actors to portray the teacher characters in the performance. My previous experience working with Forum Theatre consisted of employing undergraduate drama students as actors to portray scenarios of teachers’ feared prospective teaching experiences to undergraduate pre-service teachers. I found the actors’ portrayals, while skilled and engaging, to be deficient in their embodiment – the combined physical and cognitive understanding of, and sensitivity to – their teacher characters. The intention of these Forum Theatre events was to encourage the pre-service teachers in the audience to replace the teacher characters and enact a more realistic interpretation of the scenario. In this way the deficiencies of the actors served to encourage the pre-service teachers to consider their own practice and teacher identity, so while stereotypical, the portrayals served a function. However, as a result of these and similar observations and experiences I decided against employing actors to portray the teachers’ characters in this
study, and instead employed teachers with an understanding of performance.

**Casting**

As mentioned earlier I have worked on Forum Theatre projects combining the performance skills of drama undergraduates with the ideas of pre-service teachers. These experiences gave me cause to reflect on the way teachers are represented by actors. I made the decision to work with teachers who I knew had the skills to perform with the intention of encouraging them to bring their own personal histories to the performance and offer suggestions as to the interpretation of their characters. I wanted the experience for the audience to be as authentic as possible, to move their experience beyond enjoyment to something that would speak to teachers from teachers, and to counter the pitfalls experienced when employing actors who know little about those they are representing (for example Ackroyd & O’Toole 2010, p. 14-15). I therefore approached teachers I had worked with in the past on a variety of performance-related projects, inviting them to participate in the representation of the participants’ experiences.

I knew the play required a minimum of nine actors and that I wanted to maintain the gender of the original participants, though this could easily have been altered, as the stories are not particularly gender specific. I cast the teacher-actors in roles that I believed would be similar to their own experiences. Here, the term role, as discussed in Part One: Literature Review is employed in a similar manner to the social roles teachers undertake. The actors as teachers extended their understanding of their own roles as both teachers and actors through taking on the role or character of another teacher, and utilised this understanding to represent the experiences of the participants. The Interviewee characters represent each participant as they described their first – as a ‘me’ of the present – in the interviews. The teacher-actors portraying the trio of Interviewee characters were cast not
only on their availability and agreement to take on a large role, but also because they had more recent performance experience than the other teacher-actors. The Teacher characters represent each participant’s first as the ‘I’ of the past. The Teacher roles were cast as follows:

- Lara was played by a young primary teacher with experience teaching preps;
- Sari was played by a teacher with experience working at a year 9 campus of a boys’ school. This teacher-actor also portrayed Sandra, as both are secondary English teachers;
- Beth was played by a drama teacher, who also portrayed Janet;
- Cassidy was played by a secondary teacher who I knew had experienced anxiety in her own 1yr practice;
- Maggie and Amelia were played by a 1yr teacher;
- Tash was played by a primary physical education (PE) teacher; and
- the male roles were given to the male teacher-actor who was at the time in his 1yr of teaching.

Each teacher-actor could relate strongly to their character/s and the situation/s, and offered some insightful interpretations. I recall the teacher-actor who represented Sari remembering how upset and angry she used to get when dealing with confrontations with students. As a result we refined the de-escalation of degrees of outrage the Teacher shows throughout the four confrontations depicted in the scene to highlight the transformation of the character’s identity in relation to her practice. Generally the teacher-actors themselves developed the peripheral characters of other teachers and students. They saw their portrayal of naughty students in particular as a form of release, and often got out of hand during rehearsals! However, the teacher-actors’ need to let off steam in these scenes indicated that they found their interpretations of the Teachers emotionally draining, because they were so close to the teacher-actors’ own experiences.
There was an abundance of discussion on topics such as the one above between the teacher-actors and myself throughout the rehearsal process. An analysis of these discussions are outside the scope of what can be presented in this thesis. Research into the teacher-actors’ experiences of rehearsing and performing, and the process of employing teachers as actors, has been identified as an opportunity for further research. This future research will include an investigation into the teacher-actors’ experiences of representing the data, the impact of their experience on their own practice and identity, and their perceptions of the performances with regard to the variety of audiences they have presented to. This future research will also investigate who performs arts-based research, and will include my rationale for employing teachers to represent teachers.
Scripting, Rehearsal, and Performance

Seven Features of Arts-Based Educational Inquiry

Manipulating the data through a theatre-based research process was employed to analyse the experiences of the participants. Careful consideration was required to ensure the data was represented faithfully and ethically, through processes that provided the mode of theatre-based research with validity and rigour. As such I orient a discussion of the processes of scripting, rehearsal and performance through the ‘Seven Features of Arts-Based Educational Inquiry’ as described by Barone and Eisner (1997) in order to acknowledge how these features might serve a research function, firstly for the researcher and secondly for the audience. These features are: 1. The Creation of a Virtual Reality, 2. The Presence of Ambiguity, 3. The Use of Expressive Language, 4. The Use of Contextualised and Vernacular Language, 5. The Promotion of Empathy, 6. Personal Signature of the Researcher/Writer, 7. The Presence of Aesthetic Form.

The Creation of a Virtual Reality

The purpose of the creation of a virtual reality is to pull the person who experiences the ‘art’ into an alternative reality through creating verisimilitude. The audience is encouraged to recognise some of the portrayed qualities from his or her own experience. They are thereby able to believe in the possibility of the virtual world as an equivalent to the ‘real’ one (Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 74) where they may find that the ‘performed world becomes a kind of heuristic device that speaks directly to familiar, nearby concerns as it raises questions about them’. A virtual reality assists the audience to vicariously inhabit a ‘location’ near enough to a previously experienced one to recognise it, but far away enough to place it in a revealingly (sometimes startling) new context.
In creating a virtual reality I chose exemplars from the participants’ data for what they promised to contribute to the enrichment of understanding about 1yr teaching. van Manen supports this selection by recognising that the phenomenologist knows the value of having an insatiable interest in the ways in which sensitive artists are providing us vicariously with expressive examples of fundamental truth experience. There exists a hermeneutic dialect between lived life and art: art interprets life and life interprets art…we may gain more interpretive understanding and more profound insights into human life from a great novel or a great poem than from some reputable behavioural [sic] social science text.’ (van Manen 1984, p. 13)

In the creation of the virtual reality – the world of the 1yr teacher – I sought to recognise the ‘truths’ in the participants’ words based on my own experiences as a 1yr teacher. The creation of a virtual reality encourages the audience to recognise similarities to their own lives, rather than to simply describe the life of another. The performance encourages these ‘truths’ to be recognised through the audience members’ own connections to the experiences represented. During the interview process I began to visualise the dramatic nature of the data being generated. When transcribing participants’ words I formatted our conversation as a play script, which included the interview duologue and my notes that read like stage directions, and also included the participant’s expression and what was happening in and near the interview room that impacted on the conversation.

While it was my initial intention to work with the data through theatre-based methods, it was much later in the data generation period where I decided to employ play writing (as opposed to group devised or semi-improvised methods) as one of the sub-methods to analyse the data. Play writing became a tool for noticing themes and sorting the data. Working within a phenomenographic paradigm the play was shaped through a continual process of iterating between a focus on parts and a focus on wholes, plus the
attempt to integrate the episodes in the play as seen over time. The focus of the analysis in forming the play script was on what participants’ described as their experiences as located in specific times and places. Within individual transcripts particular statements about *firsts* were identified and interpreted within the context of the individual’s whole transcript. Then episodes were contextualised within the participant’s total transcripts, and/or across all participants’ themed transcripts. Finally groups of transcripts were interpreted within the context of the total set of all transcripts as a whole (Åkerlind in Bowden & Green 2005, p. 120).

To consider fully the creation of a virtual reality I employed Aristotle’s hierarchy of elements for drama, which include Plot (mythos), Character (ethos), Thought (dianoia), Diction (lexis), Music (melopeia), and Spectacle (lusis). The key aspects of these elements that have implications for analysis include plot, character, and thought (Aristotle trans. 1973). The remainder deal with the means of drama and the manner of presentation. Plot involves the arrangement and selection of materials. Character is determined by action. Thought, while originally relating to arguments and rhetorical strategies, is employed in its more modern understanding as theme or discourse in this work. Thought is employed to ‘frame’ – to cut out – a piece of the phenomenon for inspection (and retrospection) creating a bordered space and a privileged time within which images and symbols can be relived, scrutinised and revalued (Turner & Turner 1982, p. 34). I also employed the concept of mimesis from real life in order to represent the work and lives of the participants as they told them. These processes are evident in those described by Barone and Eisner (1997, pp. 80-1) as ‘the four important dimensions of educational criticism that serve to re-educate readers’ perceptions of educational matters’. The four dimensions are description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. These are interwoven, nonlinear dimensions that help an audience to visualise what educational phenomena are like, to explain meaning – make obvious important events and situations, to identify the factors that bear upon a particular educational
practice, and to shed light on potential consequences of that practice in developing a work around a particular controlling insight or issue.

During the analysis of the transcripts I noticed they held aspects of monologue, soliloquy, duologue and dialogue, which revealed the way each participant thought about their practice and their identity. Monologue revealed the telling of the story as thick description. The monologic aspects of the interview transcripts form the bulk of each scene. Soliloquy revealed the thinking aloud – where the participant expressed phronesis. This guided the creation of the Interviewee characters. Aspects of duologue are apparent in our interview conversations, and dialogue is also present in the transcript where participants described and re-enacted the sayings of others. These form the basis of the other characters present in the scenes. During the process of transcribing and analysing these dramatic devices of monologue, soliloquy, duologue and dialogue began to take shape. In the analysis of individual transcripts I began to identify each participant’s firsts, which prompted consideration of which firsts represented each participant’s experiences. I then went back over the individual interview data identifying the precursors to, and elaborations of, each event.

The creation of a virtual reality promotes the vicarious participation of the experiences of, in this case, 1yr teachers. In order to test whether this had been achieved in the early stages of analysis I sent a copy of the play to different people to read and provide feedback. I gave copies to a number of academics in the fields of education and drama, a teaching colleague, a playwright, and a novelist. I received thorough feedback from these people, and pondered long and hard on one suggestion in particular – to create a story arc by shaping the performance within the time constraint of one teaching day. I have noted with interest other ethnographic performances and verbatim theatre works that draw on data spanning a large time frame that are subsequently shaped to take place within a shortened period (Bird et al. 2010; Denborough & Denborough 2012) or re-contextualised (Hare &
Stafford-Clark 2008). However, partly because I was driven to staying true to the participants’ stories while manipulating aspects through non-naturalistic theatrical conventions, I maintained the belief that representing each scene as an independent vignette within a thematically related episodic structure would highlight how *firsts* can often be examined by the teacher as an isolated incident, taken out of context, and as seemingly larger than in reality. In this way the virtual reality being created does not allow the audience the comfort of being seduced into predicting the plotline of the performance. Each episode serves to reveal an aspect of the experience that may have been previously taken for granted.

As mentioned earlier it was important that I maintain an ethical and moral commitment to the participants’ stories, yet I was also conscious that I was creating a piece of theatre – a virtual reality. This is one of the tensions many performance ethnographers face (Saldaña 1999; Mienczakowski 2001; Denzin 2003; Anderson 2007; Ackroyd & O’Toole 2010), and I found myself meticulously self-justifying every intricate decision I had made in manipulating the interview text. I selected theatrical conventions and devices that I believed would enhance the portrayal of the experiences of the participants being represented, while attempting to maintain true to each situation – to take the audience far enough away from reality in order to allow new ways of seeing. I refrained from including unifying dialogue within and between scenes unless it could be found in the interview data. I judiciously selected scenes that represented different discourses surrounding 1yr teachers in general while maintaining the personal experiences of each participant as an individual. In these and other ways I attempted to avoid one of the performative stance pitfalls of the performance ethnographer – the ‘custodian’s rip-off’ (Conquergood 1985, p.5), a selfish stand where the researcher’s aim is simply to find some good performance material. If I am honest I was tempted to create extra dialogue, and embellish some accounts in order to create a more theatrical piece. At these times I reminded myself that the purpose was the theatre-based research process, not the
performance as a finished piece. The work is not intended as a prescriptive instruction manual, nor a tale of the beginning teacher as a piece of propaganda. The intention was, and still is, to demonstrate how teachers ‘work through’ their myriad experiences and come to understand themselves in relation to their work as a result.

**The Presence of Ambiguity**

The presence of ambiguity is the careful positioning of blanks or gaps in the text, to be filled in by the audience with personal meaning from their own experiences outside what is represented (Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 75) and to persuade the audience to contribute answers to the dilemmas proposed in the performance. This ambiguous quality was created during the playwriting and rehearsal processes. The writing aimed to embody *noueliness* – a type of writing that inspires readers to enter into a dialogue with it; a characteristic of writing that encourages a multiplicity of readings and a variety of interpretations of the phenomena (Bhatkin 1981 in Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 75). As a text to be read I felt the play script served a specific purpose of highlighting the stories of 1yr teachers, as told by the teachers themselves. Berliner (1992) suggests that stories be written in which teachers explicate and illustrate findings that were derived and legitimated through research strategies based on social science. The text was developed through the phenomenographic approach of allowing a set of categories or meanings to emerge from the data, but remain reasonably ambiguous so as to encourage the audience to fill in the gaps in the play and performance in light of their own experiences.

The stage directions within the text, the majority of which were derived from the participants’ exact words, assist the reader to understand the context. For performance the play script needed to be altered to include context specific information, while still allowing the audience to fill in the gaps with their own experiences. I added clarifications such as the names and titles of
characters, and some location specific dialogue to the text and to the PowerPoint, which assisted the audience to understand the time and place the characters were in, and who they were talking to. At times I felt like this was cheating – that I was not being faithful to my original commitment to the verbatim data, despite constantly checking myself. Yet it was during this process that I was also able to become clearer on what to leave out. All the performances to date have been designed to be presented to ‘expert’ audiences consisting of those with an investment in the experiences of 1yr teachers. This meant the performance needed to acknowledge the personal histories of the audience and encourage them to enter into the virtual reality through a dialogic exchange. Had the performance been designed for a non-education audience I feel it would have become a piece of propaganda that focuses more on telling what it could be like to be a 1yr teacher, rather than allowing the audience to recognise themselves in the performance. By providing snapshots, rather than fully developed plotlines, I was able to address the phenomenon as a possible human experience, emphasising that phenomenological descriptions have a universal (intersubjective) character (van Manen 1984, p. 14).

The presence of ambiguity developed further in rehearsal, particularly in the validation rehearsal where I invited the participants to a reading of the play, and provided them with the opportunity to discuss their stories with the teacher-actors. Both participants and teacher-actors contributed to the continued discussion of what was being represented and what was left out. The participants recognised themselves in the representation, while acknowledging that sometimes they did not remember their descriptions of events. The validation rehearsal also demonstrated that many of the participants (now in their second year) said they couldn’t remember what they had actually discussed with me, and while they recognised their stories, these had somehow become subsumed in their daily practice with so many other stories that their significance had altered in relation to new times and places. Their scenes prompted further discussion of not only the event, but
also their practice and the shift in their identity that had taken place since, and as a result of, these instances. The participants also recognised similarities between their own experiences and those of the other participants, which encouraged me to further consider my reading of individual’s verbatim data. The defining of individual categories needed to occur within the context of identifying similarities and differences among transcripts and relationships between categories, as a group (Åkerlind in Bowden & Green 2005, p. 117). The validation rehearsal, as part of the theatre-based research method, assisted in the analytic process of category identification. The procedure of discussing similarities and differences continued throughout the rehearsals where the teacher-actors often discussed their own experiences in relation to those they were representing, filling in the gaps with regard to their portrayal of characters with their own personal meaning. Throughout the early rehearsals it became more apparent to me that the power of the performance would come from showing rather than telling, from hinting rather than explaining, and from inviting rather than dictating.

The Use of Expressive Language

Rhetorical strategies and devices – metaphorical and evocative – are employed to ‘call forth imaginative faculties, inviting the audience to fill in the gaps with personal meaning. Whereas scientists aim to state meaning, artists aim to express meaning’ (Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 75). Here I discuss the combination of verbatim and expressive ‘language’ as not only words but the way individuals express themselves through body language, facial expression, gesture, movement and stillness.

In working with verbatim data I had little influence over the choice of words to form the text. However, I employed several rhetorical strategies in the shaping of the verbatim data by considering the intended audience, the selection of thematics, and the juxtaposition of stories both within the scenes
and between the scenes. The predominant strategy employed was to compare and contrast in order to discover, analyse, and express meaning. The Interviewee characters as narrators compare and contrast their current knowledge and understanding with their past selves, just as the participants did in their interviews. The comparisons and contrasts invite the audience to consider their own experiences of transformation.

I also employed evocative rhetorical devices in making decisions about what verbatim data could be transformed into stage direction and action. Language, in this sense, can also be understood as the employment of artistic devices – in this case non-naturalistic theatrical conventions such as manipulation of time and space, stylised movement, transformation of character (multiple roles), narration, choral speaking and direct address, actors as props, freeze, monotone, symbolic costume and props, minimalist staging, slow motion, use of projection, self contained episodes, and visible staging such as lighting and no backstage or offstage. For example the use of symbolic costume and props through the actions of putting on and taking off the Teacher’s shirt and Interviewees’ scarves, and working with the transformative aspect of the backpacks throughout the rehearsal and the performance was designed to highlight Beth’s comment about putting on her teacher clothes and teacher face and going to her teacher show.

The use of symbolic colour served as a metaphoric device to indicate the meaning behind the participants’ descriptions of their events. I consulted a number of colour symbolism resources in determining the selection of colour for each character. Green is employed to express ‘being green’ – new, young, and inexperienced, and ties to Janet’s expressions of inexperience through the use of the term “just a grad”. Peach can be used to symbolise enthusiasm, and was employed to capture Maggie’s excitement about her first day of teaching. Blue is said to represent perception, and draws attention to Lachy’s considered approach to the unexpected, supported by his core qualities. Bright pink is not only noticeable, which
Lara describes as feeling through being the odd one out, but also represents compassion, which reflects her desire for a more student-centred approach to her practice. Teal denotes idealism, and we can see Amelia’s ideals confronted by the situations she experiences. Red represents high emotion, reinforcing Cassidy’s ‘breakdown’. Mauve and purple signify ceremony, and serve to highlight Richard’s rite of passage and initiation. Khaki was chosen as a metaphor for battle, as Sari develops behaviour management strategies through doing battle with her students. Pale pink was chosen to represent Beth feeling like a pale remnant of what she thought she would be. The electric blue of Sandra’s shirt epitomises the high energy of her metaphor for teaching as an action movie. Tash’s experience is expressed in the use of orange to denote a combination of action and caution, demonstrating this moment as one that demands attention. Grey was chosen for Sebastian’s character as the only achromatic colour, leaving interpretation open in order to promote ambiguity and serve as a resolution.

The minimalist costuming and staging provoke the imaginative faculties of the audience, inviting them to fill in the gaps with personal meaning, while the use of stylised movement such as freeze, slow motion, and repetition are employed to express, rather than state, meaning. The minimalist staging also assists the episodic nature of the performance, resulting in a concise representation of each participant’s first as they emerged from the verbatim data. The scenes had, and still have, no real sense of resolution. They move from one to the next in a perhaps disjointed manner, to convey the episodic nature of teaching, moving from one class or room or meeting to another, leaving each with a sense of having achieved something yet still needing to follow up. The episodic nature of the work also assisted to ‘assail [the audience’s] sight, hearing, emotions and intellect in real time – at the pace of lived experience’ (Mienczakowski 2009, p. 322). The use of expressive language encourages the phenomenographic analysis of the data where each scene or category reveals something distinctive about a way of understanding the phenomenon. These categories are logically related
through the ordering of the scenes in a deliberately parsimonious manner so that the critical variation in experience as represented through the performance is represented by a set of as few categories as possible (Marton 1981; Åkerlind 2012).

The Use of Contextualised and Vernacular Language

Vernacular forms of speech are more directly associated with lived experiences, and are more likely to be useful in expressing the meaning of school experiences than are theoretical forms of discourse. The use of participants’ verbatim language as contextualised and vernacular serves to address ethical issues and the question of validity, and to consider notions of accessibility.

Ethical considerations emerged during the validation rehearsal where a participant became uncomfortable about the way her colleagues were portrayed, and was concerned that she would be identifiable. We discussed making the delivery of the dialogue less aggressive in order to get closer to her intended meaning at the time. The phrase reads quite angrily at first, and needed a different tone in the delivery.

I’m super uncomfortable because all they do it bitch about people at the school and I don’t join in, and sit there not talking to anyone feeling uncomfortable…

Upon the participant’s request during the validation rehearsal we changed ‘bitch’ to ‘gossip’. This example also draws attention to the power and problem of vernacular language when interpreted by another. In encouraging audiences (including the teacher-actor portraying this character) to bring their own personal meaning to the text the reader or audience member may attribute a different tone or emphasis than the one intended. In changing the word to ‘gossip’ we were also attempting to clarify the intention behind the word – that the aggressive nature of ‘bitch’ was not the tone that was being implied. The context needed to be addressed in the tone, and therefore we retained the word ‘bitch’, and refined the tone and
emphasis placed on the word in order to more accurately convey the context. While I was conscious that the play script should be wholly the participants’ exact words, some refinements such as this, and others including change of tense and removal of words such as ‘um’, ‘like’ and ‘you know’ seemed appropriate at the time, even though I felt like this was ‘cheating’ (Soans 2008, p. 41). When reading the play these omissions were less apparent. In rehearsal their absence was felt as the dialogue sounded too slick and contrived. The teacher-actors were given direction to make the dialogue their own by adding back in their choice of hesitational and conversational words.

An important consideration within the paradigm of phenomenographic research is asking how well the research outcomes correspond to others’ experiences of the phenomenon. The theatre-based research processes contain a number of validity checks, in addition to the validation rehearsal. One such check was the inviting of an expert audience to the premiere performance where feedback was gained from relevant audience members including the participants, members of the 1yr teacher population, and others including pre-service teachers, teacher educators and members of teaching bodies. In addition, subsequent live performances and presentations of video material have been made at conferences to ensure the research methods and interpretations are regarded as appropriate by relevant research communities. Forms of member checking have been described earlier in this chapter. These forms such as the ones implied in tasks of later interviews, the dinner, and the validation rehearsal encouraged an appropriate form of member checking. Some phenomenographic researchers do not regard seeking ‘feedback’ from interviewees as an appropriate validity check because phenomenographic researchers’ interpretations are made on a collective, not an individual, interview basis. The aim is not to capture any particular individual’s understanding but to capture the range of understandings within a particular group. As such, member checking and seeking feedback from participants through the
means outlined in this study allowed for validation to occur on a collective basis. The use of contextual and vernacular language is often shared between participants, and was noticed particularly during these moments of collective member checking.

Vernacular language often contains metaphorical allusion that is ‘thickly’ descriptive of what may be called the ‘dailiness’ of school life. The dialogue in the performance is highly accessible to nonresearcher audiences who can easily participate in making meaning from the performance in its thick description of teachers’ experiences. The use of vernacular language promotes the recognition of parallels between the participants’ epiphanies and the audiences’ own experiences. It was important to maintain the special epiphanic quality of language the participants used in order to bring about, in the audience, a phenomenological reverberation (van Manen 2007). For example in the crafting of the dialogue as addressed directly to the audience we are asked to consider the voice of the participant, firstly through what is said and also through the silence around what is said. TheInterviewees ask the audience to see the event, and also hear the moments of realisation that can be felt in relation to the audience’s own experiences. The use of sarcasm, under- or over-playing, and techniques of suspense were employed by the participants in the interviews in describing their epiphanic experiences and are represented in the performance to capture the contextual aspect of not only what was being said but also how it was said.

I took careful consideration in the selection of phrases and the context they were nested in, so that sound bites were avoided. This was achieved by specifically looking at identifying key words within phrases that indicated first moments, for example the use of rhetorical questions, identifying common terms that emerged such as ‘real’ and ‘grad’, and pinpointing emotions. The selection of words and phrases to include in the play were, by their verbatim nature, accessible to audience members. Yet the use of
vernacular and contextual language also assisted in the promotion of empathy, by speaking to the audience using a common language, in order to elicit their acceptance and acknowledgement that these experiences are ‘normal’.

**The Promotion of Empathy**

The promotion of empathy is required in order to produce powerful representations of the perspectives of certain kinds of people for the same kinds of people. Empathic understanding encourages audiences to participate vicariously in another form of life and to reconstruct the subjects’ perspective within themselves. The use of expressive, contextual and vernacular language discussed earlier contributes to this important dimension of theatre-based research. Pathic knowledge does not only inhere in language and the body but also in the things of our world, in the situation/s in which we find ourselves, and in the very relations that we maintain with others and the things around us (van Manen 2007). With these words in mind I sought to develop a text that leads the audience to recognise reflectively what the experience may have been like for these 1yr teachers; what it was like for audience members to experience a *first* in their own practice, and to also consider what these 1yr teachers are asking of us.

The promotion of empathy should not be confused with the promotion of sympathy. While I was very sympathetic towards some of the participants’ more challenging experiences, the play and performance seek an *understanding* from the audience – an understanding of the meaning of the events as represented in the play and on stage. A phenomenographic paradigm seeks descriptions that search for meaning, variation in meaning, and structural relationships between meanings. The search is conducted through pathic images, which are accessible through texts that speak to their audience and make a demand on their audience. Through these texts ‘the more noncognitive dimensions of our professional practice may be
communicated, internalized and reflected on’ (van Manen 2007, p. 21). In the search for meaning, as a researcher I made the decision to vary the examples (van Manen 1984, p. 25) so that the ‘invariant’ aspect/s of the phenomenon itself come into view. This was achieved by trying to show how *firsts* differ between participants, yet contain recognisable essences with which the audience can connect to, internalise, and reflect on. *Firsts* can be dramatic, symbolic, positive, negative, as reflection, as action, controllable, predicted, and spontaneous. The variation between *firsts* and scenes also served to promote empathy not necessarily in all instances, but in the aim that some will speak to each audience member, allowing them to benefit from a work that encourages them to participate vicariously in the participants’ experiences and to reconstruct the experiences within themselves.

**Personal Signature of the Researcher/Writer**

The personal signature of the researcher in this instance serves to consider the potential for bias in the research, and also to celebrate the creative bias of my performance works. In both senses I have shaped the reality in accordance with my own particular thesis, or controlling insight, which the text is composed to suggest. The thesis is a pervasive quality in the text that serves to structure the various components of the work (Barone & Eisner 1997). This tentative personal statement also serves as a mediator for choosing what to include or exclude from the text, particularly in creating the presence of ambiguity. In ‘reading’ the performance the audience co-constructs meaning, filling in the gaps with their own knowledge. The performance asks audience members to witness the stories of young first time teachers, to consider who and where they are in these stories, and to consider their own relationships with the data – with how they come to understand it and what they might do with it in an ongoing act of seeking understanding.
I recognise that my thesis for ‘The First Time’ was to capture the way in which all participants in this study balanced the positive with the negative. I aimed to demonstrate how their stories of woe were told to me as opportunities for recognising transition and transformation, and that their positives were celebrated though often guardedly. My intention was perhaps an attempt to regulate the ups and downs of 1yr teaching, and that is what I wanted to capture in shaping the performance – that there are positives and negatives that occur sometimes simultaneously, or at least juxtaposed against each other in a relationship of balance and tension. My thesis is a personal statement arising out of the negotiations between myself and the scrutiny of the phenomena of 1yr teachers’ experiences. My own voices as a 1yr teacher, a teacher educator, a researcher, and a performing artist are combined and present in the text and performance through the selection and shaping of the verbatim data. My thesis will never be the same as another researcher’s, and in acknowledging this I understand that there is no single, correct version of reality. Each work embodies the unique vision of its author. In that sense each work displays the author’s personal signature (Barone & Eisner 1997, pp 77-8). In this theatre-based research work the context of the research is considered through the active recreation of the participants’ experiences, with actors of a virtual world.

Throughout the rehearsal process aspects of what the participants were communicating were revealed as situated in different times. The notion of ‘looking back’ emerged as a strong theme, and a personal signature, accentuating the themes of transition and transformation. The Interviewee characters were subsequently devised to indicate two distinct times and identities – one of the past and one in the present. The Interviewee characters act as a third-person omniscient in that their story is being told by themselves as a narrator with an overarching point of view, seeing and knowing everything that happens within the world of the story, including what the participants were thinking and feeling at the time with the benefit of hindsight. The manipulation and transformation of time emphasises that
the practice rather than the individual is the central focus – allowing us to see the transformation in identity that has taken place through practice.

The creative personal signature in my work is a stripped back, minimalist look that employs block symbolic use of colour, choreographed movement, symbolic use of space, and transformation of place and character. This is how I work, this is how I see the world – stripped of all extraneous matter in order to get straight to the point, to say ‘look here’. It is my own form of microscope, to hone in on the essence, then pull back. I aimed to scrutinise the participants’ personal experiences through laying bare the essence of each incident. This approach to staging demonstrates my analytic process of focusing on the immediate rather than the extraneous, in order to encourage the audience to focus on the quintessential, filling in the peripheral through personal experiences.

The Presence of Aesthetic Form

The connection between my personal creative signature present in the work and the presence of aesthetic form are discussed here through the use of the performance space, an approach to characterisation, and video editing as analysis. This discussion centres on the composition of both formal and substantive elements that are arranged to further the thesis of the work. This discussion of the format, or manner and style of arranging the content of the play into non-naturalistic performance, also makes connections to previous discussions of the presence of ambiguity and the use of expressive language.

Having studied drama and dance at this university in the past, and having worked with the performing arts department in recent years on projects between the drama and education faculties, I envisioned the performance would take place in the university drama studio. This did not eventuate, and one of the reasons I was told this would not happen was because preference had to be given to ‘performing arts students’. It was confronting to have my
identity as a performing artist challenged on the basis of the current faculty in which I was working and researching. I felt like the character Beth when she realised she was not the teacher she would have drawn. My experiences have shaped my identity, and this rejection caused me to consider the changes that had taken place, and the perceptions others had of me. This revelation highlighted the notion that there is still a dividing perception between schools in universities that constrain the possibilities of cross-disciplinary research. Many arts-based researchers (Jaeger 1997; Anderson 2007; Barone & Eisner 2012; Sinclair 2012) have written about their mode of inquiry not being taken seriously as real research, yet in my case I was not being taken seriously as an artist, based on the label of the school I was working in. Having experienced the so-called rejection that is reportedly occurring with regard to arts-based research, I understand now that arts-based researchers may not have enough experience in being taken seriously. Many of the works on arts-based research I have come across tend to advocate more than they explain. One of my aims in this work is to therefore explain, in order that others may benefit from my understanding and experience.

**Illustration 1.** The performance space

The performance space I ended up selecting was a new lecture theatre close to the School of Education. It was one of the only lecture theatres I could find with a suitable area for the actors to perform in. It’s interesting to note
that many lecture theatres are designed for a single presenter, separated from the audience by a large, permanent desk with very little room to move beyond or around.

Illustration 2. The stark, minimalistic ‘theatrical’ and ‘academic’ space

The seating in such spaces is often designed for the audience to view the projections rather than the presenter, and the constraints of these spaces shape the method in which the presenter acts. While the space I selected left little choice in the way the seating could be arranged I found it suitable for the task I had in mind. The new space was completely white – very stark and crisp. I decided that black costumes with brightly coloured accessories would work well in this space, to draw attention to each individual Teacher and their props. The space ended up suiting the performance very well, and acknowledged my combined identity of researcher and performing artist, and the ambiguous nature of theatre-based research. It was both ‘academic’ and ‘theatrical’. A space that heightened the purpose of the performance – to both educate and in which to create a virtual reality.

It was my decision early on to separate the character of the Interviewee into three. There are special qualities about a trio or triad that I was trying to acknowledge in dividing the dialogue among the three. My intention was to analyse the participants’ description of their *firsts* and their identity through
the use of contradiction, sudden changes, and extended pauses. For example:

INTERVIEWEE 1
I think it’s sad that I’m –

INTERVIEWEE 2
not sad, that’s not the right word –

INTERVIEWEE 3
I’d like to be that fun teacher, but on the other hand I’m not upset that I’m not.

By dividing the character of the Interviewee into three I was able to draw more attention to the way the participants described their experiences, and begin to analyse what this says about 1yr teachers. I also structured the triad to emphasise the way the interview participants often spoke in different ‘voices’. They would make a statement, then explain or expand on their statement, then consolidate their meaning, as seen here when I asked Sari with regard to her Wordles ‘What words might we see now?’

Probably – I think I’d be a lot more...I don’t think I’d say this but I feel like I’m a lot more confident now, like in telling students – I think at the start there’s things like when you’re walking down the corridor you wouldn’t pick the students up for, like uniform, and you’re like ‘I won’t pick these fights’ but now as you get a lot more confident, get to know all the students, you’ve got the confidence to tell people off a little bit more. Yeah, definitely more confident and I think there would still be a lot of words like ‘boys’ would still come out. ‘Teacher’ and ‘teachers’ is different...yeah I guess ‘easier’ would come out a fair bit, because the whole thing has got a lot easier this year. ‘Work’ that’s a pretty big one – now it’s getting a bit more relaxing now that I know what’s happening. And if I’m still there next year it’s going to get a lot better. (Sari Interview 3)

And later in the same interview, when Sari discussed further how she was developing relationships with the students.

Like picking up on, just the little things like uniform and that type of thing, you can see that change in everything. Like if you just let them not wear their uniform – like it’s something I didn’t really notice at the start, because it’s like you’re at school – this is good! You’re not throwing tables around! Just being more assertive as well. There has definitely been a change this year. It’s good reflecting on how much you’ve sort of changed. (Sari Interview 3)

This interview data was then represented in the play script as follows:
INTERVIEWEE 1
I think now I’m a lot more –

INTERVIEWEE 2
I feel like I’m a lot more confident now, like in telling students –

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think at the start there’s things like when you’re walking down the corridor you wouldn’t pick the students up for, like uniform, and you’re like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘I won’t pick these fights’

INTERVIEWEE 2
but now as you get a lot more confident, get to know all the students, you’ve got the confidence to tell people off a little bit more.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Yeah, definitely more confident. Just being more assertive.

As a result the characterisation of the Interviewees needed to be expressed through both similarity and difference. These three teacher-actors were required to speak directly to the audience reflecting the manner in which the participants spoke to me in their interviews. Only on occasion did they interact with each other, as though talking to themselves or thinking aloud in the form of soliloquy. They were encouraged to perform as one, and undertook several activities such as line running and improvisation tasks in order to develop a kinaesthetic bond to represent a single person, while
remaining different in their delivery to represent their individual traits. They also needed to work with the individual teacher-actors portraying each Teacher to create continuity of tone and expression, though they rarely interacted in the performance with these characters, as the Teachers represented the past of the first.

Manipulating non-naturalistic theatrical conventions such as transformation of time, place and character required the actors to work with props and costumes in a highly choreographed manner. These non-naturalistic conventions assisted the Teacher and Interviewee teacher-actors to create a representation rather than a re-enactment or imitation. The teacher-actors had met the participants at the validation rehearsal, and had listened to excerpts of the interview data as part of their characterisation research, though they were encouraged to also bring their own personal teaching histories to their characterisation. Creating a ‘classroom’ side of the stage and a ‘staffroom’ side of the stage assisted the transformation of character and place.

Illustration 4. Props carried in backpack by teacher-actors

Each Teacher then transported their relevant props and costumes in their backpack between scenes. The convention of transformation of character was manipulated to express the many roles a teacher can take on at a given time, and links to the transformative nature of identity. The manipulation of
props and costumes assisted the teacher-actors with the transformation of character and place, and assisted the audience to enter the virtual reality. The ambiguous nature of the scenes required the audience to be given cues such as the Interviewees’ scarves in the same colour as each Teacher they were representing. These cues encouraged the audience to focus on the connection between characters, and past and present, in order to fill in the gaps with their own understanding of the content.

Illustration 5. Teacher-actors’ embodied manipulation of whiteboard marker

Looking back at the photographs and video footage of the dress rehearsals and performance I too have noticed different themes emerging that were hidden by the immediacy of time in the live performance. Being able to pause, rewind, select from the different camera angles, and zoom in and out served as a further form of analysing these 1yr teachers’ experiences. One observation was that the teacher-actors often held onto the single blue whiteboard marker throughout their scene. The way they hold and gesture with the whiteboard marker is so intrinsically like a teacher, it makes me consider more deeply how practices are embodied – they manifest themselves in what people do in a particular place and time, employing learned capabilities and competencies. The editing of the video allowed a closer analysis of the embodiment of teaching practices in relation to how these shape identity through the use of artefacts.
Summary of Part Three

Part Three outlined the procedures undertaken to generate and encourage analysis of 1yr teachers’ descriptions of their first experiences. It began with a description of the selection of twelve graduating teachers embarking of their 1yr. The interview procedures outlined how the data was generated in order to elicit variation by asking the same questions to ensure participants were all talking about the same phenomenon. The ethical considerations of generating data through the interview process, and representing participants’ experiences in a theatre-based research method were addressed. A description of how the data was shaped and represented through the theatre-based research method was detailed within the framework of the ‘Seven Features of Arts-based Educational Inquiry’ (Barone & Eisner 1997). Part Three has served to describe how the format and contents of the theatre-based research play script and performance acted to create a new vision of the experiences of 1yr teachers. When the audience (myself included) re-create that vision they can find that ‘new meanings are constructed, and old values and outlooks are challenged, even negated. When that occurs the purposes of art have been served’ (Barone & Eisner 1997, p. 78). The processes of scripting, rehearsal and performance in this last section of Part Three lead to the discussion in Part Four of the analysis of the data through the theatre-based research method.
PART FOUR

Introduction to Part Four

It is my intention to proceed exemplificatively (van Manen 1984, p. 27) in the structuring of Part Four. The presentation (written and performed), and description of each scene aims to render visible the essential nature of the phenomenon, and then these are filled out through an analysis that seeks to provide an understanding of the experiences. Each scene enlightens an essential aspect of the nature of each 1yr teacher’s discourse and the connections between language, status, and the shaping of their identity within each 1yr teacher’s experiences. In doing so I examine how teachers’ first experiences occur within a variety of discourses that inform identity transformation.

The analysis of each participant’s data begins with a ‘reading’ of the scene with reference to the play script and video footage. The participant’s first is identified, and the ensuing analysis focuses on thematising the possible ways of viewing each individual’s experience of identity transformation. The phenomenographic search for meaning or variation in meaning occurred in three stages: first across an individual’s interview as it was transcribed; then across all participant’s interviews as a whole; and then by looking for themes – the ‘essence’ of each participant’s experience. The structural relationships between meanings took place at the end of the analysis processes of scripting, rehearsal, and performance, and are examined in Part Five: Discussion. In the first two stages the analysis process consisted of looking for dimensions that appeared critical in distinguishing one participant’s experience from the other participants’ experiences, while in
the third stage the analysis consisted of looking for dimensions that could be identified as themes running through all transcripts. Further consideration in the analysis was given to ways associated individual features of the participants’ practice prefigure their identity. These individual features of practice, employed as investigative tools, constitute forms of knowledge that are experientially formed; dramaturgical in character – unfolding in human and social action; and embodied and situated (Kemmis 2009, p. 23). The analysis focuses on how participant’s experiences of identity transformation highlight the way each individual describes their way of thinking in a certain situation, in a specific time and place, that exhibits the characteristics of the themes identified for each participant. The phenomenographic approach elicits a description of the way people think in concrete situations, and, from the collective perspective, as a description of thinking (Marton 1981).

Aspects of the participants’ experiences are discussed with reference to how each participant’s identity is shaped as ‘being’ a certain kind of person at a particular moment in time – their agency and sense of agency in which identity is transformed at the time of their first.

As discussed in Part Three the participants’ firsts have been scripted, rehearsed, and performed in the style of non-naturalistic theatre. The theatre-based method in the analysis highlights the concept of role taking which involves the self engaging in a reflective dialogue with itself in order to act in a role (Allen 2009). In the reading of each scene it is valuable to remember that the Interviewee characters as narrators consist of the three voices of each participant who observe and discuss the ‘self’ in their scene. These characters pose questions for the audience, and represent aspects of the discourses that shape each participant’s practice and identity.
Analysis

Prologue: looking back\textsuperscript{15}

INTERVIEWEE 1
I wish I could go back in time, like six or eight months, with the knowledge and experience I have now. I would do things so differently. I just didn’t even think about it at the time.

INTERVIEWEE 2
It could have gone either way, but I think it would have been positive regardless. When I think about it now, looking back, I’m like wow, I was in a completely different head space to what I am now. It’s probably funny looking back on it.

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think now, looking back at it, now I’m so happy. I’ve done everything I could.

This scene is structured as a presentational prologue where the Interviewees as a ‘chorus’ or ‘narrators’ directly address the audience. The video viewed here has been manipulated to include footage that appears later in the play.

\textsuperscript{15} To watch related scenes from ‘The First Time’ please go to: \url{http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB1ED0FDEF2AA8836}.  

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In the live performance the remaining teacher-actors enter the space with their backpacks and ‘set up’ behind the Interviewees, as though it is the start of a school day. Classes take place to the left of the screen and the staff area is to the right. The Interviewees are embedded within, yet remain distanced from, the action. They describe and react to the action and the self in order to ‘let that which shows itself be seen from itself’ (Heidegger 1962, p. 58 in van Manen 1984, p. 4). The characters within the scenes rarely interact with the Interviewees. Some exceptions are discussed in relation to each relevant scene.

All teacher-actors remain on stage throughout the performance. They change costume and move props in full view of the audience. This non-naturalistic convention highlights the contemporary notion that teaching is a highly visible practice – there is no ‘backstage’ in teaching. Many of us have at least some idea of what a teacher looks like, through our own school experiences. Increasingly, technology and design are making teachers’ work more visible. The visibility of teachers’ work can be seen in the way new teaching and learning spaces are designed to be open plan. Teachers in these new buildings work in glass-walled shared spaces. Parents are encouraged to become more present and active in the classroom – particularly in primary schools. Technology increases communication between teachers and with parents and students outside of school hours.

The dialogue for this scene was developed as an amalgamation of individual participants’ words. This is the only time in the performance where a polyphonic representation of voices is employed. The remainder of the text consists of representing verbatim data. This data underwent some transformation when interpreted by the teacher-actors. This transformation can be seen in some excerpts where the dialogue performed does not directly match the script. Throughout the rehearsal process the teacher-actors brought their own teaching experiences to their characters, in order to maintain the vernacular feel of the language of the participants.
prologue, and the choral characters of the Interviewees, serve to enhance the reflective processes involved in the re-creation and representation of the *firsts*. The Interviewees look back on their past selves recognising the transformations that have taken place in their practice, and the shifts in their identities. The Interviewee characters were divided into three to reflect the way each participant thought aloud in the interview when describing their *firsts* to highlight how ‘When I speak I discover what it is I wished to say’ (Merleau-Ponty in van Manen 1984, p. 4). Interviewee 1 expresses a desire to go back and assist their past self with the knowledge and experience of the present self. She represents key moments of shifts in identity, with a particular reference to time and place. Interviewee 2 speaks of the different emotions experienced in coming to terms with the shifts in her identity. She often contradicts what she has said as Interviewee 1, expressing the awkwardness that comes with liminal experiences. Interviewee 3 captures the way the participants have reflected on the achievements and areas for improvement in their practice as conditional to making progress. She expresses a sense of hope that is present in all the participants’ experiences, and has shaped the structure of the scenes with respect to how each experience begins, develops, reaches a turning point, and resolves.

Epiphanic moments The scenes were ordered to represent periods in time and the saying and doings that occur in the social time of the school year including the rhythms of weeks, terms, and key events such as reporting. Many of the scenes are based on the synchronic present – a cross-section frozen at a particular instance where the *firsts* occur, and these moments are then located within related instances, perhaps from a different time, yet linked to the specific moment in time of each *first*. Janet’s scene was selected to lead as it represents the transition from pre-service teacher to in-service teacher through two key moments in the participant’s experience. The first key moment is the interview, where Janet feels powerless to provide concrete examples of her practice like that of a ‘real’ teacher. Janet’s sense of feeling like ‘just a grad’ is weighed against her description of a later
experience – the key moment where she feels like a ‘real’ teacher – on the first day of in-service teaching.

Analysis of individual participant’s data

Janet: ‘just a grad’

INTerviewee 1
Part of me still sees myself as

INTerviewee 1, 2 & 3
‘just a grad’

INTerviewee 1
just because I haven’t got years of experience under my belt.

INTerviewer
Tell us about [some of your classroom management strategies]16

Janet
At uni [I did an assignment on classroom management]

INTerviewer
What about [some of the things you’ve implemented in the

16 This scene contained some improvised language – distinguished by […] – in addition to the verbatim data.
classroom]

JANET
While I was on rounds [I helped my supervising teacher]

INTERVIEWER
So you haven’t actually implemented any strategies yourself?

JANET
Well, as a student teacher [I haven’t really had the chance yet, but I’m looking forward to the opportunity]

JANET
*opening classroom door, a group of parents rush in from the rain*
Hello, I’m...

PARENT 1
My son hasn’t been feeling well, if he doesn’t feel well can you call me?

PARENT 2
My name’s Pam and I’m Julie’s mum.

PARENT 3
My daughter has a tummy ache, if she doesn’t feel well can you call me?

PARENT 4
I’m Max’s dad and this is my partner, and this is Max’s mum Anita. My son’s got a mosquito bite. If it flares up can you get an ice pack?

*PARENTS transform into STUDENTS sitting on the floor looking up at JANET who starts teaching...*

INTERVIEWEE 2
I reckon I felt like a real teacher after the first day!

INTERVIEWEE 1
Just having my class, they’re really beautiful, I think it’s because I had such a naughty class last year, I was expecting the worst.

INTERVIEWEE 3
They’re really lovely, and me being in control, and no one watching me, I was just like yeah ‘It’s all mine!’

INTERVIEWEE 1
I can do this!
INTERVIEWEE 2
I still feel like I’m learning a lot but I feel more comfortable calling myself a teacher now.

INTERVIEWEE 3
And I feel like this is my job, whereas before I was a bit – I don’t know if I can do it, but now it’s just… not second nature because I’m still learning how to do things, but yeah.

STUDENTS move off one by one. JANET is left asking a COLLEAGUE questions.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I guess as a grad I do ask a lot of questions. I don’t want them to be like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Couldn’t she work that out for herself?’

INTERVIEWEE 2
And I’m sure they wouldn’t. They’ve said you can ask anything at all, but you don’t want to look like an idiot!

INTERVIEWEE 3
I know I’ll be doing a lot of talking with my mentor, and my supervising teacher as well; now my ex-supervising teacher… my colleague!

In our interview when Janet described her job interview she said “I guess I felt like a grad because I kept referring to my teaching rounds and uni assignments” (Janet Interview 1). This first part of the scene is directed towards pre-service teachers, suggesting that feelings of inadequacy can be fleeting moments that change over time. Janet says she feels more comfortable calling herself a teacher after the first day. Her sense of identity shifts with an acknowledgement that her self-prescribed status as ‘just a grad’ changes with experience. The transformation of time between the interview and first day, and transformation of character from parents to students in this scene serve to introduce the concept of identity transformation in that we can ‘be’ a certain kind of person at particular moments in time.

Janet’s scene is thematically related through the notion of being ‘just a grad’. Initially, in Interview 1, Janet predicted she would stop feeling like ‘just a
grad’ after one year. She mentioned this would happen when she was “more used to everything and have consolidated my teaching more. Hopefully it comes earlier” (Janet Interview 1). Beginning teachers face the question of whether they can see themselves as teachers, ‘not only in the reflections from colleagues and children in their schools, but also in the mirror that they hold up to themselves’ (McNally et al. 2008, p. 293). A dimension of identity research is the biographical perspective, which refers to experiences that become the basis for teacher role identity and the way in which individuals think about, or the image they have of, themselves as teachers (Beijaard 1995). For Janet, her image of a grad was based initially on anxiety, and entailed asking a lot of questions, having someone else in the classroom with her “watching me”, worrying about “looking like an idiot”, and being perceived by others (particularly parents) as inexperienced.

There’s so many things I have in the back of my mind like [colleagues are] watching me because I didn’t get the job the first round so they’ll be thinking “Did we make the right decision in hiring her?” and then just behaviour management stuff, and then having to reapply after the first year. (Janet Interview 2)

In Huntly’s discussion of one of the categories of teacher competence: ‘Competence is becoming a professional’, she recognises that beginning teachers’ perception of competence is closely linked with their confidence. This is most apparent in the excerpt from one of her interviews:

Interviewer: What does competence mean to you?
Beginning Teacher: I think to feel confident that you come into the classroom and do the job that you’ve been trained to do. (Huntly 2008)

The theme of confidence emerged many times throughout the year in Janet’s interviews, particularly in the beginning during her job interview and her first few weeks of teaching. The focus of this analysis is on how Janet perceived herself as a teacher in her transition to beginning teaching, resulting in the confidence to describe herself as more than ‘just a grad’.

While describing herself as ‘just a grad’ Janet also recognised that she was to undertake the same day-to-day work as teachers of varying stages of
experience and expertise. On many levels beginning teachers have the same job description as more experienced teachers, so Janet felt compelled in the early stages of her teaching career to remind herself that she was just starting out. The fact that Janet was employed for her 1yr in a graduate position, coupled with having to complete her VIT application for full registration, are some of the reminders that she was not the same as a ‘real’ teacher. Interestingly she taught in a closed classroom, although there were opportunities to team teach with another teacher. “This is how I did Primary school myself so this is the norm…” (Janet Interview 3). The physical teaching environment is still in many cases one that isolates colleagues from each other, in the main business of teaching, and reinforces the notion that teachers’ work is the same despite the amount of experience individual teachers posses (Bullough 1991; Lortie 2002; Merrill 2006). Janet’s classroom was at the end of a 1960’s style building with a corridor down the middle and classrooms on either side. There was a small room with some computers connecting to the next classroom, though the concertina doors often remain closed.

That’s one of the weird feelings you’re not really prepared for. And just you’re on your own – well you are in this situation, in this classroom. And no one really watches you, and you’re the boss! (Janet Interview 2)

It is interesting to note that Janet linked feelings of confidence to having no one watching her. The transition in her identity was marked by her transition from pre-service teaching to ‘real’ teaching through the removal of the supervising teacher. However, Janet still felt as though she was being “checked up on”, most evidently in relation to her VIT application for full registration. She referred to her application and the Standards as important, because you get into the classroom and you’re sort of on your own, so I guess they can still monitor that we’re still trying to do things. It’s not just like OK now I’m in the classroom I can do whatever I want. I guess it’s still monitoring that because we’re new it makes sense that they would want to keep an eye on what we’re doing. (Janet Interview 3)

It appears from this comment as though Janet perceived the Standards as something she had to aspire to, rather than part of her practice. The notion
of someone “checking up on” or “monitoring” her is apparent here, and was prevalent throughout her interviews in the early months. These notions reinforce the idea Janet had about being ‘just a grad’, that she did not feel ready to have autonomy over her practice in the very early stages of her teaching. Janet was then surprised that she began to feel like a ‘real’ teacher after just a few weeks.

I guess it’s just having that experience, and I couldn’t give you a date of when I’ve changed from the old to the new, it’s just been a gradual thing over the last few years [on practicum], but that’s one of the big differences, not being so – I don’t know the word – fussing over [the students] and knowing when to just move onto the next thing. Just little things like that. I think I’m a lot more confident in myself now – it’s only been three weeks and I still have lots to learn – but I feel like I can do it!

*Interviewer: Did you ever feel like you couldn’t do it?*

Before I started I was a bit shitting myself – like what if I’m a failure? What have I done this last four years? I was like what if I get into this school and I’m crap? What if I’ve wasted that degree? (Janet Interview 2)

Beijaard et al (2000) recognise that teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice. Janet’s initial description of herself as ‘just a grad’ was experientially formed expressing her lack of agency. This disposition placed limitations on what she was able to accomplish, and limitations on her aspirations and status. Her confidence in her own ability was initially skewed by her hesitant approach to beginning teaching. Later when she began to see herself as a ‘real’ teacher, her confidence and autonomy increased, and she was able to view herself without putting herself down or imposing any restriction on what she could achieve. She also acknowledged that her identity transformation was a gradual undertaking with no one moment of change from one state of being to another.
At the end of her 1yr Janet looked back on the changes in her perception of herself as a teacher, from feeling like ‘just a grad’ to feeling more like a ‘real’ teacher. In letting go of the constraints of her earlier identity she was able to develop more confidence in relation to her practice.

It’s hard to think back to that now – it seems like so long ago. Even in the first few weeks when I talked to you I still feel like I was – OK metaphor – tiptoeing, and now I’m just like – I’m doing the run! I’m doing it now. I feel like a teacher now. I am a teacher now. It just feels so different to the beginning of the year. I knew I’d feel like this eventually, but then all of a sudden you do. (Janet Interview 3)

Janet’s scene captures the transition she describes from the ‘old me’ to the ‘new me’, from feeling like ‘just a grad’ to “I can do this!” The scene resolves with a sense of hope – a recognition that as a 1yr teacher Janet still requires assistance and guidance, but she now has the confidence to seek these out without the fear of being compromising her status or autonomy. The hegemonic discourse of ‘just a grad’ is also discussed further in Part Five: Discussion. Janet’s feelings of being ‘just a grad’ and her hopes of feeling like a ‘real’ teacher are echoed in Maggie’s scene.

**Maggie: being a ‘real’ teacher**

**MAGGIE and a small group of GRAD teachers standing watching the students come in to school on the first day**

**MAGGIE**
It’s real. This is happening! It’s the only time we’ll ever have it.
We’ll never get to do it again. It’s kind of like a new start to the rest of our lives. You never get to have your first day again.

GRAD 1
I’m shit scared!

GRAD 2
Me too!

MAGGIE
Yeah, ‘good’ scary. Exciting scary. No supervising teacher! Oh my god, let’s go get our kids!

*as MAGGIE goes into the classroom and organises students*

INTERVIEWEE 1
I remember the first time, the Friday morning, and it was sort of a bit busy and where do we put our stuff and I’d already put their names on their hooks, so I said just put your name on, find your seat.

INTERVIEWEE 2
Once they’d all done that they went and sat on the floor, so I got the last person done and I turned around and they were all just sitting there staring at me, and I was kind of like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘OK, they’re really quiet...what do we do now?’

INTERVIEWEE 3
The first time you’re alone and they’re quiet and they’re like ‘do something with us, teach us something’. OK… what are we doing? SHIT!

INTERVIEWEE 2
Then, in the moment, I didn’t feel as much like a ‘real’ teacher. I felt like I was kind of getting away with something I shouldn’t be.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Just until I felt more confident. Yes this is my class, yes I can do this. I felt like that for an hour, maybe by recess, then I had everyone’s names.

Maggie’s scene echoes the ideas of feeling like a ‘real’ teacher introduced in Janet’s scene. Again, this is the first day, and the first moment of in-service teaching. Maggie’s excitement at not having a supervising teacher indicates a shift in her perception of status and sense of agency. She is discovering the level of excitement she is able to express with regards to the other 1yr
teachers, and she appears to be responsible for providing cues to the other members of her affinity group on how to act. She modifies one teacher’s reaction “I’m shit scared” to “good scary, exciting scary”, indicating that she has been granted, or perceives herself as having, higher status within this small graduate teacher group at this school. As such she sets the tone for the coming experience, and is perhaps complicit in shaping the way the other 1yr teachers approach the experience. In contrast, her moment of realisation in the classroom speaks of the hesitancy she may have been concealing with her earlier enthusiasm. Maggie says she felt like she was “getting away with something” – she felt like a fraud. She questions her ability, expertise, and ownership. Her first hour of ‘being’ a teacher demonstrates Maggie’s varying levels of confidence. With her colleagues she leads the way, but on her own in the classroom she begins to question herself. As the moment of doubt dissipates her confidence returns. With no supervising teacher any more Maggie found it difficult to read how she was going in the classroom. She describes feeling self-conscious that she had to ‘teach’ the students. No longer deferring to the supervising teacher, the realisation that she is responsible for the education of these children hits hard. It stops her in her tracks and signifies itself as an important moment in the transformation of her practice and identity.

In our discussions throughout the year Maggie often referred to feeling like a ‘real’ teacher in conjunction with not having a supervising teacher and not having someone watching her. In order to feel like a ‘real’ teacher Maggie needs to have a sense of autonomy. She recognised and recalled a number of key moments in her 1yr of teaching as ones where she felt herself caught in between feeling like a ‘real’ teacher and feeling inexperienced. These feelings came about through her interactions and affiliations with her colleagues and other friends outside of her school who were also beginning teaching. Maggie’s interactions and affiliations emerge as having the most impact on her identity transformation. Her interactions with the other graduate teachers allow her to explore feelings of not belonging, anxiety,
and excitement. Maggie’s interviews, particularly early in the year, are peppered with phrases such as “I can do this”, and “I’m going to be fine.”

In order to prepare for the transition to becoming a ‘real’ teacher Maggie’s focus was on the more tangible aspects of her practice. As a primary teacher, setting up her classroom was the most important and immediate concern. In our first interview Maggie described the important moment of getting her key to her classroom at the end of the 2010 school year. She then described how she spent a lot of time in the summer holidays setting up her room.

It felt like I was sneaking around – the lights were off and no one else was there and if people would come to play at the school I was like “Maybe I shouldn’t be here – but wait – it’s my room, I’m allowed to be here!” (Maggie Interview 1)

This was one of many liminal stages Maggie experienced. It was an uncertain period between letting go of the identity of pre-service teacher and becoming a teacher. Maggie was attempting to assert control over her practice, and the transformation of her identity, by working with concrete aspects of her practice. This was common amongst the beginning primary teachers in this study, and is discussed further in Part Five: Discussion in the section titled ‘Cultural-discursive features of 1yr teachers’ work and identity’. However, in this case Maggie felt like she didn’t belong in the school yet, even though she had a key and permission to be there. Her feeling of not quite belonging can be described as being on the threshold of, or experiencing the transition to, a new identity through the liminal phase (Turner 1994; Pierce 2007; Wendling 2008). Maggie’s feelings of liminality carried through to her first day of teaching where she felt like she was “getting away with something”. This links to her sense of whether she felt prepared during her pre-service teaching experiences (Gravett, Henning & Eiselen 2011), for the realities of teaching, and is also discussed further in Part Five: Discussion.

Maggie described that she had developed an idea of who she would like to, or felt she needed to, be at specific times in her transition to teaching. It is
interesting to note Maggie’s attempt to make sense of her transition to
teaching came from looking to those around her for an indication of how
she should be feeling in relation to particular meaningful moments in her
practice. By reflecting on her predicted rites of passage, Maggie was able to
develop a form of measure of her progress. Initially other graduate teachers’
posts on Facebook about setting up their classrooms influenced Maggie.
Their comments and photographs compelled Maggie to begin making her
transition to teaching by gaining some control over her teaching
environment. When I went to visit Maggie at her school she sent me some
instructions of where to meet her and a sketch of the school, with ‘MY
ROOM’ featuring disproportionately large on the map. The word ‘room’ is
one of the five largest words in her first Wordle and still features, though less
prominently, in the second Wordle (see appendix 3.2.1). This indicated how
significant setting up her room was in regards to her identity as a teacher.
Setting up her room during the summer was an effective strategy for Maggie
to develop feelings of belonging, and begin to ally her fears of getting away
with something. The scene when Maggie finishes all her organisational tasks
and is faced with a class of students captures the way Maggie described the
realisation that her preparation for teaching has focused mostly on
organisation. Afterward she realised the importance of having to educate,
and in doing so she began to acknowledge the learners as an important part
of her practice and identity.

Later in the first term, Maggie’s connection between her classroom and her
feelings of being a ‘real’ teacher were challenged in a few ways. These
included worrying about other teachers and parents watching her and (she
imagined) talking about her behind her back, and colleagues changing her
display boards and leaving things on her desk. On one occasion while
Maggie had been granted time release from class to conduct individual
student’s testing, the replacement teacher displayed a selection of student
work on one of the notice boards. Maggie found this rather challenging. She
described her reaction:
I was a bit annoyed with that because that got put up ... someone else came in for an hour while I was out and stapled them all up. It made me feel irritated, just because it’s not their room. You don’t go into someone else’s house and nail things on the wall. You don’t go into someone else’s classroom and hang stuff up. I had that square planned – it was going to be our rules and photos and good manners, and now I’m like “Uh” and the kids would be like “Why did you move it all?” if I changed it. (Maggie Interview 2)

Maggie says she was irritated by the other teacher’s actions, and by sharing ownership of the classroom, and thereby sharing the students. She had the idea that her students and classroom ‘belonged’ to her. Maggie often used possessive terms to describe her students and classroom. Later in the year when Maggie reflected back on her beginning weeks as a teacher, she described her first day excitement about having the students all to herself – “you’re all mine”. In this sense Maggie aspires to have complete autonomy over her physical environment as an indication of her autonomy in regards to her practice. Her aspirations include being a leader – she sees herself as the matriarch of the group of graduates at her school – and based on her previous pre-service experiences at the school in 2010 she does not view herself, as Janet does, as ‘just a grad’, though her more experienced colleagues may.

The dramaturgical nature of Maggie’s practice unfolds through the intricacies of her social interactions and affiliations. In her affiliations with the other graduate teachers she positions herself as competent, while in interactions with other staff her feeling of competency is contested. In the early weeks of her teaching Maggie did not feel ready to share and collaborate with her colleagues. She had a desire to demonstrate her competence by doing everything herself, without assistance from others. In setting up her room she was able to begin visualising and planning for what would take place in there. She felt as though she was beginning to have some control over what is essentially an unpredictable profession. However, she reported still feeling “like a student teacher at times”. At the end of 2010
Maggie met her class during orientation. This was the first time she had been in the role of teacher without a supervising teacher in the room with her.

The leading teacher kept popping in, which was nice, because I’m not sure that I’m technically allowed to be by myself with them because I’m not VIT registered or anything like that. It was nice that she kept popping in but I was like “I don’t want anybody supervising me – I don’t really know what I’m doing, but I know what I’m doing – they’re my kids and they’re my grade” and so – it was nice. I’m hoping that doesn’t keep up next year – I don’t think it will. (Maggie Interview 1)

I think the phrase “don’t really know what I’m doing, but I know what I’m doing” sums up Maggie’s feelings of liminality here. She felt she was on the cusp of becoming a ‘real’ teacher, but having someone checking up on her sent her back to feeling like a pre-service teacher. When Maggie said she hoped this teacher would discontinue popping in she indicated she was looking forward to being able to complete her transformation into a ‘real’ teacher.

Later, in the first weeks of term one, Maggie’s team leader would sometimes stand in the doorway of Maggie’s classroom to watch for a few minutes. This reinforced to Maggie that she was still a beginning teacher, again challenging her sense of autonomy.

It just feels like you’re on rounds or something – people watching you. I don’t mind if she comes in to grab stuff, or say stuff, or to help, or whatever. If it’s like that it’s fine. But she was just sort of standing there watching and then smiling, like “I’m watching” smiling, and then just going back into her room. (Maggie Interview 2)

Here Maggie expresses what could be really at the heart of her annoyance at other teachers being in her classroom. Having another teacher in her room, changing displays, or leaving resources on her desk, reinforced to Maggie that she was a beginning teacher, rather than a ‘real’ teacher. She believed these teachers’ actions were indicating to her that she still had a lot to learn. Maggie felt that once she had set up her classroom and had come to know her students she was the same as any other teacher in the school. She felt she didn’t need assistance from other teachers. She saw their offers as a challenge to her autonomy.
When Maggie was watching the students arrive on their first day of school, she aligned herself with the few other graduate teachers in the school, and expressed a terrified delight at experiencing this *first*. She recognised this as an important moment in her teaching career, but it was evident from further discussion that Maggie was keen to get this over with, so she could begin to feel like a ‘real’ teacher. Maggie rarely discussed experiences of ‘becoming’ a teacher. When I asked her who she would turn to for assistance she indicated she was comfortable asking advice from her mentor, though she feared that other teachers might talk about her, and her lack of experience, behind her back.

I do want to seem comfortable and competent, but I’m fine with being a grad and not knowing anything and [my mentor] makes it really easy because she’s been in grade 5/6 for the last year and I said something to her like “we did this” and she was like “oh crap – I can’t remember how you’re supposed to do it – you’ve done it really well. It’s been so long since I’ve done it. I’ve forgotten how to do it!” And the same with the lady across – she was in grade 3/4 and she’s having to bring herself down a bit as well. We’re all still learning and you’re not the only one who’s had a first day kind of thing – like it’s all of us – first time in here. (Maggie Interview 2)

There are some seemingly conflicting statements in here. Maggie says she feels comfortable ‘being a grad’, but she is more comfortable with the idea that the teachers in her team are still learning as well. Her interesting use of the phrase “bring herself down a bit” suggests that Maggie aspires to feel at the same level of expertise as the other teachers in her team. So for Maggie, being a ‘real’ teacher is not so much about being competent or confident but more about being the *same* as the other teachers. For Lachy, feeling like a ‘real’ teacher involves recognising and building on aspects of his core qualities in order to acknowledge the personal philosophies he sees as important in becoming a teacher.
INTERVIEWEE 1
On my first teaching day I went down to the staff room at 8:45 for briefing, and I had period one spare, so I was like this is good. I’ve got time to get ready and stuff. And I went down and the extras sheet was out and I looked at the extras sheet and

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
I had an extra period one!

INTERVIEWEE 1
And it was a year 7 class so their first high school class,

INTERVIEWEE 2
and I had a yard duty before school,

INTERVIEWEE 3
so I had no time to prepare or anything!

INTERVIEWEE 1
That was like a really interesting way to kick off my teaching career!

INTERVIEWEE 2
I felt pretty excited because I had my year 7s planned and I was like sweet, I’ll just use that same lesson.

INTERVIEWEE 3
But I was a bit daunted like whew. I felt adrenalin yes, and I basically had no time to stress because I had yard duty and all the year 7 parents were there and staff running everywhere, and talking
to people and then the bell went and I had to go to class.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I kind of didn’t have time to think about it or anything.

*LACHY* gets students in a circle and while playing a name game the HEAD OF JUNIOR SCHOOL walks in.

HEAD OF JUNIOR SCHOOL
That was fabulous Lachy. Those kids will remember that forever. You couldn’t have done anything better.

INTERVIEWEE 2
On that same day, period two I had year 10s.

INTERVIEWEE 3
My first year 10 class I remember I was running late for some reason already.

INTERVIEWEE 1
They were all waiting out the front and I was like...

LACHY
G’day! I’m your English teacher...

*Puts key in the door and can’t unlock the door. Tries every single one of the keys and still can’t get it to open. Goes next door to get another teacher’s keys and her keys don’t work... find someone who had a key for the room, unlock door and go in. Starts teaching...*

LACHY
OK, so we’re half way through the lesson, any questions?

STUDENT 1
Um, are you our teacher?

INTERVIEWEE 2
And funnily enough that class now is my most difficult class.

INTERVIEWEE 3
I really do attribute it to having a shaky start.

LACHY
All before recess!! It was pretty full on, pretty whirlwind.

This is the third scene dealing with the first day. The scene concludes by summing up not only Lachy’s experience, but also the emotions experienced
by many of the participants with regards to their first day as “pretty full on. Pretty whirlwind.” The stage direction concerning the keys, like all stage directions in the script, is derived from the interview data and represented in the performance through structured improvisation. The aestheticising of this particular moment serves to promote empathy for the character. The contextualised language speaks directly to an expert audience who understand all that an ‘extra’ entails, and what it means to be in a position where a limited understanding of the learned competencies of a teacher such as getting an unexpected extra or not having the correct keys can be deleterious.

Being given an extra period one on the first day of teaching demonstrates a disregard for this particular teacher. Having been a Daily Organiser in the past, I know doling out the dreaded extras is a difficult job. Careful consideration needs to be given to who is going to take each replacement class. In Victoria the VIT recommend 1yr teachers be exempt from extras in their first term of teaching as part of their induction period. Any experienced Daily Organiser would never have given Lachy this extra. However, it was revealed later that the Daily Organiser at Lachy’s school was new to the school. They had come from a career in architecture, and this was their first day on the job. Luckily for the Daily Organiser Lachy has strong core qualities that allowed him to remain calm and think clearly. However, the extra caused Lachy to be late for his period two class, where he met his “most difficult class”. One can’t help but wonder what an alternate scenario would reveal in this instance.

Lachy’s personal identity consists of characteristics developed through his ‘personal practices’, and the qualities developed through his personal practices shape, and are shaped by, his professional identity. He began his teaching career with a clear purpose: to “actually teach something”. This sense of purpose began to become clearer to him in his final year of teacher education. Lachy realised there was more to teaching than his three-week
blocks of practicum had indicated. He began to consider what the students were going to learn rather than simply making the experience enjoyable for the students. He described the change that took place as a result of his yoga practice.

Something’s changed with me in the last six to twelve months – I’m feeling very collected and centred at the moment, which is great. The whole point of my life at the moment is about finding that right balance – being calm, being centred and having purpose. I have taken up yoga and been doing it for a year now and probably the last six months I’ve got really serious about it, and I practice it pretty religiously. I really do feel like that is what’s really holding me up. It changed me a little bit. It’s not physical at all – it’s all about the mental changes that have come from it. [Last year on] rounds I would feel really stressed and wouldn’t sleep too well the night before [teaching]. I’m not worried by it that much at the moment, and I do put that down to yoga. I believe you can achieve so much if your brain is clear – you can achieve in one hour what it would take five hours feeling tired. (Lachy Interview 2)

Lachy’s core qualities of being calm, centred, and having a purpose, and his ability to reflect on his core qualities, have shaped his identity as a teacher. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) following from work at the turn of the century on peoples’ character strengths, and positive psychology (for example Tickle 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000) align these previous discussions with their notion of core qualities and core reflection, and their relation to teaching competencies. Core qualities are always potentially present – the distinction between qualities and competencies is that qualities come from the inside, while competencies are acquired from the outside (Korthagen 2004). Kim and Green (2011) further this discussion focusing on the importance of core reflection in regards to teachers bringing together all aspects of their ‘potential’ to the moments that define them as teachers and as human beings. They suggest the idea behind core reflection is teachers’ awareness of their core qualities, including their identities and ‘mission’, and this awareness determines to a great degree how they will answer the questions, ‘Who am I, and how do I reflect who I am?’ Kim and Green suggest this is a critical point of intersection in the process of exploring one’s ‘inner landscape’ as a teacher: ‘the point where one’s identity as a human
being intersects with one’s professional development and where one’s identity as a teacher educator emerges from one’s identity as a person’ (Ibid p. 110). Lachy’s core qualities enabled him to reflect on the reasons why he attributed his difficulties experienced with the keys to the lack of engagement of his most difficult class. The event came back to him as pregnant with meaning in light of his future experiences.

Knowing how to tap into core qualities (such as courage, caring, and perseverance) is crucial to overcoming internal obstacles and limitations, such as limiting beliefs or limiting behavioral patterns (Kim & Greene 2011). Lachy recalled a few instances where he reflected on his core qualities in relation to the attributions others proposed with regard to his prospective teaching practice. One was the last lecture of his degree consisting of a video of a 1yr teacher talking about her experiences, and Lachy described it as:

the most negative thing, she was like “It’s so hard and I’m up until midnight every single night and I’m barely keeping my head above water” and [the lecture] didn’t end on a positive. I remember there was a murmuring in the lecture theatre – oh great, thanks a lot! That’s a good thing to go out on! (Lachy Interview 1)

This incident provoked Lachy to approach his teaching with a positive attitude. Korthagen (2004) states that it is vital teachers are emotionally in touch with their core qualities, so they can make conscious decisions to utilise those core qualities, and then carry out those decisions. There was another instance during his first term where Lachy again reflected on how his positive attitude and goal setting could assist in countering others’ notions of how difficult the 1yr of teaching, and teaching in general, is for so many teachers. Lachy’s school provided an in-service Professional Development (PD) for beginning teachers, focusing on the first six weeks of teaching.

She spoke about how if you ‘lose’ a class, that’s it for the year. And your life’s going to be hell for the year! And I was saying this to my mentor and she was like “you can lose them, definitely, but you can get them back on board.” I had this horrible feeling of I think I’ve lost them – the class with the keys – but I always thought I could get them
back. And now, four weeks later I feel like I’ve really achieved that. Now I’ve got everyone back on side. I’ve brought it back. I just feel like going up to that PD lady and saying you shouldn’t give this advice to graduates because it’s horrible. (Lachy Interview 2)

Lachy identified limiting factors as believing other teachers’ negative attitudes and attributions toward his difficult class, and believing teaching myths such as the ones described earlier and others such as the survival terminology discussed in the literature review. Lachy made a conscious decision to not believe the ‘hype’, and in doing so allowed himself to reflect and to become aware of the fact that he had a choice whether or not to allow these limiting factors to determine his behaviour. In Lachy’s school there are a number of older staff – “tired and cranky” as Lachy describes them, who could have had an impact on Lachy’s ideals. He described a light bulb moment he had when discussing the amount of time teachers should put into planning.

I spent three periods putting together a PPT for my year 8 class and I was really excited to do it, and when I did it, it took me 40 minutes. And someone said to me you should never plan for something longer than it’s going to take to teach. But now I’ve had a total mental shift – I’m like no, you should put so much time into something little, and if it’s good and then you can share it with the other staff, and it can be used in following years. Otherwise if you follow that rule, you’re just going to have all these pieces of crap resources floating around that people have just whipped up. (Lachy Interview 3)

In consideration of the shifts in his practice I discussed Lachy’s Wordles with him, and asked him what was missing, or would be apparent later in the school year if we did another Wordle. Unlike many other participants his response was not immediately concerned with teaching, but rather it was a discussion of foundations for him to be able to function as a teacher.

I think ‘health’, ‘exercise’ that kind of thing – it’s become a lot more important to me. As I’ve gone through teaching I’ve realised – you look around at all the old, fat teachers, and unhappy people, and it’s just like – “no, I’ve got to take care of myself”…so something that’s conscious of the body, and the health of it, is important to me. For me personally it is important, for numerous reasons…it’s very low energy work, so it is a little bit sedentary. Everyone’s always sitting, everyone’s always slouching, slumping. Everyone’s drained but not from doing anything physically hard, so it’s interesting. You give so
much of yourself every day, in every class. It’s like a performance, or like being on stage. It’s very energy draining…it’s full on. (Lachy Interview 3)

In order to function as a teacher Lachy said is was important for him to maintain enthusiasm for his work. He described this further during the Word Task where he identified Professional Learning as one aspect that had a great impact on his identity.

I mean the job is professional learning, what I’m doing is professional learning, so yeah. This isn’t, for me, professional development. Professional learning, yeah, definitely, and that’s every day. I learn something new every period. So that’s shaped me. Just learning – that’s massive. And I’m feeling really good, I feel like next year – how many things will change just based on this year? That’s big – a big impact. (Lachy Interview 3)

Lachy also practices goal setting in order to maintain his professional practice. He discussed one instance in an interview before he began teaching.

I think it’s all about what sort of mindset you put yourself in to be completely honest. I think I’m not going to let myself … I set myself a goal not to complain. Time wasted complaining is time you can do what you’re supposed to do anyway. (Lachy Interview 2)

Lachy discussed another goal setting instance in an interview conducted late in term three, where his goal for that term was achieved.

I’ve actually had the best term teaching. It’s been a powerful term. I’m just feeling good. I’m starting to feel more on top of it. I set myself a goal at the end of term two for this to be a good term. (Lachy Interview 3)

Lachy’s personal practices, reflection on core identity, and goal setting, have enabled him to understand himself as a teacher. He has achieved this by refusing to conform to the more negative aspects of the profession he has experienced in his observations and interactions with others. His experiences here are shared by Lara, who also attempted to resist conforming to the social norms as demonstrated by her colleagues.
TEACHER 1
OK, so that’s the first 2 weeks planned. Any other questions? OK.

LARA
Leaves, while the TEACHERS stay gossiping

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Are you all right down there Lara?

LARA
I don’t feel part of the team.

INTERVIEWEE 3
I’m super uncomfortable because all they do it bitch about people at the school and I don’t join in, and sit there not talking to anyone feeling uncomfortable, because I don’t know these people!

INTERVIEWEE 1
They haven’t done anything wrong to me, and I don’t want to join in with gossiping about things that happened in the past because they didn’t affect me.

INTERVIEWEE 2
And all the people they’re talking about have seemed really nice, so that’s one of the hardest things – I’m actually on the outer because I don’t join in. The other prep teachers are very anal, very OCD and I didn’t want to be like that.

TEACHERS, miming teaching their classes, dialogue is spoken simultaneously in a calm yet mechanical tone

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Get your lunchbox out of your bag and have some brain food.

LARA
to her students
OK, get your lunchbox out of your bag and have some brain food ...and then come back…

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Put your lunchbox in your bag.

LARA
put your lunchbox in your bag...

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Put your bag away and sit at the table quietly.

LARA
and, quick, put your bag away and come and sit quietly.

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Get your lunchbox out of your bag and have a snack.

LARA
OK, go get your lunchbox out of your bag and have a snack...

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Put your lunchbox in your bag.

LARA
put your lunchbox in your bag.

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Get your lunchbox out of your bag and have some lunch.

LARA
OK, lunch time. Go get your lunchbox...

TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3
Put your lunchbox in your bag.

LARA
put your lunchbox in your bag...STOP! Just leave your lunch box on your desk […]

INTERVIEWEE 1
Because it’s open plan I’m always looking into the other room and going

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Oh her kids are more organised and know what they’re doing’
INTERVIEWEE 2
and when she lets them in after recess her kids are in two perfect rows,

INTERVIEWEE 3
and we’ve got a tub that they put their drink bottles in so at lunchtime they go up to their tub and get their drink,

INTERVIEWEE 1
so her kids are in 2 perfect lines and they’ve already taken their drink bottle out of the tub, and I’m like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘these kids just know what to do!’

INTERVIEWEE 2
And I thought my kids are so bad they’re not doing that. I’m not doing things right.

INTERVIEWEE 3
And I think it’s starting to get better just naturally. It’s not me nagging them all the time, and I’m like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Oh, maybe I didn’t need to worry so much?’

INTERVIEWEE 1
And that’s like the littlest thing – it doesn’t have anything to do with teaching, it’s like a daily thing that happens. But it’s something that’s actually made me realise something – I’ve had an epiphany about lunch boxes!

Lara’s scene is crafted to highlight how differently she perceived herself from her more experienced colleagues. The monotone delivery of the Teachers’ dialogue accompanied with synchronised and stylised movement contrast

Illustration 6. Synchronised movement
with Lara’s more naturalistic portrayal. This scene is also designed to encourage the audience to empathise with Lara, to put themselves in her situation, and for the audience to recall their own similar experiences of the frustrations of feeling as though having to be like other teachers. In all the performances we have presented to date, the lunchbox section of this scene has struck a chord with many audience members. We feel for Lara as she leaves the meeting, while the characters remain to gossip. She is excluded by their conversation, and also excludes herself saying she doesn’t want to be “like that”. Yet Lara still tries to emulate their actions, without really considering why, until she finds this doesn’t work for her. Initially she believes she is “not doing things right”, because her students are not responding to her the way the other prep students respond to their teachers. When Lara states “it’s starting to get better naturally…” she comes to the realisation that she needs to be herself in order to develop an effective learning environment through a natural rapport with her students. Through Lara’s experience we see how important it is for her to understand ways of being a teacher, particularly through her interactions and affiliations with colleagues.

What stands out the most across Lara’s series of interviews is her relationship with the other staff and her references to fitting in and finding her place, and therefore her identity, within her school. In the beginning she felt as though she had nothing to offer.

The school I was at on rounds, I felt like I had so much more to offer. The teachers were over 40 [years of age]. When I went in there I showed them websites that I’d found, activities that I was doing and they were like “Oh, I want a student teacher!” That made me feel really good because it made me feel like I was adding something to the school. But at this school all the prep teachers plan everything together, they do all the same lessons, and I feel like everything is very much pre-planned. So I’m like “Do I have anything to bring here?” (Lara Interview 1)

Lara’s identity during her last practicum was initially formed partly in relation to the role she played with the older teachers. Therefore, when she found herself working with different types of (in this instance younger)
teachers she had to change again, both in order to maintain her uniqueness and because her identity as an expert had altered. A different aspect of her identity appears in a different time and place. Allen (2009, p. 651) describes this as a ‘situational identity’, where beginning teachers come to understand the school environment and begin to establish identities in relation to the immediate context through their interactions. Rather than feeling as though she fit in with the prep teachers at her new school Lara was disappointed that she felt she had nothing to offer. It appears that Lara links feelings of competence with being able to be unique. She needs to have her own, different role in order to feel useful.

Sometimes you think about who you’d like to become like, but at the same time I think I’m really different to [the other prep teachers]. I like to incorporate music and dance into my classes whereas Josie has hers sitting at their desks quietly. (Lara Interview 2)

Based on her professional experiences Lara’s identity began to form in comparison to the other teachers she was working with. She viewed herself as a young and therefore energetic, up-to-date, technology-savvy teacher. These are some of the traits graduates value as unique to them, making them feel as though they are able to offer something to their workplace, despite being less experienced in other areas of their practice. As recognised in the literature there is a wealth of research on the difficulties encountered in the transition to beginning teaching. However, little appears to have been discussed in relation to what schools value in graduate teachers, and as a result, what graduate teachers value about their identity in this particular beginning period.

In my own work as a teacher through discussions I held with experienced teachers and principals reveal that the benefits of employing graduate teachers include:

- cost – they are relatively cheaper to employ than experienced teachers;
• enthusiasm – they are generally more enthusiastic than experienced teachers, and do not yet have their own families to care for, so they’re able to take on more co- and extra-curricular activities;
• modern – they are up-to-date with the latest education initiatives and technology;
• youth – younger graduates can balance out the average age of an aging staff population, and;
• assisting with staffing – graduates are often provided with incentives to work in hard-to-staff schools.

Similar benefits are supported in the findings by Liu (2005); Hogarth et al. (2007); and Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011).

Many of the participants’ report they were told during their teacher education, and subsequently came to believe, that they have specific skills and qualities, making them desirable in the education workforce. Some of these are similar to those listed above. In addition, graduates (particularly younger graduates such as Lara) view themselves as:

• better able to relate to students than older teachers;
• willing to be flexible in undertaking employment outside their area/s of specialisation – such as secondary teachers working outside their method areas, or primary teachers taking on specialist classes, and;
• idealistic – they see themselves as not yet ‘worn down’ by years of teaching and related bureaucracy that they perceive as coming with extended periods of time in the profession.

After being offered her job Lara spent some time in planning meetings with the other prep teachers before starting teaching. Lara’s relationship with the staff in her team and within the school had a large impact on the transformation of her identity. During these weeks at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 she described encountering some situations that made her feel less confident about her ability, and her place in the school.
I still don’t feel quite like a part of the school yet because I’m sitting in on the team meeting and they’re all there with their MacBooks and I’m sitting there with nothing, and they all have their edumail open and all this kind of stuff and I just thought “Wow, I just don’t feel like a teacher at all.” (Lara Interview 1)

When she began teaching Lara looked to the other experienced teachers and saw how ordered their classes were. Because the classrooms were open plan – essentially four classrooms in an L shape with the walls removed, so she and her students could see the other teachers and their classes – Lara attempted to create a similar environment to those adjacent to her by embodying the practices of the other teachers in the hope that both she, and her students, would appear the same as the other teachers and students. Allen (2009, p. 653) found that beginning teachers re-create their roles on entry into the workforce through adopting the practice of peer and expert teachers. This occurs as they actively play a role in their development by endeavouring to make sense of their physical and social environment. However, Lara found it difficult to embody the sayings and doings of the other teachers and after a while she decided to stop trying and started thinking things through for herself and what worked best with her students.

One of the first things I’ve realised is to just chill out! That’s one of my big light bulb moments – you just have to go with the flow a little bit. What I’ve noticed is that my attitude or my mood really reflects in the kids. (Lara Interview 2)

Despite her attempt to create an individual identity for herself within the prep team, Lara was already perceived as one of the prep clique by other staff. There are a number of cliques within Lara’s school. Hardly anyone eats in the general staffroom for lunch. Teachers tend to socialise within their team and/or with teachers of a similar length of tenure. The other staff label the young prep teachers the “principal’s princesses”, while the younger staff label the older staff “dragons”.

They said “you’ll be labelled a princess – you’ll be labelled a grad”… the principal is in on it too. She has issues with people – implying and raising eyebrows at staff meetings. The grads are more ‘in’ with the principal. (Lara Interview 2)
The disparity between cliques caused some anxiety for Lara and she found herself making a conscious decision to try to remain neutral. “I’ve got a school full of politics, really bad – the worst I’ve ever seen. There’s a group of us and I get roped into it because I’m a graduate” (Lara Interview 2).

As the year progressed, Lara became more confident in being an individual within the prep team. Towards the end of the year she had gained the perspective to reflect on the transformations that had taken place with regard to her role, and her affiliations, within the school. She considered her role as a graduate in comparison to other graduate teachers in the school who seemed to have been doing more than she had, and who appeared to her to be losing their graduate label. However, she was still conscious of the perception other teachers from different cliques had of her.

I haven’t done a great deal on a whole school level to get my name out there yet. I’ve kind of been finding my feet this year. I’ve done bits and pieces, but on a whole school level I haven’t done lots and I think that when you start doing things like that you’re less of a graduate, because people think “Oh she can do something”, but I think I’d rather be looked at as someone they get along with. Because if you do too much then it’s like you’re making other people look bad and then they look upon you in a negative way. (Lara Interview 3)

Lara sees her professional identity as one beyond that of a teacher ‘role’. Her identity as a teacher is intrinsically linked to, and draws from, her personal identity. She has passion for the environment, particularly recycling, and instigated a sustainability program in the school for 2012. She has a determination to remain neutral, to judge others on their actions and interactions with her. These are principles that have been difficult for her to uphold in this particular context. Having the confidence to develop and maintain her own identity in a school where membership of a particular clique is valued and supported through the sayings and doings of other teachers has been a major part of Lara’s identity transformation. Her first realisation that she doesn’t have to be the same as other teachers led her to
begin to reflect, albeit tentatively, on how her understanding of role might shape her identity in the future.

You do realise you’re different. I’m learning to play guitar…so I’m hoping when I get a bit better I can start bringing my guitar in – I’m hoping that’s gonna be my ‘thing’. I’ve got a recycle bin I brought into the classroom because I like to recycle. I am a bit of a greenie. So it’s funny I have a bit of an identity now – sort of. (Lara Interview 2)

In the next scene we see how Amelia also experienced difficulties in forming an identity within her school, though unlike Lara’s story, Amelia’s occurs within an environment where her identity has undergone a shift from student to teacher.

**Amelia: vision**

AMELIA
There are still kids at the school that I went to school with in primary school, and this will be the last lot of them. So there’s still a little bit of familiarity that shouldn’t be there, it’s not separate enough yet.

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think that’s a little bit why – my brother’s friends are in the year I’m teaching and their friends come over to our house. I would like to be able to walk in with a clean slate.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I’ve got some year 10s which will be nice because I don’t know
them – that will be good. They need to know I’m serious for them to take me seriously.

in class

STUDENT 1
Did you know my brother?

AMELIA
Yes, we went to school together. We’re actually friends.

STUDENT 1
I told my brother about you and he wants you to know that he thinks you’re hot.

AMELIA
That’s inappropriate.

trying a bit not to laugh

INTERVIEWEE 2
But this then turned into – I then got an email from the brother that was inappropriate. And I went ‘Ugh!’

INTERVIEWEE 3
I need to look at answering… I’d like to say ‘Yeah, I knew your brother. I went to school with him’ I think that’s nice to be able to have that with the younger kids and I don’t think that’s crossing any boundaries.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I never did until this happened. And now I kind of go

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘What should I be saying?’

STUDENT 2
Amelia!

AMELIA
No!

INTERVIEWEE 2
I have to pull them up straight away, and that’s hard if they’ve known me a long time.

INTERVIEWEE 3
And I feel a bit bad because it makes them feel uncomfortable but I have to do it.

INTERVIEWEE 1
Then later on I go I’m really sorry I did that in front of everyone.

INTERVIEWEE 2
My Mum, she knows these kids, they’re the ones we’ve know forever, and they come to our house and they ask her

INTERVIEWEE 1 & 3
‘What should we do?’

INTERVIEWEE 2
Mum was in the car on the day before the first day back at school, with my brother and his best friend who I have in one of my classes, who I’ve known since he was really little, and he said

INTERVIEWEE 1
‘I’m really nervous about having her. What do I call her? Miss Razz?’

INTERVIEWEE 3
and Mum said

INTERVIEWEE 2
‘Yeah, you have to call her Miss Razz. She’s Amelia at home, but you need to be able to treat her as any of your other teachers at school.’

INTERVIEWEE 3
Mum gets that I need to establish that respect and that difference.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I think some of the staff still see me as a little bit like the student Amelia.

INTERVIEWEE 2
One of the people in my office who I’ve become friends with was my teacher in year 10 and he made a comment to me at the start of the year...

TEACHER
I don’t feel comfortable around you yet as a professional because I still know that you were a student... and I can’t let my guard down.

AMELIA
That’s really disappointing. I’m just another colleague now.

TEACHER
I know but I’m not comfortable with it yet. I’m sorry.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Later on I think he thought about it, ’cause I was really quite
offended, but then it wasn’t personal I don’t think, it was new, something that hadn’t happened yet, and I understand that.

INTERVIEWEE 1
It’s difficult for some of the teachers, but yeah, at the beginning I was quite hurt but now it’s fine.

INTERVIEWEE 2
And now he’s relaxed and realised nothing’s going to happen.

INTERVIEWEE 3
The teachers in the office are worried that if I tell my brothers things, students will know. But they don’t know that at home nothing is said ever, and I could trust those boys with anything, and I completely understand that that could be difficult for the other staff, but I think a little bit of it is me making sure that yes I am the teacher.

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
I don’t go home and play dobber.

PRINCIPAL
makes sign of the cross
Please don’t mess up, because I don’t hire graduates in year 12 positions.

AMELIA
Oh… great, thanks!

INTERVIEWEE 1
I’m not supposed to have a care group as a grad. That’s part of it, but when the house coordinators were doing their pick and choose and fight over people, the principal said

PRINCIPAL
it’s different with Amelia. She can have a care group.

INTERVIEWEE 2
It’s nice to know she has faith in me but she just forgets I’m a grad.

INTERVIEWEE 3
People keep saying to me ‘are you up every night planning?’ I’m always saying everything’s great and they say

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘You just wait.’

INTERVIEWEE 3
Marking… I still think marking’s fun! And they all just laugh at me.
The theme of Amelia’s experience emerges from the transfer of her role from student, to sessional staff member, to teacher, in the same school over a period of a number of years. The theme is exemplified in the performance through three key moments in Amelia’s early experiences as an in-service teacher. The first is her interaction with students, the second with a staff member, and the third with a member of the administration team. Amelia is caught between her vision of being treated as a ‘real’ teacher, and her vision of being recognised as a 1yr teacher. Her character’s physical progress across the stage from the student side to the teacher side symbolises the shift in her role from student to teacher in the school. In the revised version of the play this scene was edited to show only Amelia’s interaction with the students and the staff member. The section where the Interviewees refer to Amelia’s brother’s friend, and the section with the principal were edited, in order to focus more on Amelia’s desire to be recognised as a ‘real’ teacher despite her experience at the school as a student.

Amelia’s knowledge of the school was formed while she was a student. She therefore formed a vision of the kind of teacher she felt she needed to be when she began teaching at this school. ‘Teachers’ visions are substantial and concrete, vivid and powerful, and stable and consistent over time (though visions also do evolve)’ (Hammerness 2004, p. 34). Hammerness suggests these visions are often developed as a student and in Amelia’s case this is certainly so. She described both wanting to be like her past teachers, and disassociating herself from others she considered herself no longer like. In her role as teacher Amelia felt she had to actively create a stable and consistent teacher persona that assisted her to make distinctions between when she was a student and the teacher she is now. There were added difficulties here as Amelia was teaching students who had older siblings who went to school with her, and who she is still friends with, as well as having her younger brother still at the school. She was happy that he was not in her
class, though some of his friends were, and they were unsure as to how to interact with her in and outside of school.

In my own experience teaching in a number of secondary schools in Victoria it is sometimes common for ex-students to begin their teaching career at the school they attended as a student. It is my understanding that this also occurs in primary schools, though the time and age gap created between finishing secondary school and beginning teaching can be as short as four years, whereas it is up to ten years for primary school. Some schools encourage past students to return as teachers in order to perpetuate an established school culture. Victoria has a decentralised employment process for teachers where, even in government schools, applicants can apply directly to the school. This makes it easier for schools to employ teachers who ‘fit’. This is especially prevalent in Catholic schools such as Amelia’s.

There was no time gap between graduating from school and being employed by the school for Amelia in the transition from student to teacher. Upon completing her Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) she returned to the school as a sessional music teacher, assisting with choirs and performing arts activities, while undertaking her teacher education. She did not necessarily plan on teaching as a graduate at this school, but once the principal discovered she was applying for teaching jobs at the end of 2010 Amelia was offered a full time position, which included teaching senior psychology. The principal’s actions managed to create additional complications for Amelia. She was flattered that the principal expressed confidence in her as a teacher, but was also wary when teaching allotments were being discussed and it was indicated to her that her allotment would be different to other graduate teachers. The school administration usually did not give 1yr teachers a VCE class, a care group, or a full load. Amelia was given all these on the basis that she was different to other graduates based on her prior knowledge of the school.
The creation and maintenance, and sometimes the breaking, of a series of rules, shaped Amelia’s vision and identity. These were rules about how students can interact with her, sticking rigidly to the school’s code of conduct, her own rules about who she should associate with on staff, and the principal ‘breaking’ the rules about what graduate teachers can and cannot have in their teaching load. In the scene where the principal says “It’s different with Amelia” we see the normal rules for 1yr teachers are broken. At times Amelia wished she had begun her career at a school where she had no history, and no one knew her.

I don’t think it would have been as hard, because the kids would have come in with, you know, first day quietness – they don’t mess up yet because they don’t know what you’re going to be like. So I wouldn’t have had to lay down the law as quickly– it would have been a progressive learning. But here, they came in familiar even though I was a first year, so I didn’t get the luxury of the new blood. So I think I had to come in guns blazing. (Amelia Interview 2)

Amelia viewed it as being harder to teach in a school where there was familiarity, and as such employed a variety of means to create her vision of the kind of teacher she needed to be in this situation. Amelia mentioned dressing more professionally than other teachers, to help create her teacher persona. What she wears to school is very different to what she wears at home. She was also far stricter with the students than many of the other staff. She described her approach as “no crap-taking” with relation to students coming late to class, not handing in homework, and speaking over the teacher. Amelia consciously created a teacher persona that was over and above what she thought a teacher should be, in order to over-compensate for the previous associations she has with the school as a student. This conscious development of a teacher persona is different to the more gradual context-specific development of an understanding of their identity we have seen in the participants so far.

I’m very aware of having a teacher persona, but I think the way I represent myself – teachers know that – the kids say to them “Please can I leave early from class” and they’re like “You’ve got Miss Razz don’t you?” “Yeah and I can’t be late” So they know that I’m placing
myself as this no crap-taker, and you can’t be late to my class, and that’s what I wanted. And at home, if I’m telling stories, my family thinks I’m a bitch. But that’s fine – if that’s what the students think but they’re still working and they’re still enjoying my class then I’ve done what I wanted to. And if that’s coming across to the teachers that I’m a no-crap-taker, then that’s good too. That’s how I hoped to represent myself. (Amelia Interview 2)

In creating this quite rigid persona, Amelia believed she had developed respect from both students and staff. Perhaps in the early stages of the year this was true. However, later in the year it became apparent to her that some staff found her difficult to work with due to her hyper-organisation and strict rules. The psychology team in particular requested that she stop developing extensive course materials and taking on too much responsibility for planning. One team member left the school half way through the year, and was replaced by an external applicant. Amelia said she then began getting emails from this teacher’s students with questions, rather than the students asking their new teacher. She was rather proud of this, interpreting the students’ actions as their acknowledgement of her as a real teacher. And Amelia believed that she was assisting the new teacher in some way. She also acknowledged that she would feel denigrated if the roles were reversed. However, she did not see her actions as complicit in shaping the new teacher to not contributing to planning, or feeling a sense of belonging to the team.

Amelia is a self-confessed “control freak” and acknowledges that for her teaching is always about “work, work, work, work, work.” And yet she also acknowledged that other teachers, such as the performing arts staff she previously affiliated with “frazzle” her, saying they believe if you take a break for recess and lunch you’re lazy. She wanted to disassociate herself from that attitude by not spending as much time with them. In Interview 2 she repeats wanting to feel “grounded” implying that she sees the performing arts teachers as “flighty”. Like Lara, Amelia did not believe the way other teachers approached their practice would work for her, but unlike
Lara, she already had a clear, stable and consistent vision of how she would approach her 1yr of teaching at this school. Her vision was of a good teacher, and her primary concern was her students – particularly her VCE class. In her Wordles students, kids, and class/es loom much larger than other aspects of her practice such as teachers, and in the Word Task the words Students and Student Learning are at the top of her arrangement. Amelia’s experience, like the teacher in Hammerness’ study (Hammerness 2004), reveals the complex relationship between context – particularly in the context of being a past student – and her commitment to her vision as a good teacher.

Not all 1yr teachers would enter teaching with such a clear vision as Amelia did, or felt she needed to. As portrayed in Cassidy’s scene, creating or possessing a clear vision of one’s self as a teacher can lead to many heightened emotions, when the vision does not match the situation encountered.

*Cassidy: shifts in positioning*

CASSIDY
I’d just like to literally get my head around ‘you’re going to be teaching...’
INTERVIEWEE 2
I get anxious moments. You know? I’m dreaming about it too.

INTERVIEWEE 3
I’ve just got to go with the flow. I can’t do too much about it. It’s no use getting worked up and upset about it, so just go with it and hopefully there’s someone there to tell me what to do!

CASSIDY
We’ve got this new pod system. We’re moving into a new school and it’s all open learning, so everything’s supposedly open but I don’t know how it’s going to work because we’re in this learning community. We’ve got two classrooms with no doors and another big open space that used to be the dance room and that’s got floorboards and you can’t move the chairs because you scratch the floorboards, and I can’t keep my class quiet…

INTERVIEWEE 1
So that’s our ‘community’. We’re supposed to be open and flexible – with the timetable, with the teachers. I’m yet to see it happen!

in the classroom, another class is going on at the other end, there is additional noise of students’ chairs scraping on floorboards, students talking at the other end when CASSIDY’S end is quiet and vice versa

INTERVIEWEE 1
No one prepares you for those first few weeks. This is what they don’t tell you at uni! They neglect to tell you this part!

COLLEAGUE
So, how are you going?

CASSIDY
Um...actually...
starts crying, trying to hold back the tears
...bad idea. You should not have asked my how I was going.
goes ‘home’ to curl up on the couch and cry

MUM
No more crying. You go in tomorrow and speak to the principal, and tell her it’s not working and you need something done.

INTERVIEWEE 2
I think I would have had a breakdown no matter what. It was bound to happen at some stage. I think you need that to re-fresh, get that weight off your shoulders, all that stuff that’s been happening, so re-fresh and start again.
COLLEAGUE
Why did you leave early yesterday?

CASSIDY
I went home to cry.

COLLEAGUE
What? You can’t do that! You have to leave work at school and go home and that’s your own time! We need to go speak to the principal.

CASSIDY
to principal
I’m struggling and can’t be in that classroom, it’s too hard.

PRINCIPAL
Oh, we’ve had expert teachers who’ve found it hard!

CASSIDY
I just want them to be silent for silent reading, just for five minutes!

PRINCIPAL
They don’t have to be silent.

CASSIDY
I know that, but I’d like them to be. I don’t want them to be so rowdy they’re annoying the other classes. They’re going into this new space and they’re going to have to know how to work quietly. They need to learn how to be silent before they can be noisy.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Maybe I’m putting too high expectations on myself? We’re into day three and I was getting upset because I couldn’t control my class,

INTERVIEWEE 1
but also because I wasn’t getting the guidance. I haven’t been into a class and started it myself EVER. I’ve been in at the start of term, but never a year.

Cassidy’s “first breakdown” is situated within a number of discourses. Personally for Cassidy her breakdown belongs to the sink or swim survival discourse, and more broadly her experience of a different way of teaching belongs to the current discourse surrounding team teaching in flexible learning spaces. In both instances Cassidy felt unprepared by her teacher education. She tells us “no one prepares you...they neglect to tell you this
part!” Her words cause me to consider who ‘they’ are? She was speaking to me, her university lecturer, so was she implying that I was complicit in neglecting to fully inform her of the realities of teaching? She is also speaking about others who were a part of her teacher education in general, including her supervising teachers. In representing this dialogue in the performance the character of Cassidy is asking the audience, particularly those who are teacher educators, to consider the shifts in positioning of her experience in light of their own work with pre-service teachers. To put themselves in her place and remember what it can be like coming to terms with a new and confronting situation, without the knowledge and experience that allows us to see this as temporary.

The teacher-actors and members of the audience who had attended the dress rehearsal were all surprised by the audience reaction to Cassidy’s tearful scene in the premiere performance. The audience laughed. Prior to this we had all found this scene rather moving and could relate strongly to it. I wonder whether this was because the emotions expressed were a bit close to home – uncomfortable for some people to recognise themselves in Cassidy’s portrayal? Or perhaps the laughter was about remembering the youthful passion of caring so much?

Illustration 7. The presence of aesthetic form
The presence of aesthetic form in this scene where Cassidy is physically supported by the Interviewees serves to highlight the closing in on one’s self in order to seek comfort. In Cassidy’s interview she says she went home to curl up on the couch and cry. No one else was home. My image of Cassidy during this moment was represented in the scene by bringing all aspects of her ‘character’ together as one. It is a fleeting moment, interrupted when her mother enters. This aesthetic representation of Cassidy’s private world emphasises her isolation, vulnerability, and retreat, and is intended to promote empathy for the character. The Interviewees as her other ‘selves’ are with her in the moment, demonstrating Cassidy’s emotions through their facial expression and gesture. At this point in the play the Interviewees and the character are united in time and place, no longer looking back. The unity of the characters accentuates how a strong emotional response has a powerful impact on memory, where emotional events are likely to be recalled with clarity and detail. The Interviewees remain standing where they assisted Cassidy to “re-fresh and start again”. Their placement reminds the audience of the emotional experience that has led to Cassidy’s request for assistance. She takes control of a more tangible aspect of her practice in requesting a change of learning environment.

As identified in Part One: Literature Review, Britzman believes that ‘becoming’ is not limited just to what happens to teachers. She also takes into consideration what teachers make happen because of what happens to them. It is a time of rapid change in education in Australia. Technology and resources impact strongly on what teachers do day-to-day. Recently government primary and secondary schools have seen the introduction of flexible learning spaces across a multitude of schools as part of the Australian Government’s Building the Education Revolution (BER) program (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2011). Until the time Cassidy completed her secondary education in 2006 she had spent her school days mostly in a series of individual classrooms with one teacher to a group of approximately 20 students, moving from
room to room for each subject she undertook. Some of the older style classrooms had a podium at the front of the classroom near the black/whiteboard, where the teacher would deliver the lesson. The students sat at rows of desks mostly facing the front of the room, though sometimes students were allowed to move the desks into different formations. This is what Cassidy was used to, and her practicum experiences did little to alter her perception that this is what a teaching environment looked like. What it is to become a teacher has changed over the years and the discourse surrounding and penetrating teaching has transformed in response to a variety of factors. A teacher’s day is different today than it was as little as five years ago. What teachers do is strongly connected to who they become, and their identity is apparent in their curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment.

Situating the shaping of a teacher’s identity within the context of practice implies the necessity to be aware of the effects this context might have on the shifts and changes in a teacher’s identity. (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009, p. 184, see also; Canrinus et al. 2011; Mockler 2011). Therefore it is important to understand who teachers become in relation to what they do and where they do it. The enactment of their identity is situated within time and place.

Since 2006, in preparation for the new facilities at Cassidy’s school, students have been arranged in small learning communities. Cassidy came to the school at the start of 2011 with some understanding of the year 8 program, which includes a majority of students’ learning time being spent in a small learning community or Pod. It was explained to Cassidy that 100 students in each Pod work with teachers as a team to cover the Pod Learning Program. Each teacher had been chosen in order to ensure that there was expertise in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science and humanities in each Pod. Within each Pod, students are further grouped into a maximum of 25 students and Cassidy acts as the Learning Mentor for these students, taking primary responsibility for the individual learning program of each student in
the group. She is also the key person in relating to both parents and the other teachers who work with students in her group. Cassidy teaches interdisciplinary units in Maths, English, Science and Humanities – termed MESH by the school – plus skills sessions and specific Literacy and Numeracy sessions. All these aspects of her practice were completely alien to Cassidy based on her prior experiences, so the shift in positioning herself as a teacher was quite dramatic.

Cassidy’s teaching methods include English and dance. In preparing herself for the MESH program before she began teaching at the school Cassidy identified her English teaching background as the most influential. She had a clear picture of what it would be like teaching English based on her previous experiences, and as such believed she would know ‘how to be’ in the classroom. It is argued that teachers’ professional identity provides a framework for them to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work. As mentioned in the literature review, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (Sachs 2005, p. 15). Cassidy was unprepared for the rapid shift in her identity as a teacher in relation to the context of the school.

Cassidy’s frustration began when she received little contact from the school in relation to preparing for the first weeks of her teaching career with them. She was anxious about starting the year off with her students as she’d had no previous experience in this area of teaching, and expressed her anxiety of feeling underprepared through phrases such as “no one told/showed me...” in Interview 1 before she began teaching, and in Interview 2 during term one. For example:

   No one told me I’m going to have to enforce these rules every single minute for the next term.
   No one can show me what this team teaching is! Give me some expert teachers who can show me.
I wanted to go up to a classroom by myself and he was like ‘have you booked it?’ and I went ‘Ah have you shown me how to? (Cassidy Interview 2)

I feel these comments demonstrate Cassidy’s preconceived notion of what a teacher is. She views a teacher as someone who has all the information and transmits all that information to the learner, systematically and thoroughly. This is seen both in her experiences of herself as a learner and her preconceived notions of her role as a teacher. Her preconceptions were immediately challenged, resulting in an uncomfortable shift in her positioning as a teacher. She expresses her anxiety in terms of blaming others for not ‘teaching’ her. Perhaps she is indicating here that she expected to be prepared to be an expert upon entry into the profession? It was not until later in the year that Cassidy realised she needed to accept and even embrace the shift in her positioning in response to the new situation, to reevaluate her preconceptions of ‘how to be’ in this particular context. She initially felt she was justified in complaining about situations she felt were out of her control. She saw the challenges she faced as happening to her. Cassidy’s subsequent experiences demonstrate how she positions herself in relation to others through a form of micro-political induction (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin 1993), and how she positions herself in a time of educational reform (Cohen 2008). This was particularly evident in her discussion in relation to her teaching spaces throughout the beginning of the year.

The physical environment, while problematic, was not wholly the cause of Cassidy’s anxiety. It was more the transition shock she experienced in relation to her expectations as a teacher. The reality of the (temporary) learning community was far different to what Cassidy believed it would be.

At the moment we have two classrooms with no doors but they have walls and another big open space, and then there’s a corridor with two classes and I think four classrooms down there. So they gave me the open space – the floorboard end – great! So that’s our community – four teachers and we’re mentors to 25 students and we’re supposed to be open and flexible. (Cassidy Interview 2)
Initially, the main difficulty she encountered was that there was another teacher and group of students in the same space as her class. This caused her to feel compelled to keep her class quiet in deference to the other group, though this was not reciprocated.

At the start of the first day I was like “I can’t hear a thing” – I can’t get my class quiet because there’s the other classroom in there. I have 25 kids. I think mine’s the biggest class, and I just couldn’t do anything in it – it was just “No – I can’t do this!” (Cassidy Interview 2)

This highlights how important understanding and being able to work within the situation – in this case physical space/resources – is for teachers in today’s schools, and how our rapidly evolving world impacts on what teachers do and who they become. Later in the year when Cassidy had moved to the new space her understanding of the shifts that took place as a result of the change in physical and emotional environment of the school were more apparent.

[U]sing this space because, it is all about our space now and the environment we get the kids to work in. Compared to your own classroom – it’s a very big thing now (Cassidy Interview 3)

The learning community and Pod system, and the impact of colleagues, were influential in the transformation of Cassidy’s teacher identity. The emotion brought to the context, and generated by the context, affected Cassidy’s identity (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009, p. 184). Concepts such as changing landscapes (Clandinin, Downey & Huber 2009), borderland discourse (Alsup 2006), the ‘in-betweeness’ of becoming a teacher (Sinner 2010) and liminality in beginning teaching (Pierce 2007) all attempt to get at the heart of the feelings encountered in understanding the transformative nature of teacher identity. They allow us to feel the awkwardness related to understanding an identity that is not fixed; that is constantly changing in response to the context in which the identity is trans/formed. So while Cassidy expressed her anxiety through a discussion of the situational factors she felt were impacting on her ability to function well as a teacher, it was essentially the awkward experiences of transformation in her positioning that created the greatest amount of anxiety.
In our rapidly changing school environments teachers’ identity is constantly reforming in order to adapt to current developments. Teachers working in an ever-changing environment need to be flexible and adaptable. I noticed a difference in Cassidy’s disposition when I visited her at her school in term three. The students and staff had moved into the new building, coinciding with Cassidy’s family moving into their newly built house. All Cassidy’s anxiety was gone. She was very calm, despite what I perceived as chaos going on around us; with many classes, students walking in and out of the room, waving at her and calling out to her, furniture being delivered to the foyer and so on. She told me that she hadn’t cried for a term, despite a few confrontations with some staff members in determining the workload in the new space. She put this newfound centeredness down to feeling more physically settled. Having moved away from the scene of her discomfort at the old campus assisted greatly in giving her the freedom to adjust to the learning environment. She had a far more flexible approach to her practice by this stage, preferring to spend her planning time assisting other teachers and the students in the flexible learning space.

I’m a bit more relaxed and settled and actually have started to feel like a teacher. And I know that I can take a lead role down at our end when we have the three classes, and they all listen, so I do feel more like a teacher now. A lot more settled. (Cassidy Interview 3)

It is worth mentioning here that Cassidy’s home life underwent a similar transformation to her school life simultaneously. Her initial anxiety at work was compounded by her move from living in a country town with her family in eastern Victoria to the other side of the bay, living in a rental property while her family were building a new home, and having a much smaller support network than what she was used to. The feeling of being settled played a major role in Cassidy’s ability to be flexible in her approach to her teaching.

I think moving house and moving [to the new campus] at the same time. That made a big difference. I’ve got a few friends, playing Netball...going out of a weekend. I’ve gone from having nothing on and no friends to getting out, and I think that’s just confidence,
having been settled. I’m actually really happy having moved down here. (Cassidy Interview 3)

Now, twelve months on, and half way through her two year contract, Cassidy has been able to shift her focus more onto her learners. In her final interview when we were discussing the Wordles I asked Cassidy what she thought was missing in her practice earlier in the year? She responded with:

Getting to know the students, students getting to know me, and each other, feeling more settled, more confident. I think I am a lot more settled now and I think that comes with being in this space, that you do have a lot more support and there’s a different mix of kids and they have settled each other. (Cassidy Interview 3)

Feeling more settled has allowed her to develop a deeper understanding of the priorities of the school, one that supports a whole school commitment to literacy and numeracy. Cassidy has always had a passion for helping others enjoy mathematics and now that she is feeling more settled, has enrolled in a mathematics teaching course to develop deeper knowledge in order to assist with the numeracy focus of the learning community. She can now see her way clear to how she can position herself in the future. Feeling settled is an important moment in beginning teaching as it can allow the teacher to let go of feelings of liminality. Richard felt settled after an anticipated event had occurred. His rite of passage served as a form of initiation, which led to acceptance of him by his colleagues.
Richard: rites of passage

in the staff room
PE TEACHER
Isaac told me to fuck off today.

RICHARD
Yes! It wasn’t me!!

2 days later
RICHARD
Isaac told me to fuck off today.

STAFF 1
Oh, that sucks.

STAFF 2
It was only a matter of time.

STAFF 3
With a kid like him you’re gonna get that. You can’t control that.

PE TEACHER
Welcome to the club!

This scene marks the half-way point in the performance, and is the only scene with no dialogue from the Interviewees. Aesthetically it is deliberately short to heighten the sense of repetition/motif, and to encourage the presence of an ambiguous quality where the audience fills in the gaps in the reconstruction of the virtual world. The audience initially sees Richard separated from the larger group and is encouraged to question why. Later
the group of teachers accepts him, and the audience is encouraged to consider the conditions under which this acceptance takes place. The contrast between the seriousness of the events and Richard’s delighted feelings at both moments informs the audience of his desire to fit in. He is pleased that he is not the first teacher that year who encountered swearing from Isaac, yet he is also pleased when it happens to him two days later, as it allows him to feel welcomed.

Right from our first interview Richard began talking about this particular student – Isaac – who he had been warned about when he was offered his job. The principal discussed with Richard Isaac’s learning difficulties, low ability level, and limited interpersonal skills. Richard reported the principal’s words as: “I want to give you this job, but I’ve got to tell you about this kid in the class, he’s a right little shit basically…” Later when Richard attended a staff meeting before the beginning of the school year another staff member announced “Richard’s got grade 6, oh – hello!” and the teacher that had taught Isaac the previous year said to Richard “I’m going to have a good chat with you about him”. Richard was prepared to experience a range of difficulties in his interaction with this particular student, but until it happened he perceived the other staff did not yet view him as fully initiated. There was a perception among the staff at Richard’s school that shared experiences of difficulties with students indicate an understanding of what it is to be a teacher at that school.

From the beginning, before Richard began teaching, his affiliations and interactions with other staff revolved around this one particular student. Beginning teachers seek signals from their colleagues about, among other things, how to interact with students, and who to look toward for expert guidance. Whether the beginning teacher can count on these colleagues depends largely on the prevailing norms and patterns of interaction that exist within the school (Kardos et al. 2001).
The principal said to us [graduate teachers] something like “don’t take too much notice of the scuttlebutt in the staffroom – some of the teachers have been here too long – you guys – it’s a good place to start, but I’d expect you guys after 4, 5, 6 years and you get the opportunity to move on, move on.” (Richard Interview 3) Prior to that he taught at a high-achieving school for 14 years. Richard feels the principal was indicating that the current school was a good place to start as a teacher, but in terms of career development it would be beneficial to move to a less disadvantaged school. The principal also indicated through his comment that the staff were not to be relied on too much for any type of informal induction into the school culture. I believe this was in an effort to change the existing school culture, rather than to denigrate the staff. However, this type of comment demonstrates how new teachers can come to form alliances within a sub-culture of the school, and how this can create tensions in developing an identity within this particular professional culture.

Professional culture is the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevail among colleagues, and each school has a professional culture that influences new teachers’ induction into that school (Kardos et al. 2001). Richard’s school could be considered a tough school. Many students have lower than average literacy and numeracy skills with a high number of students considered disadvantaged in terms of family structure and language. Richard describes the school as one where:

you get kids who don’t come to school, don’t come with lunch, all those different kinds of things, it is slightly low SES [socio-economic status], Sudanese kids. But when we looked at all the [NAPLAN] data, essentially we’re middle. I think in terms of the cohort we’re better off than similar schools. Some of the issues, you’ve got some kids take up a lot of your time. It’s probably similar to most schools, but you tend to focus on the negatives…I’ve got those two or three kids that I know are going to cause me grief, rather than the other 12 or 13 kids – you just forget about them because I can trust [them] to do their work. (Richard Interview 3)
Professionals indicate that daily interaction with colleagues helps form a socially constructed image of themselves. This interaction also increases their allegiance to the profession (Daley 2002). The “scuttlebutt” in the staffroom has continued to shape Richard’s identity through his affiliations and interactions with other staff, mostly in discussing difficult students. This may explain why Richard finds it difficult to talk to me about himself as a teacher. Instead he tells stories of what his students get up to – usually horror stories – perhaps designed to represent himself as a teacher who has begun to experience the rites of passage that grant him acceptance by the staff at this school. This suggests that Richard’s perception of a teacher is someone who has done it tough, and survived.

As mentioned in the literature review, survival terminology is employed by beginning teachers to describe their struggle to understand their role as a teacher early in their career. Cherubini (2009) links this survival terminology to beginning teachers’ emerging identities in understanding the school culture. Experienced teachers often believe that they have paid their dues and that new teachers must do the same. They may view surviving the first few years of teaching as a badge of honour, and that beginning teachers need to undergo similar experiences in order to be accepted into the school’s culture (Renard 2003, pp. 63-4). In regard to Richard’s induction the school’s culture falls between what Kardos et al (2001; Kardos 2005) describe as a ‘veteran-oriented culture’ and an ‘integrated professional culture’. The support is there from the principal, yet there is still a sense that until Richard has the same experiences as the veterans he is still viewed as ‘different’. It was therefore with a sense of pride that Richard relayed his first to me; not so much in the sense that he was told by Isaac to fuck off, but that this event resulted in his acceptance by the staff as someone who has experienced and survived the initiation this school’s culture values.

Richard’s experiences allowed him to understand what it entails to be a teacher at this school. These learned capacities are developed through
interactions and affiliations with more experienced, and in this instance entrenched, staff. Sari’s experiences develop on the one depicted in Richard’s scene, where confrontations with students are linked to interactions and affiliations with staff. Sari’s scene also echoes aspects of Lara’s, where the difficulties in being like, and not wanting to be like, team members shape the development of her learned capacities and competencies.

**Sari: embodiment of learned capacities and competencies**

SARI
I can remember my first confrontation with a student… not bad, just...

STUDENT 1
*walks out of the classroom*

SARI
Right, what are you doing?!

STUDENT 1
I’m going to the toilet Miss.

SARI
You need to ask me to leave before you leave the classroom.
STUDENT 1
Oh...well...Miss...

INTERVIEWEE 2
I think I could have handled it better, but maybe I think it was me letting them get away with too much – names and stuff.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Sometimes I’ll just be yelling, especially with that trouble class and it’s my ambition to get them really working well.

INTERVIEWEE 1
But if there’s a kid – they don’t usually walk around – but if there’s a kid up and you’re like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘What are you doing up?’

INTERVIEWEE 2
or there’ll be smart-ass comments.

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think because I let some of the smart-ass comments slide at the start, that now I just have to knuckle down.

SARI
To INTERVIEWEE
I never send the boys out into another classroom or anything, like they’re my responsibility. And some of the other teachers will send them out, and you can hear them talking “She doesn’t need to send them out” but they’re like “Sari if you need to do this you just send them out to us...” But I feel like I need to sort it out myself, and if I need to send them out to another teacher, I feel like I will lose authority – do you know what I mean? Because I’m sending them out?

SARI
To STUDENTS
Alright, gentlemen...

STUDENTS
mimicking / making fun of her
Gentlemen!

SARI
Alright guys you’ve got to show me some respect!

INTERVIEWEE 1
And I wasn’t pulling that up at the start.
INTERVIEWEE 2
The kind of teacher I’m trying to develop into...

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think the biggest thing is trying to get the ground of teacher and friend, and I know they’re not your friends.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I think I’ve started off a bit too laid back and easy going. That’s what I’m working on at the moment. Getting the full authority.

STUDENT 2
Shut up Miss!

SARI
Alright, leave the room.

outside classroom
Why were you being that disrespectful? Do you say this to all your teachers?

STUDENT 2
Miss I was joking. I was joking!

SARI
If I call your mum and tell her you said "Shut up Miss" to me what would she say?

STUDENT 2
Oh she’d know I was joking...

INTERVIEWEE 2
Mum would be really cracking it!

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think it was important because it was the first time it happened, and from that incident I was better prepared for the other episodes.

INTERVIEWEE 1
It might not have been the best way to talk to him, but I always now...

STUDENT 3
to another student
Oh you faggot

SARI
RIGHT, come into my office!
in office with the student
OK what did you do wrong then?
STUDENT 3
I didn’t do anything wrong! I don’t know what I did?

SARI
Alright do I need to ask you again, or do you want me to tell you?

STUDENT 3
OK I know what I did. I called him a faggot.

SARI
Did you know that is actually illegal? To do that in a classroom, or in your workplace you could be fired, be suspended, for doing something like this?

STUDENT 3
I’m really sorry Miss. I didn’t mean it like that.

INTERVIEWEE 2
Yeah, to shape how I speak to the boys, and to make them actually see it as their own thing they’ve done wrong.

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
I don’t know if I’ve done it right?

INTERVIEWEE 1
I don’t really give detentions; I’m pretty bad at that. Just because –

INTERVIEWEE 2
I don’t know why I do that?

INTERVIEWEE 3
Maybe that’s something I need to work on, but there’s just so much other stuff to think about.

INTERVIEWEE 1
The only thing I’ve done and this was really bad, I was so pissed off about it and I took it home and was like upset, was

INTERVIEWEE 2
I missed one of my science classes!

INTERVIEWEE 3
The timetable changes every week.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I didn’t come into my class and here the boys –

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
all of the teachers said they’ve done it –
INTERVIEWEE 2
but one of the boys should have come and got me,

INTERVIEWEE 3
but they were silent the whole time and no one even realised that there was no one in the classroom,

INTERVIEWEE 1
and then the boys said they’d come to see me at my desk, and they,

INTERVIEWEE 2
oh, they hadn’t because I was sitting at my desk the whole time.

INTERVIEWEE 3
And I was just like devastated.

SARI
Boys why didn’t you come and get me?! Guys as leaders you need to be able to stand up and say...

STUDENTS 1 & 4
They didn’t want us to go Miss!

SARI
Alright guys, I know it was my fault, but you guys it was your fault too. It was your responsibility as well to come and get me.

STUDENT 4
*aggressively*
How can you blame this on us Miss?

SARI
Right, leave the room.

STUDENT 4
*leaving the room*
Yeah but Miss...

SARI
*outside the classroom*
You can’t speak to me like that in front of the class.

STUDENT 4
But Miss it wasn’t our fault that you didn’t come to our class.

SARI
I am accepting the responsibility that it was my fault and it was partly your fault. If you can’t see that, that’s fine but don’t embarrass me in front of the rest of the class like this.
STUDENT 4
Starts crying

INTERVIEWEE 1
I think now I’m a lot more –

INTERVIEWEE 2
I feel like I’m a lot more confident now, like in telling students –

INTERVIEWEE 3
I think at the start there’s things like when you’re walking down the corridor you wouldn’t pick the students up for, like uniform, and you’re like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘I won’t pick these fights.’

INTERVIEWEE 2
But now as you get a lot more confident, get to know all the students, you’ve got the confidence to tell people off a little bit more.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Yeah, definitely more confident. Just being more assertive.

In this scene the character speaks directly to herself – the Interviewees – as she searches for answers to her conundrum. Sari finds it difficult to be like her more experienced colleagues because she is still inexperienced. She appreciates their offers of support, but does not want to be talked about in a derogatory manner if she does need to send a student into another class. She makes the decision to take responsibility for her class herself, and we see four situations where Sari learns to deal with student misbehavior. The first instance demonstrates Sari’s hesitancy in telling the student off. The second instance shows how Sari lacks the skill to tell the student off for their misbehavior, and the two remaining instances demonstrate how Sari learns to develop the competence, or as she describes it the “confidence”, to tell the students off. The escalation situations couples with Sari’s increased confidence and calm approach demonstrates how Sari’s experiences with both students and staff shape who she is being and becoming in this context.
In aspiring to be like the other staff she begins to embody the learned capacities and competencies required of a teacher in this time and place.

Sari perceived herself as fortunate in gaining employment at the school she undertook her final practicum. She had already developed a relationship with some of the students and staff, and knew about the school. Sari spent some time discussing with me what she had learnt during her practicum about teaching boys, and classroom management of boys in particular. During her practicum she was conscious that she was not having any classroom management ‘issues’ and wondered whether that was because of her own management or the established procedures and positive environment created by the mentor teachers. She indicated she was looking forward to having her own class to see whether her experiences would differ once the security of the supervising teacher was removed. According to Lave and Wenger ‘[m]oving towards full participation in practice involves...an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner’ (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 111). Sari described her experience of in-service teaching as positive, relishing the opportunity to try things her own way and see how they go.

When you are in the classroom by yourself with the boys – it was pretty big, but then I thought this is so much easier without a supervising teacher in here, because you don’t feel any pressure and then you can quickly see if you’re doing the right thing or the wrong thing and reflect on it after class. (Sari Interview 2)

When predicting how she might deal with students’ challenging behaviour Sari recognised that she could, and was encouraged to, ask for assistance from other teachers in the year 9 team. She was hesitant to use this strategy as she saw this as potentially losing authority – among both colleagues and students. Already she was thinking about how to create a teacher persona in relation to what was deemed acceptable among the staff, knowing that this would be important for her as a young teacher, as a female teacher, and as a teacher of boys. As demonstrated in Sari’s scene when some teachers request assistance from other team members, or send students into other
teachers’ classes they are talked about behind their backs. So while Sari knew the support was there for her, and the team’s expectations were different for her than the more experienced teachers, she still wanted to be seen as the same as the more experienced, competent teachers. Cherubini discusses the awkwardness beginning teachers experience when wanting to be seen as the same as the other teachers, while recognising that they are still learning. He says beginning teachers’ initial experience in the classroom combined with having to become accustomed to a professional culture is framed as ‘a daunting challenge to both their idealism and their self image’ (Cherubini 2009, p. 91). Sari believed her authority was determined by her ability to be the same as the other teachers. Yet she recognised in the beginning weeks of her 1yr of teaching that her capacity for possessing authority similar to the other teachers was deficient. She knew she was not following through with detentions and was letting the students get away with too many little things. At the time she recognised the importance of a consistent approach to behaviour management. However, it took another couple of terms for her to develop the confidence to actually implement more effective strategies. Her confidence developed through the experiences of a scaffolded introduction to dealing with students’ inappropriate behaviour. The gradual embodiment of her learned competencies also lead to a realisation that in accepting assistance from other teachers in her team she was the same as everyone else.

In her beginning weeks of teaching Sari’s first confrontation with a student, (which in the scheme of things was not particularly challenging) provided her with an opportunity to reflect on and learn from her experience. We can see the development in her language when dealing with the subsequent students behaving inappropriately in her class during these weeks. As the incidents escalated Sari’s confidence in her ability to deal with them increased. Rather than just telling the student off she questioned them, bringing in aspects of restorative practices, and made the situation relevant to society, allowing students to think critically about the implications of their
actions. These were strategies modeled by other teachers in the team. Sari’s desire was to develop the students’ leadership skills, independent thinking, and team work through constructing positive relationships with her students, in order to improve students’ behaviour that would enhance their learning.

Becoming more like other teachers in a particular context can be likened to Allen’s (2009, p. 649) discussion of ‘role taking’. The process of role taking involves individuals seeing themselves as others might see them and regulating their behaviour accordingly. Framed within Mead’s (1934) concept that individuals construct their reality in social contexts through communication and role taking, Allen discusses how experiencing role taking can assist beginning teachers to develop a sense of professional identity; where teachers reflect on their practice – in this case on classroom management – recognising the influence their private thoughts have on their actions. Sari not only viewed herself through the eyes of her colleagues, but also through those of her students. This was particularly evident when she forgot to turn up to class. In her discussion with the students she acknowledged she had done the wrong thing. Seeing herself as her students see her allowed her to reflect on how she developed her teacher identity in regards to the fine balance between being their teacher and being friendly. She mentioned sometimes finding it difficult to keep a straight face when telling off a student, and that the students can see when this happens. She understood it was important for her to retain as much of her personal identity in her teacher identity, so the ability to have a laugh was important. However, it demonstrated that she was still limited in her capacity to demonstrate authority in some situations. Sari’s reflection on her confrontations allowed her to understand and begin to embody the kind of teacher she wanted to develop into. She wanted the students to see her as a mentor, having authority like the other teachers in her team while also maintaining a friendly and supportive demeanor. She is still considering whether this is the type of identity she is comfortable with, in this particular school.
Sari demonstrates the embodiment of learned competencies and capacities through a process which Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 111) describe as where an ‘apprentice’s contributions to ongoing activity gain value in practice – a value which increases as the apprentice becomes more adept...legitimate participation of a peripheral kind provides an immediate ground for self-evaluation’. To enhance her classroom management Sari attended a classroom management PD that focused on positive reinforcement. She had learnt this theory during her pre-service education, but stated before beginning her 1yr of in-service teaching “I’ve never really had any problems with behaviour management in the class, but I don’t know, maybe it will happen when I’m by myself” (Sari Interview 1). Having the theory made more real by relating it to her current circumstances meant she implemented positive reinforcement strategies immediately, and noticed an immediate difference in the behaviour of her students. “…just noticing – saying “great work” and some of the others get their books and start reading and it’s so much easier” (Sari Interview 2).

Through becoming like the other teachers Sari has refined her classroom management strategies, which she now sees as more consistent with other staff in her teaching team. Her understanding of her role as a teacher is becoming clearer, and she is able to consolidate her philosophical approach to her teaching with her actual practice. Her first confrontation acted as a catalyst for reflecting on the development of her confidence and the embodiment of her resulting practice. Beth also described the embodied aspects of her practice as she felt herself ‘becoming’ a teacher.
Beth: ‘becoming’ a teacher

BETH
I sometimes still get scared.

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
I don’t know what I’m doing.

INTERVIEWEE 3
And I’m pretty sure I will even when I have a class on my own I’ll be like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘I don’t know what I’m doing!’

INTERVIEWEE 1
The other day I was like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘This is going to be so hard! What am I doing?’

INTERVIEWEE 2
Then like a few days before that I was like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Yeah, I’m going to do this and this’

INTERVIEWEE 3
Imagining myself in the classroom – just make it fun.

INTERVIEWEE 1
So I’ve been thinking about that – what I’m going to do with them to keep them enthused.

INTERVIEWEE 2
I’m excited to have brand new year 7s, like straight out of primary school. They’ll be so little and cute, ‘pinch your cheeks!’

*BETH gets students into pairs*

BETH
Off you go!

*She lets them go, and things get out of hand. Students start pushing each other around and knocking each other to the floor and one kid nearly smacks his head on a box.*

BETH
Your behaviour is inappropriate! You cannot do that now!

INTERVIEWEE 3
Because they are so horrible all the time I feel like I have to be over-strict because if you give them the slightest thing they go mental!

BETH
*The next day...finishing writing instructions on the board as STUDENTS come in to the room*

STUDENT 1
Is this what we’re doing today?

BETH
Yes, this is what we’re doing today.

STUDENT 1
Cool.

STUDENTS
*reading from board, settling down, the 'class' continues during...*

BETH
My housemate has just started 1st year teacher ed and had to draw the kind of teacher he wants to be,

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
and I’m not the kind of teacher I would have drawn.

INTERVIEWEE 2
And then I got a little bit sad. Because, well I’ve always thought of myself as sort of on their level, jokes with them, kind of relaxed,
but I feel like, especially the year 7s they don’t have that maturity level to do that, so I have to be like this matriarchal authoritarian figure up the front.

INTERVIEWEE 3
We still joke around and it’s not a horrible class, and I’m not one of those hard-ass straight down the line teachers, but I’m not as chill-axed as I thought I would have been.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I was a little bit sad, because I was like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Oh I’m such a teacher.’

INTERVIEWEE 2
I suppose someone who’s sensible, because I’m quite a frivolous, crazy person!

INTERVIEWEE 3
But in class that is absolutely toned down.

INTERVIEWEE manipulates BETH into ‘the teacher’ – dress, face, props etc.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I get into my teacher costume,

INTERVIEWEE 2
and put on my teacher face,

INTERVIEWEE 3
and go to my teaching show!

INTERVIEWEE 1
I think it’s sad that I’m –

INTERVIEWEE 2
not sad, that’s not the right word –

INTERVIEWEE 3
I’d like to be that fun teacher, but on the other hand I’m not upset that I’m not.

INTERVIEWEE 1
I think what I’ve got going works so there’s elements of... I let things slip and I choose my battles, I’m not completely laissez-faire. I don’t want shambles.

INTERVIEWEE 2
I think what I wanted to be like is I really do think it’s unrealistic. I really don’t think that you can have – sounds really wanky but –

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘valuable learning experiences’

INTERVIEWEE 3
while being on their level because a lot of them I don’t think are mature enough to have that sort of base to build from.

INTERVIEWEE 1
If I’ve learnt anything I think they need structure and I probably need structure in my life too!

BETH
Which is hard to instill structure when you have none!

Laughs

Beth’s scene is constructed to enhance the contrast between her predictions of the kind of teacher she thought she would be, and the kind of teacher she felt herself becoming, particularly in relation to the students. This scene draws on data from two different interviews – one before Beth began teaching and one after. The moment of transition between the two is ambiguous, depicted almost imperceptibly through the change between the mime sequence and Beth’s dialogue in sending the students off to rehearse. We then see the strategies Beth employed in ‘becoming’ a teacher, such as writing explicit instructions on the board and taking on the character of teacher through costume, props and facial expression.

Illustration 8. Beth putting on her teacher face
The division of the Interviewee characters into three voices heightens the way Beth described in her interviews her awkward, yet revelatory, liminal feelings of transition from who she thought she would be to who she is becoming.

Beth is a secondary teacher and her methods are English and drama. Drama is her passion and an inherent aspect of her personality. She is vibrant, she gesticulates enormously when she’s talking, and she always tells an entertaining story in order to make her point. My interviews with her are peppered with fits of giggles. I found it difficult to capture the tone of her responses in writing when I was transcribing the interviews and resorted to using emoticons, excessive use of exclamation marks, and abbreviations such as LOL in order to capture the dramatic nature of the discussions.

Drama is at the centre of Beth’s practice and her professional identity. She sees teaching as a performance, and her teacher persona as a character. Sawyer (2011) discusses the benefits and pitfalls of describing teaching as a performance. While the metaphor can be a helpful one in describing the public and unpredictable nature of teaching in a classroom, it can fall short of describing teacher expertise – making teaching seem like an innate, intuitive ability that does not stand up to deep analysis; as well as implying that teaching is a form of public speaking rather than as the scaffolding of students’ learning (p. 5). In this analysis I investigate Beth’s teacher identity development as ‘character creation’, drawing on some of the concepts of teaching as a performance, as well as theatrical notions of creating a character for performance, in order to understand how she sees her journey of ‘becoming’ a teacher. The analysis draws attention to both the benefits and pitfalls Beth encountered in the transformation of her teacher identity.

Character creation in theatrical terms is a method, informed by the framework the actor is working within, employed to develop an understanding of a character for performance. It often involves physical and
vocal workshops to improvise and refine the expressive skills of voice, gesture and movement. During character development an actor will consider how the character interacts with other characters within the context of the play. Beth created her ideal teacher character primarily on an outward-in model, preparing a façade through costume, props and an ‘ideal’ script. When she turned her focus to the foundations of her character such as the ‘actual’ script and the other characters, her character underwent a transformation more relevant to the context.

Before she began her 1yr of teaching Beth formed an ideal picture of herself as a teacher. This was partially based on her relationship with her influential drama teacher while she was at secondary school, where the relationship between teacher and student appeared to her to be casual, adult and therefore fun. She imagined herself as the kind of teacher who would be called Beth, as opposed to Miss Emerald, by her students, and where ‘fun’ was the main objective of the class – for the students and for her. She saw herself as having fun with the students, and pictured that as this fun teacher she would be able to give the students a stimulus at the beginning of class and they would be inspired to create and play together. It was important for Beth to clearly visualise herself as a teacher, and in the classroom, in order to allay her anxieties regarding her ability as a teacher. At times she felt confident about her ability, and at other times she felt like she wasn’t experienced enough. She developed her character consciously through her voice, dialogue, costume, and props, in order to imagine herself in her teacher role. In essence she created a teacher character for herself based on an ideal script to perform. In the early weeks of term one Beth began to feel as though her character was in a different script to the one she imagined. This actual script represents the realities of the school context, often in contrast to Beth’s imagined script.

DeZutter (2011, p. 42) contends that if new teachers understand the value of improvisational teaching to student learning, they are more likely to plan for
improvisation instead of planning a script. Beth imagined her students as either young adults, or cute year 7 students fresh out of primary school. She had a romantic image of what her students and classes were going to be like, as well as herself as a teacher. After a few days she realised that her year 7s were not so cute. The realisation that they were not yet teenagers, and they couldn’t cope with the lack of structure in her classes had quite an impact on Beth. In those first few classes the students “went a bit crazy”, and after a few weeks Beth felt she needed to develop some class rules, particularly for the year 7 drama classes. When I met with her in term one her teacher diary was full of behaviour contracts that she had each student sign. At this stage she was making an attempt to change her ideal script by making the student characters fit in with her ideal teacher character. It was soon after that she came to realise it was her character that needed to change. She had a strong emotional attachment to her previous character and was obviously hesitant to let it go, as it provided some security in preparing to face the new situation, and she had formed this attachment to her teacher character over a number of years, which until beginning her 1yr of teaching, had remained unchallenged.

Beth’s introduction to her school began the year before her 1yr of teaching when she undertook a practicum there in the final stages of her education degree. The end of the 2010 school year consisted of many excursions and catching up activities where her role as a teacher was more like a supervisor. She experienced little in regards to planning and assessment and as a result of the limitations of her professional experience her ideal image of herself as a teacher remained. The students even said “you’re not a real teacher” to her on one occasion. When she began the 2011 year as a ‘real’ teacher her character began to transform. This was most evident to her in her interactions with the year 7 drama students. She noticed that these students needed her to be a different kind of character to the one she had created. She observed other ‘characters’ within the school for direction.
I’m going to be very cliquey and judgmental – the maths/science people. They always seem to be – I feel like it’s a personality thing – the people attracted to maths/science are the very organised, segmented, let’s do this…which is why, when I was thinking about what to do with these horrible drama boys, I decided it is because I don’t have enough structure in my classes. (Beth Interview 2)

By working within the actual script for inspiration Beth’s character began to transform in a way that allowed her to work within the school context. Interestingly she sought inspiration from characters she believed were the total opposite to her own, indicating that she believed some radical modification to her character was required. As a result, for her next class she went in early and wrote instructions on the board. The students responded positively and produced some authentic work that day. However, Beth remains sad at the loss of her ideal character. Looking back on her first few weeks of teaching in term one, Beth realised she had become more “matriarchal” in response to the students and their need for structure and routine. Sawyer (2011, p. 3) contends that teachers constantly improvise a balance between creativity and constraint. In the early stages of the year Beth seemed to have gone from one extreme to the other. It was later that she was able to find a balance between the two characters.

Beth experienced difficulties in creating a teacher character first, rather than in response to the script. One of the difficulties was she initially did not see the value of understanding who she was in relation to her work. Beth wanted to be a fun, relaxed teacher, who the students saw as on the same level as them. She held a perception of herself as a teacher who was creative, rather than a teacher who employs creative teaching, which Sawyer describes as ‘disciplined improvisation’ (2004, p. 13). She believed that by devising a teacher character as something created and perfected, her anxiety over feelings of being unprepared and inexperienced would be reduced. There are many views of identity development. Krueger (2007, p. 57) describes two opposing traditions. One sets up rigid structures that refuse to change because transformation is not possible. The other is flexible, open to
adaptation and possesses characteristics of openness and improvisation. Beth’s character creation fell in between these two traditions, initially in creating an identity that was an ideal, which she saw as fixed; then moving towards an understanding that her identity was more fluid, one that was responsive to the context in which she was working.

Some of the pitfalls of Beth’s development of her ideal teacher character became apparent in her earlier classes. Initially her character relied on the use of props such as her pencil case and teacher diary. She described how she found teaching classes the day she forgot her pencil case incredibly difficult. In this she recognised her heavy reliance on external and extraneous features of her character creation to support her through a variety of situations. Beth also placed herself, rather than the students’ learning, at the centre of her practice. Aristotle promoted the importance of plot over characters, arguing in his Poetics (trans. 1973) that drama is a representation, not of men, but of action and life. Once Beth developed a broader view of her practice with the students as the primary focus, she changed her character to suit the actual script the students were enacting. As a result of the variety of moments of becoming a teacher Beth could improvise between creativity and constraint more, and allow herself be a fun teacher while creating meaningful learning experiences. Beth described her identity transformation through being aware of her moments of becoming. These moments are rare in the day-to-day business of beginning teaching. Sandra describes this rare moment to reflect through the metaphor of an action movie.
INTERVIEWEE 1
*miming an action movie with slow motion flashback section*
In movies, I guess like action movies where all this stuff is happening and it’s like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
ACTION, ACTION, ACTION, ACTION,

INTERVIEWEE 2
and then it’s like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
flashback scene – ohhhhh –

INTERVIEWEE 3
and then you sort of have that moment to stop, reflect, and then it’s like

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
OH! Something’s happening again!

INTERVIEWEE 1
So you’ve got to go into action again.

INTERVIEWEE 2
Like every now and then there’s a pause and you’ve got your little moment to catch up and have a think and then
INTERVIEWEE 3
it’s just back into it.

This scene expands and abstracts the dialogue spoken by the Interviewees into movement. The movement is choreographed to a piece of music from an action-movie spoof, which plays on the convention of contrast between the fast-paced action and the slow-motion reflection. In this scene we see a group of Teacher characters, including Sandra, perform abstracted everyday teaching movements at a fast pace which contrast with “that moment to stop, reflect…” where the teacher-actors pause.

Illustration 9. Sandra’s reaching motif

A reaching motif was employed and developed in rehearsals to symbolise that moments of reflection are attempts to grasp meaning. The teacher-actors interpreted meaning as a combination of meaning of an event, meaningful practice, and meaningful reflection. The reaching appears difficult and the meaning remains just out of reach. Sandra’s final reach as she is supported – in this instance by her colleagues and a sense of self – suggests that with assistance she moves closer to grasping the meaning of events, practice, and reflection.

Throughout Sandra’s 1yr of teaching she experienced many moments of attempting to grasp meaning. Sandra is a secondary English teacher at a government school. Since the introduction of the Education (Self-Governing Schools) Act in 1998, numerous government schools have developed
specialist programs to combat the ‘one size fits all’ model of government schooling. As a result government schools running specialist programs receive additional funding and can select students on the basis of skill or potential in a particular field. Sandra’s school introduced three specialist programs – sport, arts, and maths/science, in 2008. Students wishing to participate in one of these programs must complete an application and interview/audition/exam. It is also understood that additional fees are paid for these students to participate in their selected program. Students are grouped into their specialist classes or homerooms and remain in these groups for their non-specialist classes in English, maths and personal development. Alongside these programs, Sandra’s school continues to run a mainstream program for students who are not part of a specialist program. In 2011 Sandra taught both English to both mainstream and sport program students in years 9 and 10.

In the early stages of the school year Sandra attempted to understand the meaning behind the contrast in behaviour and attitude between the mainstream students and the sport program students. She described the mainstream students as “troubled”. Their personal problems impacted on their ability to concentrate and to develop self esteem. She described these students as ones struggling with eating disorders, abuse, parental indifference, and having the propensity for violent behaviour. Engaging these students became a focus of Sandra’s practice. Their issues were heightened in comparison to the sport program students who appeared to be more engaged and motivated, and less challenging in terms of their behaviour. Sandra’s impression was the mainstream students saw their teachers as the enemy, and that these students would constantly push the boundaries to get a negative reaction from their teachers, giving them an excuse to give up.

It’s like they just want you to snap and go ‘I’m sick of you! You’re just going to become nothing and I hate you!’ And I just refused to let them have it, because they want an excuse to say ‘my teacher hated me or never had any faith in me’ so I’m always like whatever
happens don’t let it get to that point, so that’s my focus with that class. (Sandra Interview 2)

Sandra’s decision to focus on developing these students’ sense of self came when she was able to reflect on her teaching after the first few weeks of the school year. She found she had been focusing too much on what students were doing wrong, which created a negative atmosphere that was unsustainable. In the beginning weeks she described herself as “jumpy at the tiniest things” like at students swearing, turning up late to class, or yelling out in class.

At the start I was probably yelling at them too much because they were doing so much wrong, but then I was like I can’t keep that up because it’s ridiculous… and it was draining yelling all the time. I can’t tell people off that often! So now I’m relaxed about certain things, but then if they break any of our serious rules it’s like all hell comes lose. So I’m flexible with things that don’t offend me or the other students much. My three rules are: Be nice to Miss Spade. Be nice to each other. Be nice to the school. (Sandra Interview 3)

Sandra’s identity was shifting and changing in the early weeks and months of the school year, particularly in response to working with her mainstream students. However, it was her first realisation, upon reflection, of these changes that was an important moment of identity transformation for her. Reflection has been identified as an important and influential aspect of a teachers’ practice (for example Schön 1983; Russell 1989; Loughran 2002). In Sandra’s case she would love to spend more time reflecting on her practice. However, she feels so time poor that she rarely embraces the opportunity to reflect. Her initial concerns were those immediately apparent – the ‘frontstage’ aspects of her practice – such as the students, their engagement and behaviour, planning, teaching, marking, and administrative duties. The ‘backstage’ aspects of her practice – predominantly reflection – took second place for Sandra. When the opportunity to reflect presented itself, such as in our interviews, she was delighted, though she saw it as an indulgence, and something extra.
In their findings from the ‘Becoming a Teacher Project’ Hobson et al (2007, p. 20) discuss one of the teachers’ lows as feeling they did not have sufficient time to explore resources, observe other teachers’ lessons, discuss issues with colleagues or reflect on their own teaching. Lack of time, the emotional and physical demands of a new job, and illness, impacted on Sandra’s ability to commit to regular independent and collegial reflection. In addition it appeared that the other staff, while supportive, did not value reflection as an important aspect of their practice at this particular school. Sandra’s school is divided into two campuses, and the entire staff body only come together for a few meetings a year. In 2011 there were 30 new staff members across the two campuses. Sandra said this may have been one of the reasons she received little induction and mentoring support “I’m one of so many [new teachers] you barely get asked [how you’re going]. It’s a bit like every second teacher’s a new one” (Sandra Interview 2). Sandra’s assigned mentors – two part time teachers – spent little time with her in terms of addressing Sandra’s questions about behaviour management. This led Sandra to develop a relationship with some “adopted mentors” later in the year. In addition, during the first few weeks of the school year, the principals observed some of Sandra’s classes, as part of a strategy to check in with the new staff. Most of the feedback Sandra received from her adopted mentors and the principals was about how she appeared to be doing really well. Based only on observations rather than discussion and joint reflection, the meaning Sandra understood here was the notion that her actions were the most important aspects of her practice, rather than her thoughts and reflections.

Sandra certainly recognised the value of reflection, particularly in understanding these troubled students, though she would have liked to spend more time thinking about what she could do to help these students. She described her development as a teacher as “growing really quickly” and as a result she did not feel as though she had the time to reflect on this growth.
It’s a bit like now, if I sit there and think about how much I’m growing as a teacher, it’s like a lot, but so fast. It happened before I even noticed. I don’t have that time – like when you’re on teaching rounds and you do little things step by step. Now just everything happens and then someone might say to you “that’s like the first time you’ve done that – good for you” and you’re like “Oh yeah! It is true – isn’t that nice.” But I’m just too busy just getting the job done. I don’t have the time to reflect on it. (Sandra Interview 2)

Sandra describes the process of growing really quickly as an action movie. This was a defining moment in her teaching, as it was the first time she had the opportunity to reflect amid the frenetic activity, and this first indicated a shift in her identity. In developing this metaphor Sandra was able to describe the intangible feeling of making progress in, and giving meaning to, her practice. She referred back to it later in the year, saying it was still applicable, though she was getting better at making time for reflection. Metaphors in teaching can be useful for both the teacher and for the other whether that is a mentor, student, or researcher, where the listener interprets the metaphor in order to further understand the speaker. Beginning teachers use metaphors to integrate the past, present, and future to help them find cohesion within their lives. Furthermore, metaphors are powerful research tools to understand the individual teacher in terms of particular social contexts (Volkmann & Anderson 1998). Unlike Lachy’s metaphor of himself as a beginning teacher (the tractor), Sandra’s metaphor is of the meaning of her practice.

While developing the meaning of her practice Sandra realised that she needed to change her approach to the mainstream students. She began to consider what she could do to help them, rather than just reacting to how badly they were behaving. This shift took place in conjunction with some brief discussions she had with the year level coordinators, who reassured her this was a difficult group of students, and that she was beginning to do some valuable work with them. Receiving positive feedback from her colleagues allowed Sandra to feel as though the decisions she was making about her
practice had valuable meaning. This understanding came about thorough the chance to reflect on her practice in the light of others’ observations. She then began to focus more on giving positive feedback to her students. Sandra also drew meaning from a PD she attended where it was discussed that teachers “wear a mask”. This resonated well with Sandra as she found herself becoming a different kind of teacher with her mainstream students than she was with the sport program students. She recognised that her actions could have a lasting impact on these students and that she needed to remain positive, even when they were trying to get a rise out of her. She made a point of letting them know that she believed in their ability to succeed, and would tell them they were better than their behaviour and attitude indicated. Her mask allowed her to avoid taking the students’ affronts personally. She reflected on the meaning behind their comments and actions in order to better understand and engage these mainstream students.

Later in the year, during the Word Task, I asked Sandra to identify which words had the most impact on her practice, and her identity as a teacher. Her response indicated that the mainstream students were highest on her list.

I’d tend to lean towards – Students and Student Learning – it’s those relationships with the kids. If I didn’t – I wouldn’t come to school if I didn’t have that. That’s every day, trying to get them engaged. Every day that’s all I’m trying to do – do something interesting for them. (Sandra – interview 2)

It is important to note that once Sandra had the opportunity to reflect her practice and identity began to transform in relation to the context she was working in. Trying to reach towards an understanding of the meaning of particular students’ actions in different classes was one of the key aspects that Sandra identified as transforming her practice and identity at this particular school. Tash also sought an understanding of her practice in response to the actions of her students. She believed that the students’ misbehavior was a direct reflection on her teaching skills, and that as a
result of their naughty behaviour Tash was not ready to be a teacher. She turned to other staff that had similar positions and experiences to de-brief and feel ‘normal’.

**Tash: feeling ‘normal’**

TASH
The first time that I questioned whether I really wanted to be a teacher.

INTERVIEWEE 1
All my classes are good except for the days that I have sport and that’s only because –

INTERVIEWEE 2
I like sport –

INTERVIEWEE 3
but because we do sport outside, when the kids are outside in a big open space they go CRAZY.
*TASH sets out PE cones and STUDENTS are lifting the cones up and looking through them; going absolutely crazy and setting off a few of the others; all out of control, one’s running off in one direction, others running off in the other direction.*

INTERVIEWEE 1
I came away thinking that I’m not qualified enough. Maybe I’m not ready to do that?

INTERVIEWEE 2
I felt like I was a student teacher. As a student teacher you’re still a student and not a proper teacher yet, and I felt like I didn’t have the skills yet of a proper teacher to be able to handle that situation.

TASH
*after class to mentor and other teacher/s*
They were insane!

MENTOR
It’s the group of kids. Just wait until they get used to you, and they’ll start to calm down.

TASH
Were they like that with you?

TEACHER 1
OMYGOD yeah! [This kid and this kid...]

TASH
Yeah they’re the same ones I had giving me trouble.

INTERVIEWEE 3
So that started the conversation, and afterwards a couple of other teachers came into it and said

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Yep.’

INTERVIEWEE 1
And then their classroom teacher who sits with us said

INTERVIEWEE 1, 2 & 3
‘Oh no my kids are like that. You’ll get used to it.’

INTERVIEWEE 2
And believe it or not I’m starting to get used to it.

INTERVIEWEE 3
So we all found out we’re feeling the same way.

INTERVIEWEE 2
Now it’s funny because every week it’s become a

INTERVIEWEE 1 & 3
‘so how were they this week with you?’...

INTERVIEWEE 2
‘Oh they were like this...’

INTERVIEWEE 3
It’s become a weekly catch up session.

The aim of this scene was to portray through vernacular language and everyday actions how Tash’s understanding of herself as a teacher was challenged, and then how her colleagues supported her to feel ‘normal’. The action was shaped through Tash’s description of her first Physical Education (PE) class, which was perhaps slightly exaggerated, therefore so too were the actions of the Students on stage. The character of Tash says very little in the scene, but the teacher-actor portraying Tash employs effective facial expression to convey the feelings of dismay at not feeling “qualified”.

Illustration 10. The teacher-actor’s portrayal of dismay

There are two moments worthy of discussion that emerge from Tash questioning whether she is going to remain in teaching. These were feeling unqualified for the specialist role she undertook, and being reassured by other teachers in similar roles that what she was feeling was ‘normal’. The way Tash phrased her first here is not wholly indicative of what she was feeling at the time. She says “remain in the job” but further discussion indicated that it was her confidence in the role and her ability to be a teacher – the kind of teacher she thought she would be – that she was questioning. Initially when she was applying for teaching positions in
primary schools she had an image of herself as a ‘normal’ classroom teacher.

I was getting so excited about buying all activity books and going through all those worksheet books and I sort of thought “now I have to wait another year before I can do all that”. Everyone’s like “I’ve decorated my classroom” and I’m like “Oh, I don’t really have a classroom to decorate”. (Tash Interview 1)

Some of Tash’s lack of confidence came from being employed in a specialist teaching role. Promised that if she undertook this role for 12 months, she would have her own classroom the following year, Tash taught specialist PE, Information Technology (IT), art, and general classes for other teachers’ time release in her primary school. She felt reasonably confident in her ability to teach in these areas before she began. The main point of conversation at the time of Interview 1 centred around Tash’s frustration in having to explain her job to everyone. An example of the conversation would go like this:

Tash – I got a teaching job!
Other – What kind of teacher are you?
Tash – I’m a primary teacher.
Other – Oh, what grade have you got?
Tash – Actually, I don’t have my own grade. I teach all grades physical education, information technology, and art.
Other – Right, so more like a secondary teacher?

I could sense the frustration when Tash explained her role to me. It sounded rehearsed, as though she’d said it so many times and refined it to prevent any further questions. Tash was frustrated that she could not experience any of the rituals she was expecting such as setting up her room, and that many people did not fully understand her specialist role. This exacerbated her feelings of not being a ‘normal’ teacher.

Once in the job Tash experienced contrasting emotional states of inexperience and lack of confidence to some feelings of competence through the support of similar teachers at the school. In her second Wordle the word teacher looms large. Tash spoke often of the specialist teacher role she had, and the impact of this on her day-to-day planning and teaching. She still saw herself as “different to a proper classroom teacher”. Often when
discussing her role she would describe her job as “tough” and “bad”, referring many times to “next year when I have my own class” with the image that it will be easier to have her own grade rather than multiple classes across a variety of grades and subjects. While there are some more negative words apparent in the second Wordle, there are also a number of positive ones as well. This helps to demonstrate Tash’s in-between feelings during the early weeks of her 1yr of teaching. While she looked back at her first PE class as a disaster, and as the catalyst to make her think she was not ready to be a teacher, her experiences during those first weeks led to her feeling progressively more (as seen in her second Wordle in Appendix 3.11.1) confident, better, and OK. This has been common among all the participants in this study, though for Tash it was important to see herself as succeeding in this particular role in order to picture herself having her own grade in the following year, and prove to her employers and to herself that she was competent enough to progress.

Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) suggest that graduate recruitment is an exploration of current identity, in terms of ‘graduateness’, with a view to judging whether a person is capable of assuming a role in respect of practice, identity and performance. It therefore follows that graduate identity, of its very nature, is something that is malleable. Thus, it may be that the identity claimed by an individual is also one that is affirmed by others, as recognisable. Because Tash’s teacher role, and therefore her identity, was difficult for others to recognise Tash experienced identity conflicts (Alsup 2006). The tension between what she was expecting and had been led to believe about teaching through her teacher education was in stark contrast to what she ended up doing. It took a few months for Tash to realise that ‘teaching’ comes in many forms, and that she was indeed prepared to work as a specialist teacher because she was doing the same things, with the same students, as the classroom teachers. It was just difficult for Tash to recreate her image of herself as a teacher in the light of her role as a specialist. Tash found that expressing her feelings of frustration and
uncertainty in this unfamiliar teaching role allowed her to develop some affiliations with teachers who could help her by feeling accepted and ‘normal’. Knowing that there were other teachers familiar with the role of a specialist teacher to support her allowed Tash to understand and embrace the transformation of her identity.

In their report on employer and university engagement in the use and development of graduate level skills, Hogarth et al (2007, p. 36) identify traits that employers see graduates bringing to the profession. Some of these traits include flexibility, and bringing new ideas and energy. It could then be surmised that Tash’s employers wanted to see her demonstrate these traits before they committed to offering her a classroom position. Their decision to employ Tash as a specialist teacher in her 1yr had a deep impact on Tash’s sense of self in relation to her constructed notions of what it means to be a primary school teacher. Her employers could only assess Tash’s potential as a teacher – they were not able, in the main, to assess actual performance (Hinchliffe & Jolly 2011). Providing Tash with the opportunity to prove herself can be seen in both a positive and negative light. On the one hand it is important for schools to employ teachers who understand and are committed to the local context. An internship of sorts in this case allows both parties to reflect on the ‘fit’ of the teacher with the school. The more negative implications are ones of job insecurity and identity crisis for Tash. She was employed on a 6 month contract which she was assured would be rolled over, but she still had to see her job advertised. She had to formally apply for the position, and potentially compete with other applicants for the job. The same situation occurred at the end of the 2011 school year. As a result Tash had to apply for other jobs at these times in case she was unsuccessful in her applications. This caused some anxiety, particularly as these times coincided with report writing and completing her VIT application for full registration. Tash’s employers stated that a few other graduates had been employed in the past under similar circumstances and were currently employed as classroom teachers as a result. This was of some
comfort to Tash. However, it was also difficult for her to transform her idea of what a teacher is into her specialist role.

When I spoke to Tash later in the school year she noticed there were many negative words in the earlier Wordle (Appendix 3.11.1). When I asked her what kind of words we would see now she explained: “They’d be a lot more positive now. More words like now because I know what I’m doing now, and comfortable and enthusiastic and those sort of words.” At this time the head of PE was taking long service leave and Tash was stepping into the role of coordinator, which entailed the responsibility of hosting and running the inter-school athletics carnival. She was excited by the prospect of taking on a leadership role, and was very confident in her ability. During this time a casual replacement teacher (CRT) was employed to take over Tash’s other classes and this allowed Tash to reflect on her transformation throughout the year, by looking at the CRT as a version of herself at the beginning of the year.

Because I was a new person I thought there was such a focus on me, and being a graduate – “is she going to be a good one or a bad one?” Whereas now, because I’ve been here nearly 8 months, everyone knows what I’m like, this is who I am as a teacher, and I’m quite happy with that I don’t even think about it now. Whereas before it was the first things – I was the newbie and I thought all eyes would be on me, and all these teachers have had years of experience. Whereas now it’s not an issue. (Tash Interview 3)

There are also some more indications of the importance of ‘fit’ (Liu 2005), as discussed earlier Part One: Literature Review, between Tash as a graduate, and her school. In order for her to become a classroom teacher she first had to prove herself in a non-traditional role. Tash stated at the end of the year in Interview 3 that despite her initial frustrations she found that she had indeed proved herself, and had benefitted from her role as a specialist teacher. Sebastian’s statements regarding his perception of transformation and the gradual development of understanding his identity express many similar
feelings to those of Tash and the other participants, as they described their experiences throughout their 1yr.

**Sebastian: aporia – useful expression of doubt**

INTERVIEWEES and other actors representing the three ‘stages’ – SEBASTIAN physically representing the dialogue through movement and tableaux

INTERVIEWEE 1
At the start I was getting here at 6:30am and leaving at 6pm and then doing another two hours when I got home. I just realised you’ll crash and burn if you keep going like that. And it’s just gradual. I’m learning, I’m learning with the kids. It’s my first year; I’m not expected to know everything. I accept that. At the start probably really nervous, I was kind of a bit unsure. Like everything was going really smoothly but I was really doubting myself. It was really good but I just wasn’t sure about things. I was really energetic, even though I couldn’t sleep, but I was just buzzing the whole time, loving it, it was awesome, buzzing.

INTERVIEWEE 2
And then after that ended, I went through the phase where I was doing long hours and I hit the wall a bit – felt like I had no energy. And it just seemed a bit tough, like little things. I was really run down but I was relaxed at the same time. I wasn’t stressing about anything. I was doing long hours, I wanted to get a lot of stuff
...done, I wanted displays up, but it wasn’t stressful. I was really relaxed.

INTERVIEWEE 3
Now I feel like – probably feel more comfortable, more – I don’t know. But it just felt like there were three stages; like the excitement and the buzz, and the working out, and now like I’ve got through that section and I really feel probably settled for the first time. I’m not stressed. I feel more constructive. I’m a bit more switched on and working shorter hours and I just feel like I’m being more constructive with my time. Now it’s more like this is the path I want to take.

I chose this section of Sebastian’s final interview to be included in, and conclude, the performance as it sums up many of the experiences of the participants, while still personal to Sebastian. The teacher-actor’s movement serves as a reminder of the other participants’ experiences throughout the performance, and is presented as an amalgamated flashback. The teachers in the scene strike three positions symbolising the three ‘stages’ Sebastian describes as “crash and burn/excitement and buzz”, “hit the wall/working out”, and “more comfortable/settled”. These stages contain aporia – useful expression of doubt – where Sebastian grapples with notions of becoming a teacher. He expresses this through phrases such as “everything was going really smoothly but I was really doubting myself. It was really good but I just wasn’t sure about things” and “I was really run down but I was relaxed at the same time”. It was my deliberate choice to end the performance with Sebastian’s ‘path’ suggesting an ongoing journey and also a developing sense of autonomy, expressed by many of the participants.

Sebastian describes some emotional tensions in his identity transformation such as “smoothly but doubting myself”, “energetic even though I couldn’t sleep”, “working long hours, and I don’t even know what I was doing”, “run down but relaxed”, and “working shorter hours...being more constructive”. Romano, with Gibson (2006; Romano 2008), in their research into beginning teacher’s successes and struggles, describe teachers’ experiences through common categories, including peaks and troughs felt throughout the
year in regards to whether the categories were considered successes or struggles. Their research briefly mentions the combination of successes and struggles as ‘a constant battle between feeling confident in their teaching ability and ascertaining whether they were as effective as they could possibly be’ (Romano 2008, p. 72). It is interesting to consider this notion in light of Sebastian’s surprise at his feelings of success being held in tension with feelings of struggle as the catalyst for reflection. This surprise caused him to notice and reflect on his identity transformation more than when he viewed successes and struggles as separate categories.

Sebastian’s words in the scene explore his desire to move on from being a beginner. He says “it’s my first year, I’m not expected to know everything, I accept that”. The word “accept” indicated he was resigned to the fact. He does not say I ‘know’ that, or ‘understand’ or ‘recognise’ – accept is to take or admit. For Sebastian being a 1yr teacher appears to be an imposition, in some ways like a rookie year. He accepts that he needs to do the time in order to align himself with the elite. He also said he jokes with other more experienced teachers saying – “I’m a shit teacher but it’s OK because I’m a graduate – that’s my joke – I’m a graduate!” Trying to make a bit of a joke about being a 1yr teacher allows Sebastian to acknowledge his status, but also imply that this is not something that will define him for long.

Transitions from (and sometimes tensions between) youth to maturity recur as a theme throughout Sebastian’s experiences in his 1yr. These are also recognised in his transitions to becoming a professional such as moving away from being a punk, rough, jock to becoming a teacher.

I was a bit off the rails back then... I don’t want to go back there...obviously it’s not a great social look. I was a bit down on the world. (Sebastian Interview 3)

Sebastian is committed to enhancing his students’ achievement, and his professional development. He mentioned in the first interview he felt he needed to grow up, now that he’s “responsible” for a group of students.
I was doing Kangaroo Cricket – and that was probably one of the first times I’ve thought – yeah that was one of those first moments, because I was getting dropped off with 14 kids on an oval and there was no one else from the school – I was the only one responsible for them. We got dropped off at 9:30am and picked up at 2:15pm and I was the only one there with them. Even though I know I’m trustworthy I know some people would think who the hell would trust me with 14 kids!! (Sebastian Interview 2)

Sebastian aims to be a role model for his students, and models a healthy lifestyle and a passion for maths among others. Yet at times the deliberate boundaries he attempts to create between his teacher identity and his personal identity become blurred. His competitive sporting nature emerges when playing sport with his grade 6 students and he refuses to lose to them. At the swimming carnival he cheated so the staff team appeared to win in a race against the students, saying he’d rather lose by cheating than let the students win a race, as suggested by the assistant principal. He has been trying to find a balance between portraying himself as a fun teacher, and as a serious teacher, in order to develop positive relationships with the students.

Yeah, [the students] probably see me as fun. I’ll go out and shoot hoops with them or go out and probably take it a little bit seriously at times – I’ll bowl them out in cricket. Well not too serious – I’ll have a good time, but make sure I’ll let them know who’s boss. They like the challenge, when they hit a freak shot or smash it – one kid belted me back straight over my head in cricket – I made sure I bowled him out next ball! But I was trying to get him out the ball he belted me. So it’s good fun. (Sebastian Interview 2)

Sebastian’s tensions expressed through aporia speak of his feelings of liminality as he grapples to reconcile aspects of his core qualities with his teacher persona. He compares himself with high achieving colleagues, and sets goals to be like them, even though he realises that this is his 1yr and he is not expected to be an expert. Sebastian’s expressions of doubt are useful in allowing him to understand that he can have multiple identities at once.

That’s probably why I always get frustrated [with footy], I always compare myself to the elite as opposed to – yeah. It’s probably the same thing I’m doing with teaching. (Sebastian Interview 2)
In comparing himself with the elite Sebastian feels as though he is setting himself unrealistic expectations, which heighten his sense of liminality. Yet by expressing this tension between what he has set himself and what he experiences Sebastian’s doubt serves a reflective purpose. He seeks to find a balance in holding tension between his ideals and his actuality. This balance allows him to assess whether he is still striving for excellence when he feels himself becoming more complacent. Even in our interviews when Sebastian felt the conversation was becoming relaxed and casual, he would bring the topic back to something more professional or academic. He was the only participant who seemed to want to please his audience, often writing to me after an interview asking for feedback on his teaching practice. He requested that for one interview I come and meet his students, and see him interacting with them, in order to get feedback from me.

Getting feedback is an important aspect of Sebastian’s practice and his approach to understanding his identity. Through receiving feedback he is able to reconcile his own useful expressions of doubt with the opinions of others. Feedback comes not only from Sebastian’s colleagues but also his students and their parents. His students, and their parents, expect the classroom to look colourful and be a welcoming place. In their half-year student evaluations one student wrote of Sebastian “he was approachable”. This was something he had not considered, but saw as important to the students once it was pointed out. In his future practice Sebastian aimed to ensure he was always approachable.

Sebastian’s focus on reflection and improvement for the benefit of the students was also indicated in his Word Task (Appendix 3.12.2) where the students, and their learning, were indicated as of the most importance to him. At the end of Interview 1 Sebastian asked me how much time he should be spending preparing for school, saying “I don’t know if I should be doing it – like my friend is the complete opposite – she spends all her days laminating and making name tags and all that.” Sebastian looks to others,
then tries to make his own judgement about what approach he will take – whether he will emulate them or try something different. Being like other teachers worked for him in the early weeks of his 1yr, though later he needed to find his own way in order to feel more experienced. During Interview 3 Sebastian indicated a shift in his approach when he said:

I’d see someone that I wanted to be, but now I’ve realised that’s not the reality. I notice every time I try and teach like the teachers who have their week all perfectly planned – I feel I don’t have good weeks. And when I prepare the way I like to prepare and take it as it comes – like this morning, it’s better. (Sebastian Interview 3)

At the end of his 1yr of teaching Sebastian looked back with pride on his students’ achievements, and the development in his teaching practice. He had set himself a goal, stating in an email after Interview 2 “I’m really serious about becoming a brilliant teacher, and really raise their academic standards, whilst catering for all the rest”. He felt he had achieved this by the end of 2011, and was excited to be re-employed for 2012. It was during this time that Sebastian’s expressions of doubt began to resurface as perhaps less useful in regards to his teaching practice, though possibly useful to him in terms of working out whether he wanted to continue to be a teacher.

As discussed further in Part Five: Discussion, throughout 2012 Sebastian continued to express doubt over whether he wanted to identify with being a teacher. His second year provided a different set of challenges, which Sebastian thought he would not face once he had got through his 1yr. He began to question his identity as a male teacher in a female dominated profession, and was frustrated that his ‘tradie mates’ were earning more money than he was in their manual labour jobs. He was frustrated that teaching meant he was less involved in his football club, and often had to miss training because of school-related events. I believe that Sebastian felt teaching was not viewed as a masculine profession by his close and influential circle of friends, and this caused him to question whether calling himself a teacher was something he valued. Despite his words represented
in the performance that teaching is the “path I want to take” Sebastian’s expression of doubt are in a sense useful, causing him to question his commitment to being a teacher. I look back at Sebastian’s and the other participants’ experiences as represented in ‘The First Time’ in comparison to their descriptions of their more recent experiences of their employment conditions to find that many things have changed in a relatively short space of time. These experiences and conditions are discussed in Part Five: Conclusion.

**Summary of Part Four**

Part Four brings together the theatre-based research method within the phenomenographic paradigm to analyse the data of and by each individual participant. Each participant’s first as represented in the performance ‘The First Time’ highlights one aspect of each participant’s understanding of identity transformation. The analysis reveals discourses of power, such as feeling like a ‘real’ teacher or ‘just a grad’, and draws attention to the importance of interactions and affiliations in individual participant’s understanding of identity transformation. The analysis also brings to light the ways individuals understand being in a role, or aspiring to be..., and their embodiment of learned capacities and competencies as significant moments in the process of becoming a teacher. The individual themes identified in the analysis form the basis for the Discussion in Part Five, where categories of description derived from the analysis structure a further consideration of the experiences of 1yr teachers.
PART FIVE

Introduction to Part Five

The focus of Part Five is framed by the extra-individual features of 1yr teachers’ practice – namely how cultural-discursive, social, and material-economic contexts shape the identity of 1yr teachers individually and collectively. The Discussion chapter focuses on three main themes prompted by the participants’ responses to viewing the performance ‘The First Time’, and are supported by comments from other members of the expert audiences. These themes are the discourses surrounding 1yr teachers’ work and identity, 1yr teachers’ experiences of mentoring and induction captured through moments in time that reflect the nature of 1yr teaching, and the conditions of 1yr teachers’ work.

From the point of view of a beginning teacher, his or her practice draws on a particular history of personal experience. The shape of the beginning teacher’s practice is pre-structured and prefigured in discourses, in social relationships, and in material-economic arrangements. These more general structures of teaching impress themselves upon the particular structure of beginning teachers’ identity and capacities, and the way she or he performs the practice on this occasion (adapted from Kemmis 2010, pp 13-4). The Discussion recognises some shared experiences of 1yr teaching between the participants with reference to how they see themselves in relation to others, and how their own and others’ language, practices, and knowledge shapes the way these 1yr teachers come to understand who they are in relation to their work. While the Discussion focuses on the 1yr teacher participants, voices from other stakeholders such as members of the expert audiences are
incorporated to highlight the extra-individual features of 1yr teachers’ practice and identity.

Part Five concludes by revisiting the overarching research question through looking back at how the participants described their experiences of identity formation and transformation, and how their past and present descriptions and experiences continue to shape their professional identity. Recommendations for further research are proposed to investigate the impact of beginning teachers’ conditions of employment on their understanding of identity, and the use of ‘The First Time’ as a tool for stimulating discussion surrounding the work and identity of beginning teachers.
Discussion

The results in this discussion emerged from the structural relationships between meanings, in accordance with the phenomenographic paradigm. These results emerged after the performance of the data to an expert audience and consisted of looking for dimensions that could be identified as themes running through all transcripts. The results take the form of categories of description and the distribution of subjects over the categories. Responses from the expert audience provided additional indications of categories of description. The categories of description were then located within extra-individual features of practice, to consider ways these features of the participants’ practices prefigure identity. These extra-individual features of practice – cultural-discursive, social, and material-economic – are constituted in a dialectical relationship with each other and the individual features of practice (Kemmis 2009, p. 23).

Cultural-discursive features of 1yr teachers’ work and identity

This section of the chapter centres on three discourses identified from the data, of which the theory has been outlined in Part One. These discourses assist practitioners to understand their identity through language as a representational system learnt or acquired from others in interactions with the groups to which they belong (Gee 2000, p. 113). The first discussion concerns the survival discourse that has been historically formed and structured, particularly in the last thirty years, and has been preserved and maintained through teacher education practice and research, and teaching institutions. The hegemonic and liminal discourses emerge as culturally and discursively formed and structured through vernacular language from the teachers themselves.
“I couldn’t believe it, but after the play I actually felt really excited to teach the next day” (Lachy, email, 18th May 2012). Lachy mentioned early on in 2011 that one first was the moment he realised he loved teaching. This thread emerged throughout our discussions and continues in our communications to this day. As someone who has a great understanding of his motivations and the impact of events on his practice and life, Lachy often expresses surprise at how much he continues to enjoy all aspects of his teaching experiences in spite of the negative perceptions of others he believes have been ‘forced’ on him in his transition to teaching. The discourse surrounding the transition to teaching is, as identified in the literature review, still focused on many negative perceptions through a ‘sink or swim’ mentality. These discourses shape and are shaped by systemic attitudes preserved and maintained by 1yr teachers, their colleagues, and the wider teaching profession. Survival discourse has been helpful in preparing pre-service and 1yr teachers for the realities they may face. However, this discourse also assists to produce a structure of learned dispositions towards 1yr teaching. Sandra’s experiences as described in this section highlight how these learned dispositions are shaped. Sandra was left to her own devices in the early stages of her 1yr, as she appeared to be ‘swimming’. She was generally excited about her teaching, as noted by her students who called her “Happy Miss Spade”, and reported that unlike her 1yr colleagues she hadn’t cried at work. Sandra’s 1yr colleagues at her school who appeared to be ‘sinking’ – clearly demonstrating distress and anxiety, conforming to the survival identity of the 1yr teacher – received a form of positive reinforcement in increased attention, mentoring and assistance from colleagues and the school administration team. Within social processes, and through interactions constituting and constituted by social practices, 1yr teachers’ colleagues ‘apprentice’ new members via their attentions (Gee &
Teachers like Lachy and Sandra who appear competent report they often do not receive as much support from mentors and colleagues as the teachers who appear to be struggling. Lachy describes his 1yr colleague as “home every night, working until midnight, one, two in the morning”. He feels this led to her experiencing difficulties – being sick quite a lot and crying. When she comes into the staffroom at the end of the day she is often very emotional, which prompts others to provide support. This reactive type of support is like throwing a much-needed lifeline, yet it is not only the sinking teacher that requires such support.

Sandra felt as though the mentoring she received was inadequate, and was only given to those in distress.

Like last week this girl had a really hard time and she was getting this massive mentoring thing… everyone wanted to help her and it was like too much – let’s calm down. (Sandra Interview 2) She expressed her frustration that her mentors were spending time with other 1yr teachers before they would assist her.

I wasn’t like jealous or anything – I just found it strange. And [my mentors] helped the girl who was having problems as well – so why are they helping everyone but me? I’m asking for help and no one will help me. The vibe I give off has just been like I take everything in my stride and that I’m coping. I say I’m not going to cry or anything – like I’m OK with how things are going, but it doesn’t mean I don’t want to improve. (Sandra Interview 2)

From these accounts the process of mentoring seems inadequate. It is insufficient to wait until 1yr teachers are sinking before providing them with support. It would be more beneficial to provide support in order to address issues before they become disastrous. Yet these accounts also point to the way survival discourses are expressed as social norms with regard to 1yr teaching in particular, reproduced as cultural capital through the actions of mentors, and in turn shaping the way 1yr teachers express a need for assistance either explicitly or through their actions.

The 1yr teachers in this study also express what it means to sink or swim through metaphors. Cassidy describes sinking as a ‘roadblock’, and Lara as
“BAM you’re a teacher! I have to learn on my feet” (Lara Interview 2). Tash is more explicit, describing the process of trial and error as an important aspect of her teaching.

Things never go to plan or how you expect them to. You’re not prepared for that unless you’re actually physically dumped in there – sink or swim sort of thing – is it going to work or isn’t it?’ (Tash Interview 2)

These descriptions suggest that overcoming challenge is an important aspect of these teachers’ identities. They gain a sense of independence through experiencing challenge that is sudden but not wholly unexpected.

In learning to ‘swim’ Janet describes the experience hesitantly as “tiptoeing”, and Sandra more confidently as “forward movement”. There is a sustained quality to these descriptions that speaks of going with the flow in order to make progress. Other participants similarly suggested that at some point they felt as though in order to survive they needed to go along with the established cultures and norms of the school. Conversely Lachy describes making progress as:

like an earthquake, in that [my] development ... is fast tracking so much I feel so much more confident ... I made that same development plus more ... That’s how I feel. It is just going really fast ... so moving – perpetual motion – it’s gaining momentum – the boulder’s rolling down a hill and it’s feeling at this stage like not stopping, I feel just better and better at every stage. I like it more and more every day as well...with earthquakes I’m really into the idea of an exponential aspect, like a 7 is 1000 times more powerful that a 6. The development is not going on a [flat] line, it’s shooting right up – that’s how I feel. (Lachy Interview 2)

Lachy’s description has similarities to the suddenness of Janet’s and Lara’s above while the explosive aspect signifies progress as both sudden and unexpected in a positive light. Having survived, Lachy and Sebastian continue to develop. Sebastian describes this as:

another phase on my teaching journey. I feel like I’ve been here for a term now and it’s no longer about survival, it is time I really focus on lifting the academic standard of my students. (Sebastian Interview 2)

Many participants described similar feelings towards the end of their first months of teaching as the time when ‘real’ teaching can begin.
Liminal discourse: ‘real’ teacher

A real eye opener on the path I am now traveling. (Pre-service teacher)

Great to see something real and relevant and something I'm sure I'll remember next year when I'm in my own school as a grad! (Pre-service teacher)

In my work with pre-service teachers I have noticed how they develop their own culturally formed vernacular language to describe their status in relation to becoming a teacher. One word that is employed to describe their future teaching is ‘real’. For pre-service teachers during their degree this word is used in relation to their practicum experiences, denoting a distinction between these and the theoretical understandings developed in lectures and workshops. The pre-service teacher above mentions ‘real and relevant’, suggesting she values practical experiences over theoretical ones. While the practice-theory divide is an ongoing issue in regards to teacher education, the term real can also indicate how these teachers see themselves as being a pre-service teacher rather than becoming a teacher. This discourse indicates that at some point they believe they will be a teacher – a ‘real’ teacher. Some use the word real to indicate being fully qualified. Others use it to discuss teaching without a supervising teacher in the classroom, watching and assessing them. Most use the term to describe a teacher that establishes ownership of, and autonomy in relation to, their work. The development and use of this term in particular demonstrates the way some pre- and in-service teachers describe the formation and transformation of their identity.

The participants in this study undertook a final three-week practicum after their university coursework was completed. During the final practicum participants were required to take ‘full control’ for at least two weeks. This
practicum and the subsequent months prior to the end of January when their teaching officially began marked a period of transition that included many moments of liminality. During Interview 1 before the participants had begun their 1yr of teaching, we discussed aspects of real teaching and feeling like a real teacher. As discussed in Part Three: Interviews I deliberately employed the term real to encourage discussion about how the participants were experiencing identity transformation. The discussion below focuses on participants’ notions of what is was to feel like a real teacher within the liminal period encompassing the final stages of teacher education and their 1yr of in-service teaching.

Liminal discourses such as feeling like a real teacher emerged for many participants during their final practicum. It was during this period they began to consider what a real teacher was, and how they felt about becoming a real teacher. During her final practicum a student said to Beth “Our real teacher isn’t here today – I’m just going to do things.” Students also often use the term real in a pejorative sense to describe the difference between pre-service and in-service teachers. The comment made to Beth caused her to consider the differences between herself and her supervising teacher. On the surface the differences were minimal. Beth was planning, teaching, and assessing in a similar way to her supervising teacher. The difference for Beth mostly related to the time limitations of the practicum as she was at the school for a period of three weeks. When Beth looked forward to her future practice she visualised “making it fun”, and that she would be able to do so by having ownership of her class, and more control over her planning with a whole year in front of her – and that this would make teaching real for her.

During Lachy’s final practicum he found himself imitating his supervising teacher’s approach, which consisted mostly of delivering content through handouts. “It was way cruizy so I didn’t feel like a real teacher at all – anyone can do this” (Lachy Interview 1). He described his conflicting emotions and opinions – on the one hand frustration at this limited approach
and on the other hand the ease at which he managed his time by delivering content derived by someone else. In contrast to Lachy, Sebastian was encouraged to plan original material for his classes in order to gain experience in having full control.

It felt like every lesson had to be perfect because you were getting watched the whole time. So probably I didn’t feel like a real teacher yet – maybe to a certain degree – but didn’t feel like a fully qualified teacher. (Sebastian Interview 1)

However, he was very aware that he was still being watched, and assessed, by his supervising teacher. Sebastian’s understanding of a real teacher is one who is qualified.

Cassidy, like Sebastian, needed to experience autonomy in order to feel like a real teacher.

I wasn’t doing it by myself – there was someone else in there and there is plenty more that I could be doing – like planning by myself, which would put me in ‘real’ teacher mode. (Cassidy Interview 1)

Cassidy’s supervising teacher would often sit at the back of the classroom and interact with her through facial expressions and gestures. Whether it was his intention or not, his interjections constantly reminded Cassidy that this was not her class – that he was still in control, and that she needed to refine her teaching in accordance with his suggestions. Interestingly, Sari believed that she could feel like a real teacher during her practicum, as long as the supervising teacher was not present. “I don’t think you can feel like a real teacher until the other teacher’s out of the classroom” (Sari Interview 1).

There were times when Sari’s supervising teacher would leave the room, or Sari would arrive early and get the class started, and times when she would consult with individual students outside of class time. These moments allowed her to experience some degree of autonomy, as an indication of what real teaching would be like.

The liminal period of transitioning from student to teacher was emphasised during many participants’ job interviews.
I was able to answer everything in a way that sounded like I knew what I was talking about, so in a way I felt like a real teacher... I felt like I knew more than I thought I did and I obviously seemed like I was ready and I came across as a real teacher ... The whole real teacher thing – I probably won’t feel like a real teacher until a good month into it. [But] I don’t think I’m going to be that ratty that I’m not going to feel like a real teacher. (Cassidy Interview 1)

Cassidy’s prediction here in the last sentence is in stark contrast to her actual experiences in only her first few days of teaching. She expected to be busy, and expected that in order to feel like a real teacher she would need to settle in first in order to be able to reflect on her practice. The reality was rather distressing for Cassidy, and extended her feelings of liminality beyond what she expected. Her distress was partly caused by being led to believe her work environment would be in the new purpose-built space that would encourage a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning, and partly because she had never experienced teaching in a flexible or open-plan learning space before. The mismatch between her expectations and the reality led to feelings of confusion and isolation, causing her to feel less like a real teacher than she did in her interview. Cassidy’s complete change in demeanour once she moved into the purpose-built space prompted consideration of the impact of the space on the teacher’s identity, and is discussed in the section titled ‘Further Research’.

Janet was the only participant who reported that she was really nervous during the interview, despite having competed eight weeks of practicum at the school throughout 2010.

I was really nervous – so I don’t really know how I felt in terms of a real teacher. I guess I felt like a grad because I kept referring to my teaching rounds and they asked me stuff about my teaching rounds. (Janet Interview 1)

In Victorian government schools a graduate is categorised as a teacher who has less than two years in-service teaching experience. All Victorian teachers applying for a Teacher Graduate Recruitment Program position address the same five key selection criteria, which is distinguished from selection criteria for Classroom teachers in that graduates need to
demonstrate ‘knowledge/understanding of...’ as opposed to ‘experience in...’ areas of initiatives in student learning, effective teaching strategies, and assessment practices. In many cases the teachers in this study were competing for a graduate position that was more often than not ‘tagged’ for a non-1yr teacher currently employed in the school. In Janet’s case, like many of the other participants, after the interview she was invited to re-interview and was offered a (lesser) contract position. While Janet was excited about her employment, she was also concerned that having the second chance I feel like there’s more pressure – like I have to show them that I really do deserve it and feeling like colleagues were going to be watching me because I didn’t get the job the first round so they’ll be thinking “Did we make the right decision in hiring her?” (Janet Interview 1)

The conditions of Janet’s employment also serve as a reminder of her status in the school, and are discussed further in the section concerning the material-economic features of practice.

The other participants reported feeling very confident in their interview. Lachy recalled, “the actual interview did give me confidence and probably made me feel more this is real – this is going to happen, and I can be a teacher” (Lachy Interview 1), and Sandra said:

I felt really confident in the interview, which really surprised me, because like interviews are so scary, and I got in there and was like – “oh cool”. I felt so confident and I didn’t know where it came from – I was like “Wow, OK”. I felt like a real teacher when I was talking it up in the interview – I thought I’m really good at this. (Sandra Interview 1)

Both teachers saw their interview as an indication of their development towards becoming a teacher. Yet many participants, including Lachy and Sandra, reported that once teaching began they felt these perceptions decrease.
Hegemonic discourse: ‘just a grad’

We laughed and I could relate to it all – especially the lunch boxes! I’m a deputy principal at a large primary school and have lots of dealings with grad teachers and the students and parents of grad teachers! Parents often need reassuring about grad teachers. (Principal)

This comment highlights the perception the participants’ themselves, and the wider community hold of beginning teachers – and 1yr teachers in particular. The hegemonic discourse in this instance is employed as a form of 1yr teachers’ othering themselves. Gee contends:

[that] nonelites are “encouraged” to accept the inferior identities elites ascribe to them in talk and interaction … as if they were the actual achieved identities of these nonelite people, achieved on the basis of their lack of skill, intelligence, morality, or sufficient effort in comparison with the elites. (2000, p. 113)

The participants in this study ascribe inferior identities for themselves to distinguish themselves from ‘elites’ for a variety of purposes. These purposes include subscribing to affinity groups, describing lack of skill or expertise, and expressing an absence of status.

Within the hegemonic discourse of a ‘grad’ teacher, 1yr teachers are separated from their more experienced colleagues. The participants in this study often called themselves ‘just a grad’ or ‘only a 1yr’. In employing such terms themselves 1yr teachers indicate their status in the social hierarchy within their school, and also their affiliation with other 1yr teachers in the wider teaching community. It is uncertain whether the term ‘grad’ began as a pejorative term and has been adopted in a non-pejorative sense. The teachers in this study use the term in a non-pejorative sense, to define who they are at this moment in time; that they are who they are because of the experiences they have had within their affinity group (Gee 2000).

Amelia uses the term grad in a non-pejorative sense when describing the way her colleagues place higher expectations on her because they know she is familiar with the school – she says “they forget I’m just a grad” (Amelia
Interview 2) to point out that she belongs to a group that requires different considerations such as reduced time allotment and not being given senior classes. Yet Amelia was also happy with these considerations being waived in her case, deeming their absence as symbolic of the school administration team’s confidence in her ability. Other expectations of grads – coming from 1yr teachers themselves as well as their colleagues – include the understanding that as a grad they will assist in a variety of co- and extra-curricular activities in their 1yr, to prove their commitment. Lara felt as though she was not as involved as the other grads at her school, stating:

I haven’t done a great deal on a whole school level to get my name out there yet. I’ve kind of been finding my feet this year, but Jill started this ballet club, and Sonia’s running hip-hop. They’re all kind of doing stuff and I haven’t done a great deal. (Lara Interview 3)

Even though Lara aligns herself with the other grads at her school she identifies distinctions on the basis of their and her input. Maggie describes the other grads at her school as allies, yet she too makes distinctions between herself as a 1yr grad and the others as 2yr grads.

Sometimes we’ll sort of sit here and go “bloody hell” – sort of the same with Maddy – I feel like I’m an equal but slightly not just quite, because they’ve all had – even if it’s CRT [experience] or a semester, stuff like that – they’re all just that little bit ahead… I’m the slightly lower sidekick – not quite on par, but kind of close to. (Maggie Interview 2)

The hegemonic discourse of ‘just a grad’ positions 1yr teachers as lacking skill or expertise. ‘The First Time’ begins with Janet’s scene where she describes being a grad as asking a lot of questions. Janet says she goes to the other grad teacher in her team rather than her more experienced colleagues because “it’s slightly less scary asking each other dumb questions!” (Janet Interview 2). Lara feels that asking questions defines her as a grad, and while other teachers still perceive her as a grad she feels “like I know what I’m doing. Sometimes I don’t – so I’ll ask the others [but] I don’t really need to ask too many questions” (Lara Interview 3). Asking questions emerges as a common theme among the participants in the study that speaks of a lack of tacit knowledge, and limited skills and expertise. In consideration of a
graduate identity Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) encourage moving away from thinking about graduates in regards to skills and more towards an examination of the conditions of performance. They stress the importance of an individual being able to understand how a particular practice is enacted (the language and vocabulary, the goals and purposes and the broader environment in which a practice takes place) and to be able to construct a legitimate identity. ‘Therefore, when we examine graduate employability we should not think so much in terms of skills and performance but more in terms of practice and identity as forming the basis of that performance’ (Hinchliffe & Jolly 2011, p. 564). Yet the 1yr teachers in this study are speaking still of their skills when defining their identity as ‘just a grad’.

When asked about his perception of his status in relation to his colleagues Sebastian stated “I’m not expected to know everything” (Sebastian Interview 2). He sees himself as not having, nor expected to have, the knowledge of a more experienced teacher, though he conscientiously developed his pedagogical content knowledge, partly in order to align himself with his colleagues. Sebastian often discussed teachers he admires with relation to the depth of knowledge they have about students and content. Sebastian took the time to plan classes with depth, particularly working on developing engaging numeracy classes, and differentiated activities for his diverse learners. In doing so he aimed to develop substantial resources to share with the grade six teaching team, though he was not expected to. Working within such a supportive environment where his team recognised Sebastian’s status as a graduate teacher in a positive light allowed Sebastian the freedom to develop his knowledge at his own pace. Conversely, his interactions with parents, and one parent in particular, reminded him of his lack of skills and experience. During a confrontation with a parent late in 2011, the parent said to Sebastian “You don’t understand – you’re not a parent.” While this comment was made defensively and thoughtlessly, it served to draw Sebastian’s attention to his limited knowledge of, and experience with, children. He recognised this as an area that needs time to develop, it is not
something he can work on late at night or throughout the weekend like he can when developing content knowledge.

Janet’s view of being a grad is a view of a lack of expertise. “Part of me still sees myself as just a grad, just because I don’t have years of experience under my belt” (Janet Interview 2). Yet she says this is only ‘part’ of her view of herself. In other areas such as interactions with the students, planning and administration she views herself as competent. Again, time appears to play a factor in the development of expertise. Janet uses the term experience to describe expertise in this instance, as she is fully aware that years of experiences (in any area, not only teaching) do not necessarily relate to levels of competence. Janet’s comment draws attention to the difficulties in determining what constitutes experience in teaching. The Gillard Labor Government, in their promotion of performance pay for the top 10% of teachers in 2013, describe ‘experienced teachers’ as the ‘best performing teachers’ (Gillard & Labor nd). Berliner (1994) describes five stages – from novice to expert – implicit in the theory of development of expertise, where the novice must move through stages including advanced beginner, competent, and proficient, in order to become expert. While such discourses, supported by the structuring of teacher professional standards, remain prevalent in regards to teachers’ performance, and often their pay (or lack thereof when compared to their colleagues), 1yr teachers are likely to continue to view their work with regard to their skills. As such they are likely to view their skills as all at a particular level, rather than recognising that at times, like their colleagues, they can demonstrate expertise in some areas while feeling like a novice in others.

The hegemonic discourse of ‘just a grad’ is perpetuated by a variety of members of the school community when signalling a 1yr teacher’s absence of status. Parents, such as the ones the principal (quoted in the text box earlier) encounters, can often use the term ‘grad’ in a pejorative sense, to draw attention to the teacher’s inexperience. The concern expressed by
parents in having their child taught by a graduate teacher emphasises the low status of the graduate teacher. This was more evident with regard to the primary teachers who often discussed how they responded to questions from parents at the start of the year about this being their 1yr of teaching. Some avoided answering, one said “yes” and others couched their response more ambiguously, along the lines of “yes – this is my first year at this school.” The secondary teachers in this study reported that by the time they met students’ parents at parent-teacher interviews later in the year, parents rarely expressed such concern over the graduate status of the teachers. Maggie’s experience falls between the other participants’ encounters. She was employed at the primary school she had completed her practicum at in 2010, which was a small school in a close-knit community. Maggie said she would have liked to undertake her 1yr at a school where no one knew she was a graduate teacher, stating:

you would just go in maybe like a fresh slate. I’m a teacher, this is my class – this is my school. But then again, I know a lot of my parents so they do know that I’m new, so they are really supportive. (Maggie Interview 2)

Perhaps because Maggie belonged to that tight-knit community she was more readily accepted and supported by parents than Lara and Janet believed they would be, which is why they chose to remain silent or ambiguous on the issue.

Parents, along with other members of the wider teaching community, can often play a role in the transformation of 1yr teachers’ collective identity. Parents’ attitudes, biases, experiences and personal histories contribute to the formation of an understanding that a 1yr teacher may not be as valued as a teacher with more years of experience. This notion also links to the discourse of experience and expertise in relation to years on the job. Currently the pay for Victorian teachers is based on a years of service format, in essence rewarding and respecting longevity. Pay, and other conditions of teachers’ work such as tenure, comprise some of the extra-
individual features of practice that shape the discourse concerning 1yr teachers’ status.

Colleagues can also take a long time to accept 1yr teachers as more than ‘just a grad’. Amelia’s experience in making the transition from student to teacher in the same school serves to draw attention to the notion that while graduates often struggle with becoming a teacher, their colleagues can also struggle to welcome a graduate as a fully-fledged member of the profession. It takes a long time for colleagues to recognise the 1yr as ‘a teacher’. The 1yr teachers in this study viewed themselves as ‘anonymous equals’ in relation to the veteran teachers, ‘enduring an absence of status’ (Berman 1994). In Amelia’s case her colleague stated he did not feel comfortable seeing her as a teacher when he had known her as a student, and she still had siblings as students at the school. Amelia’s attempts to overcome this issue ranged from stating “I’m just another colleague now”, to over-compensating by developing enormous unit plans (and in doing so often ‘showing up’ other more experienced colleagues), and appearing too confident. Similarly, many teachers in this study describe the attitudes of their colleagues as confusing. They report their colleagues’ conflicting statements such as graduate teachers are too confident or too nervous, too needy or too independent, too busy or too lazy, too friendly with the students or too strict, and too stressed or too relaxed. In Lara’s case she was told “you’ll be labelled a grad… the principal is in on it too… the grads are more in with the principal.” In distancing themselves from graduate teachers in such ways, colleagues also contribute to the formation of a collective graduate identity as having an absence of status.

**Social relationships and interactions**

1yr teachers’ practice and identity shapes, and is shaped by, characteristic solidarities and forms of social integration in relation to one another (Kemmis 2010). A major shift in practices concerning 1yr teachers in
Victoria has been driven by recommendations for schools from the VIT which include year-long mentoring support; the provisional registration program that consists of a reduced time allotment; formal induction programs (run by the VIT and encouraged in schools) where 1yr teachers are granted access to the tools of their practice; and informal induction through interactions with colleagues. This shift has shaped not only the understandings of each 1yr teacher, but also the understandings of their colleagues and school administration. The ‘socialisation’ of 1yr teachers of the past, seen as something that was done to teachers, has altered as a result, moving away from discourses such as ‘this is how it’s done at this school’ as identified in Part One: Literature Review towards a practice where knowledge about the context and a sense of who the 1yr teacher is – a sense of self in relation to the context – is valued.

**Mentoring**

Interactions and affiliations between 1yr teachers and their more experienced colleagues often begin through either formal or informal mentoring. In many situations the 1yr teachers in this study expressed the importance of comprehending the existing socially formed and structured understandings in their new environment in order to develop their context-specific skills and techniques. They did this by seeking signals from their allocated mentors as to how things are done (Kardos et al. 2001). Many of the participants described their initial encounters with influential colleagues such as mentors and team leaders as problematic. While some difficulties were due to a reported clash of personalities, many said it was their own attempts to ‘fit in’ and ‘be accepted’ that proved the greatest challenge.

Lara’s struggles to work within the structured system of relationships among the prep team in the early weeks of her 1yr continued to resurface into 2012. As discussed in Part Three: Ethics when invited to the validation rehearsal Lara was initially concerned that her scene portrayed her
colleagues – and her relationship with them at the time – in a negative light. She did not invite her colleagues to the performance, despite having a better relationship with them that she did at the beginning of the 2011 school year. Thus while her situation had actually improved in regards to her affiliations and interactions with other members of the prep team, Lara was still conscious of the impact drawing attention to this issue might raise. Her anticipatory socialisation (Lortie 1975) or prior conceptions of what being a teacher entailed, and her efforts to regulate her behaviour within that role silenced her on this matter, contributing to an understanding of an identity of a 1yr teacher as one who shouldn’t make waves if they want to fit in.

As mentioned earlier in the discussion of survival discourse Sandra’s allocated mentors spent little time with her, and more time with 1yr teachers demonstrating explicit signs of struggle. Sandra ended up “adopting” different mentors to the ones she had been officially allocated. As a 1yr teacher she felt the need to ascribe the status of mentor to colleagues who were willing and qualified (in the sense that their experiences are relevant to her needs) to provide ongoing support to her, without having to resort to displaying heightened emotion as a signal for assistance. Cassidy on the other hand demonstrated numerous episodes or as she terms them “breakdowns” as a request for assistance. She formed a strong relationship with specific members of her teaching team, rejecting her allocated mentor who in her eyes did not provide immediate solutions to her problems.

The notion of a mentor for 1yr teachers is problematic. A mentor is usually someone who is valued by the mentee and who the mentee has developed a relationship with. The teachers in this study who were allocated mentors without the development of a prior relationship often rejected these mentors in favour of others, yet their official mentor often continued to receive a time or monetary allowance for their mentoring position, and remained the allocated member of staff responsible for assisting the 1yr teacher with their VIT application for full registration. It seems that in many of the participants’
cases the official mentor was not suited to the task of assisting the 1yr teacher in their day-to-day needs. Most of the participants reported other colleagues as more important than their mentor. This can be seen in the Wordle and Word Task (Appendix 3), where none of the Wordles contain the word ‘mentor’ yet in the Word Task each participant placed significant emphasis on the importance of colleagues in their Word Task arrangement. Of those who interpreted School Community as their immediate day-to-day community Amelia, Lara, Sebastian, and Tash placed School Community at the centre of their practice; Maggie and Sari placed it high on their list of influences on their practice; and Cassidy wrote ‘Team’, and Lachy wrote ‘English Staff’ and both placed this at the centre of their practice. Richard and Sandra viewed school community as representative of the various stakeholders, rather than their immediate day-to-day community. In particular Cassidy and Lachy, who created their own labels, demonstrate the importance of immediate colleagues in their day-to-day practice. Cassidy stated “it’s all about the team” (Interview 3), and Lachy said “I’ve had such good support from the English faculty” (Interview 3). Both indicate that there is not one specific person they turn to for support; there is a community where social relationships and interactions form a stronger basis of support than one mentor can.

**Artefacts as symbols of belonging**

Just amazing how many real classroom/teacher/school admin issues were revealed within the space of 45 minutes – and you could tell by the sighs from the audience how pertinent they were, like the ‘keys’ issue for instance. (Former principal)

The audience reactions regarding the ‘keys’ in ‘The First Time’ prompted further consideration of the meaning and interpretations of the importance of artefacts for 1yr teachers. Some teachers often do not have access to the tools of their practice that allow them to affiliate and interact with more experienced teachers. These can be tangible tools such as keys and other
artefacts the participants were looking forward to receiving, or the tools can be in the form of technical knowledge – learned skills and techniques that develop over time. Lack of access to such tools may also contribute to the distinction of status between 1yr teachers and their colleagues. These feelings of being on the outer can contribute to the shaping of a collective beginning teacher identity as one that is outside the realm of the ‘real’ teacher.

Keys, and other artefacts that symbolise belonging, formed many of the discussions with participants in the early interviews. These artefacts assisted the participants to feel like real teachers before they began the school year, yet in Lachy’s scene with the keys we see how gaining access to the tangible tools of a teacher can cause the individual to feel less like a real teacher. Amelia reported that gaining access to her teaching tools made real teaching seem more daunting than she had previously thought.

Because it’s actually happening now and I’m planning, and I’m going in to school and I have a desk, and all those things are real – I don’t feel as ready any more. I feel a little bit less confident and a little bit more scared. I have class lists. I’m actually teaching real kids and now I’m not feeling as confident – not to say that I don’t think I’ll be OK – but I don’t feel as confident as I was. I think until I step into the classroom and there are kids there and no teacher with me, will it be ‘real’ real. When the kids start to know what to expect from you I think then it becomes – a bit more ownership on it and it becomes real. (Amelia Interview 1)

Conversely, Sari and Sandra saw their tangible tools as part of feeling more like their teaching was about to begin in earnest. Sari mentioned the highlight of her induction was getting her timetable: “They give you a timetable and I was like oh yes – I’m a real teacher” (Sari Interview 1). Sandra described the planning stage after her induction as an important period in allowing her to feel more like a real teacher.

The other day I picked up a few text books... and I was walking past all these teacher planners and I was, like, when do I get my planner?! I want one! Because once you start filling it out and this is what’s on this week, it starts to feel a bit more real – feel like a real teacher! It
really does – just because you feel more organised. I want it physically in front of me! (Sandra Interview 1)

Many of the participants in this study who were employed before the end of the 2010 school year took part in an orientation to the school, and their students’ orientation for the following year. At this time they received information pertinent to their teaching in 2011 including provisional allotments, contextual information about the school, and information about their students. Many of the primary teachers were also invited to meet and sometimes teach their 2011 students, and meet some parents, in a designated orientation session. At the end of 2010 Sebastian met his 2011 grade six class, and recalled that:

It didn’t really sink in until I had my badge handed to me that had my name printed on it, with a school logo and that. I got it a couple of days before so I could wear it to the graduation, and for my class induction. And probably even more in my class induction, when I met my class for the first time. The realisation that this is my group that I was responsible for, they were all lining up outside the door, that was when I really felt like a real teacher. (Sebastian Interview 1)

Other participants’ comments were in a similar vein: “Getting that teacher’s diary, I know it’s shallow but that was like yeah... It’s the same one that ‘real’ teachers get.” (Lachy Interview 1), and “I’ve been setting up my room. It’s amazing – I got my own key!” (Maggie Interview 1).

Not all participants had such positive feelings prior to beginning teaching, due to a lack of access to tangible tools and experiences. During prep orientation Lara explained:

I felt [the integration aide, two work experience students and a student teacher] were looking at me going “this girl doesn’t know what she’s doing”. I don’t know why I needed four people in the room with me, but...when they came in they said – the student teacher was the only one that spoke to me and she said “do you want me to come in here just in case your kids need the toilet?” and I said “yeah that’d be really good” – the work experience kids just sat there chatting ... and the integration aide sat watching and I was just...I felt like I was on my rounds all over again ... you feel like they’re watching you and judging you. (Lara Interview 1)
Janet was expected to set up her classroom before the 2011 school year began, “We’re supposed to set up and apparently we can any time from now, it’s just that we don’t have a key” (Janet Interview 1). Many of the 1yr teachers were also expected to undertake planning, though this was not wholly possible for Lara, as she did not have access to any usernames or codes or just little things like that that make you feel like a part of the school, so I think that’s another thing – is that I still don’t feel quite like a part of the school yet... This is the stupidest thing, but even just seeing my name on the door – even that will feel like I belong here. (Lara Interview 1)

These comments bring to light the importance for schools to provide 1yr teachers with tangible tools and experiences, as these are the things pre-service teachers look forward to in order to assist them to make the transition to in-service teaching. Once they can experience a sense of belonging an effective induction can begin that is highly structured, collaborative, and focused on professional learning.

**Induction**

In recent years, particularly since the implementation of the VIT standards of professional practice and their program for providing full registration for PRTs, more schools in Victoria understand the importance of providing a comprehensive induction program for 1yr teachers and those new to a school. Kang and Berliner (2012) note that high-quality induction programs have three major similarities: highly structured, collaborative, and focused on professional learning. One of their recommendations is that school administrators should know the needs of beginning teachers and support them with a systematic structure of programs and training. ‘Simply offering various induction activities is not enough to persuade beginning teachers to stay. Understanding beginning teachers’ needs should be the very first step to take and then we could support them wisely’ (Kang & Berliner 2012, p. 281). Yet non-systematic forms of induction also exist in schools, which in the experiences of these participants are more likely to shape the way 1yr
teachers view themselves in relation to their work through their affiliations and interactions. Informal modes of induction affect 1yr teachers’ status through the expression of expectations of how the teacher should behave and what the expected treatment of that teacher should be.

Both formal and informal modes of induction stress the importance of social relationships and interactions as expressions of values and social norms. Induction begins during pre-service education where pre-service teachers are exposed to a variety of discourses surrounding what teaching ‘should be’. These discourses link back to the discussion earlier around survival discourse and the prevalence of negative expectations. Yet these discourses contain a certain amount of confirmation bias based on the practitioner’s own experiences.

The performance focused on too many negative situations that could or could not occur, and each of them may not necessarily apply to everyone. Performing these may scare off first year teachers as it may give them a negative unrealistic view of the profession. (A representative from the VIT)

The stories reflected a more positive experience than I feared, but there is much we still need to do to improve things for new teachers! (A representative from Independent Schools Victoria [ISV])

I find these comments particularly interesting when juxtaposing “too many negative situations” with “more positive than I feared”. When a (different) representative from the VIT came to speak to the participants about teacher registration in their final year of teacher education they spent half the presentation time describing the disciplinary processes and cases they encounter, stating that this is the main job of the VIT. This was just one of the more negative events Lachy describes as provoking him, even as a pre-service teacher, to set positive goals in order to counter such negativity. However, I am also in agreement with what the VIT representative quoted
above is saying. As seen in their use of survival language, beginning teachers’ stories of induction in an informal sense often focus on the negative. The data revealed that while these 1yr teachers had some positive experiences they were intertwined with more negative aspects as well. For example the VIT representative spoke his comment to one of the teacher-actors after the performance. The teacher-actor was at the time a 1yr teacher, who contended the comment on the grounds that his experiences were not at all as negative as the VIT representative suggested. The teacher-actor stated the performance “actually helped me as a 1yr teacher as, although these situations may be rare, it prepared me for them and showed me a way in which I could deal with them.” They then agreed that the performance is actually beneficial to 1yr teachers and their schools as it helps schools see that these teachers today need a greater network of support.

Professional practice takes place at particular times, at particular moments in the lives of the people involved, against the wider background of the narratives of their lives (Kemmis 2010, p 18). Experienced teachers can also hold confirmation bias based on their own informal (or lack of) induction experiences, and these shape their expectations of 1yr teachers’ induction in the present. When Amelia’s colleague said “you just wait” in response to Amelia’s comment that she still thinks marking is fun, the colleague was inadvertently shaping Amelia to accept the notion that experience is equated with the belief marking is not fun. Similarly Richard’s colleagues accept him into “the club” on the basis of his experience with a difficult student. Tash was also more readily accepted by her colleagues on the basis of her difficult experiences. Sari experienced conflicting and confusing signals from her teaching team when they would criticise experienced colleagues for sending difficult students into another class. Saying to Sari “you can send them to us” is couched as a mode of support but actually positions Sari as inexperienced and therefore ‘different’. In order for Sari to feel accepted she felt she had to reject their offer of support. Such methods of informal
induction whereby the 1yr teacher is encouraged to perceive positive outcomes as a result of negative experiences, or where the 1yr teacher can become confused by mixed signals, assist to fuel the negative discourses surrounding not only 1yr teaching but teaching in general.

Participants working in shared or semi-shared teaching spaces experienced more positive modes of informal induction and support. Most of these participants were primary teachers such as Sebastian, Maggie, and Lara. Both Sebastian and Maggie were located in a shared portable – a double free-standing classroom with removable walls and shared spaces between the rooms – while Lara was situated in a large teaching space shared, yet divided into sections, between four prep teachers. Access to their colleagues on a daily basis meant they had continued support. For Sebastian and Maggie the teacher in the next room was not their allocated mentor, yet they both reported these teachers as the ones they developed a mentoring relationship with.

Gary’s awesome. If I have any issues I’ll just walk in and chat to him. I enjoy [the double classroom] because if my class is quiet I can listen to Gary’s instruction and improve upon my instruction. And just pop in and out – ask any questions. (Sebastian Interview 2)

Physical proximity with another teacher can allow a mentoring relationship to develop more organically, as experienced by Sebastian: “Gary and I talk all the time and it’s an informal way of planning but we’re constantly running ideas, constantly talking about what we’re going to do next year” (Sebastian Interview 3), and Maggie: “Jan in the next room, she makes herself really approachable and you always know she’s there” (Maggie Interview 2). Lara’s allocated mentor was the head of the prep team and was the teacher in the section closest to Lara’s. “It’s good to have the support there” (Lara Interview 3).

When Cassidy’s team eventually relocated into their custom designed flexible learning space she also had more positive experiences of support and was able to more readily provide assistance to the other teachers in her
team. She viewed such a team-teaching situation in a flexible learning space as highly beneficial for her as a 1yr teacher. She felt that the space encouraged collaboration as well as options for her to alternate between taking a lead or assistant role depending on what she felt comfortable with. She often gave up her free periods and loved getting extras, taking every opportunity to join her teaching team in the new space.

It’s all about the team … using this space – it’s all about our space now and the environment we get the kids to work in. Compared to your own classroom – it’s a very big thing now. The last few weeks I’ve gone out and taught with the other two teachers. I take small groups out for health, things like that. (Cassidy Interview 3)

Being able to work with her colleagues, to not just hear about what they do, but to see it and experience it, has been a beneficial mode of induction for Cassidy, and the other teachers above. The experienced teachers in these examples shape the way each 1yr teacher developed a sense of who they are in relation to their context-specific work through daily interactions, and a more equal status.

**Material-economic conditions of 1yr teachers’ work**

Situated work involves active participation in the material world in the material here-and-now – times, places, and physical conditions – and frequently involves systematically-structured material interactions such as role related functions (Kemmis 2010). There has been much discussion in Victoria in the material here-and-now regarding the function of teacher contracts in relation to issues of attrition. The convoluted and often context-specific nature of employment in Victorian schools is rarely fully understood by 1yr teachers applying for their first teaching position. The participants in this study reported a variety of complicated employment conditions that impacted on their role as a teacher throughout their 1yr. For many of the participants their tacit knowledge of the nature of their work under such conditions shaped the way they perceived their commitment to their school and the profession.
Situated work: contractual nature of beginning teaching

As I write the participants are in their third year of teaching. The main condition of their work that remains of concern is the contractual nature of their teaching. Many have communicated to me their future plans as a teacher. Some indicated whether they felt able to continue at the school they are teaching, and some said if their contract were not renewed they would like to take some time off and travel. I recently met with a group of participants and compared the conversation to the one we had at the end of their 1yr of teaching. Their language with regard to their understanding of the nature of their work had altered significantly, and was peppered with terms about salary, contracts, and ongoing positions. They expressed an increased sense of frustration in regards to their contracts, particularly when job advertisements were released in terms two and four of the 2011 and 2012 school years. Many participants were frustrated by the fact that the number of teachers on contracts outweighed the number of ongoing positions offered or advertised at their school. Others discussed broken promises made to them regarding the contractual nature of their employment. Yet despite their frustrations regarding their employment conditions, almost all the participants remained positive in their regard towards teaching.

Frustratingly for most participants, the verbal promises made in regards to employment beyond their 1yr rarely resulted in an offer of a more permanent position. It is difficult to determine whether administration teams make such promises because they believe them to be true, or they are merely attempting to placate the graduate teacher. Perhaps some believe the statistics that the graduate teacher will leave the school or the profession, so they are hesitant to offer more permanent employment. If so, a causality dilemma emerges posing the question of whether the teachers themselves or the employment climate stimulate the transformation of beginning teachers’
practice in such instances. Either way, there remains a mood of uncertainty surrounding employment conditions for these teachers. It is wonderings such as these that formed the main discussion of the group meeting, with each participant ‘trumping’ each other’s examples with a more convoluted employment agreement. It is no wonder the conversation then turned to industrial action.

During 2012 there were a series of teacher strikes in Victoria headed by the AEU over the government’s broken promises to make Victorian teachers the best paid in the state, the proposed introduction of performance pay for principals and teachers, and the high percentage of beginning teachers currently on short-term contracts (DEECD 2012, p. 13). All the participants employed in government schools went on strike on the 7th of June, and Amelia and Sari also went on strike when the Independent Education Union (IEU) joined the AEU in a second day of industrial action on the 5th of September 2012. Further plans were made for rolling regional stoppages, a ban on writing comments on students’ reports, refusal to attend after-school meetings, and ‘work to rule’ – a 38 hour week – in 2013. For the participants the issue of contract employment was of immediate concern. Lachy was not told until very late in 2011 that his contract could be renewed. The uncertainty he experienced then carried over into his second year, and obviously had an impact on his feelings towards teaching. Lachy’s comment after the performance about being excited to teach the next day contrasts with his frustration at the nature of his employment. His experiences heighten the devastating impact uncertainty can have on teacher’s work and identity, as teachers’ identity can be shaped by school reform and political contexts (Lasky 2005).

Lara, like many of the other participants, was initially employed on a 6 month contract, which was rolled over after she reapplied for her position in mid-2011. She did not have to be interviewed to be re-employed, unlike Tash, Maggie, Richard, Sebastian and Lachy – who described being on a
contract as “this bloody contract. If I was permanent it would be great. They’ve got you by the neck – they’ve got you by the throat!” (Lachy Interview 3). At the time Lara was promised the opportunity to apply for an ongoing position at the end of 2011. According to the DEECD:

Where an ongoing position becomes available in a school, the principal should determine if the position is a suitable position for any eligible fixed term employee(s) in the school. Where the position is suitable the eligible fixed term employee should be offered ongoing employment. Where the position is not suitable the principal is to inform all eligible fixed term employees of that decision before proceeding to advertise the position. (2012, p. 8)

Towards the end of 2011 Lara was informed that there were no ongoing positions available for her at the school for 2012, despite an ongoing position being advertised a short time later. She was offered a maternity leave replacement position for anywhere between 6 months to 7 years, on the condition that if the person she was replacing wanted to come back, Lara’s position would be terminated, and she would “most certainly” be offered ongoing before then or at that time. Lara decided to begin applying for other jobs in September 2012, and reported to me the following:

I got an interview at another school for a family leave position and when I told [the principal] about it she offered me a larger sustainability role within the school if I stayed. When I asked her about permanency she said that my job was fairly permanent, as the woman who I am replacing is pregnant with baby number two. I told her I would think about it and that I would still go along to my interview. That must have worried her because a couple of days later she pulled me into her office and offered me ongoing!! So basically the choice was go along to an interview for a family leave position, or stay and take the ongoing. Needless to say, I took the ongoing! (Lara, email, 3rd November 2012)

This is just one example of how the inconsistent and unpredictable practices of some administration teams can impact on the nature of teachers’ employment conditions, and therefore their commitment to remain at the school or in the profession.

Maggie’s school experienced declining student enrolments over a number of years. This was the reason given to her when her contract was unable to be renewed at the end of 2011. Conversely, Cassidy’s school experienced
increased student enrolments allowing them to offer her a two year contract. Schools such as Amelia’s with greater staffing flexibility and stable student enrolments are often in a better position to offer longer contracts and ongoing employment. The variety of approaches to staffing can be confusing and comparisons between graduates regarding their tenure contributes to an ongoing uncertainty regarding the conditions of their employment, and therefore uncertainty with regards to their ability to reap the personal benefits of being a professional, such as financial independence.

Even though I’m not a teacher, I understood everything that was presented simply by being a parent of a teacher. Unless you have someone in the family who teaches, no one can ever know the truth [about teaching]. Every single scene brought back memories of my own firsts as the parent of a teacher. (Teacher-actor’s parent)

This comment serves to highlight that many 1yr teachers including those in this study remain living with their parents, or have to move back into their parents’ homes in order to cope with the uncertainty of their employment conditions, and resulting lack of financial independence. Cassidy moved back home as the contractual nature of her work meant she faced financial as well as job uncertainty. Tash, Richard, Maggie, Amelia, Sebastian and Sari remained living in their family home. For Lachy, the nature of his contractual employment meant he had to move back in with his parents during 2011 when his lease was up, essentially separating from his partner for a period, until he had secured employment for 2012 and could rent another house.

While remaining in the family home for longer than generations in the past, these Generation Y participants are choosing to remain due to financial instability coupled with the cost of repaying their Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) fees. Some refer to Generation Y as the Boomerang Generation – those who move away from and back to home; or, more scathingly, the Peter Pan Generation – those who have delayed various rites
of passage into adulthood. These derogatory terms imply beginning teachers’ are more immature, and less independent than those of previous generations. Anecdotal evidence from Victorian teachers who began their careers prior to the contractual nature of teacher employment introduced in 1992 indicate that 1yr teachers did not live with their parents upon completion of their teacher education. Once they were gainfully employed they became independent. This current generation of experienced teachers continue to express surprise at encountering 1yr teachers who still live at home. Yet 1yr and many beginning teachers find additional support in living at home. The comment above also indicates parents of Generation Y are more emotionally supportive and involved in the lives of their children than in the past, particularly by assisting these teachers to cope with their transition to teaching. It has become far more likely that beginning teachers employed under contract conditions will remain in or return to the family home.

It is little wonder then in this climate of job uncertainty, these 1yr teachers found their work emotionally draining. Having to adapt to teaching with all its challenges is difficult enough for the 1yr teacher without having these difficulties compounded by reapplying for their (or other) jobs half way through the school year, only to face the same uncertainty in another five months. Yet still these teachers find joy in their work. For most of the participants their outlook remained positive throughout the year, and into the beginning of their second year of teaching. However, due to the contractual nature of their work Cassidy and Lara wrote to me regarding their intention to change schools in 2013, and Sebastian wrote the following:

I really struggled for teaching passion this year; it’s seemed like such an unrewarded effort at times. Whilst the principal has been really pleased with the turn around of [my year 6 students] in both behaviour and attitude, constantly emitting positivity to such a negatively minded, self-centred cohort has been draining!!! I guess I’m also questioning and having insecurities about being a male in such a female dominated industry, when I could easily be labouring
earning a small fortune in the mines in [Western Australia]. Being 26 and nowhere near ready to buy a house when all your tradie mates are killing it has made me question for the first time my attitude towards choosing a labour of love as opposed to labouring for money! (Sebastian, email, 11\textsuperscript{th} April 2012)

Sebastian often seeks advice from others, and usually follows the trend of his ‘mates’ as they are the driving force in his life. The insecurity of teaching combined with a relatively low wage and the dominance of females appears to be taking a toll on Sebastian’s commitment to the profession, his ability to find ‘balance’ between his professional and personal life, and his commitment to teaching under what he perceives as testing conditions.

**Tacit knowledge**

This kind of knowledge is revealed through practice in a particular context and transmitted through social interactions. In this sense practice involves access to, and the use and transfer of, resources available to the agent. These resources take the form of strategies chosen in response to the situation, and ascertain power and positioning based on expectations developed during pre-service teaching experiences, and shaped within the present context of contract employment. All the participants in this study are from an undergraduate degree, and teaching was their first professional job. The period where graduate positions were advertised for the start of 2011 began in July of the previous year and ran until the day before the 2011 school year started. During this time the participants’ social networking sites were peppered with posts regarding applications, interviews and offers. These conversations created motivation for some and anxiety for others, and their resulting heightened emotions often clouded the judgement of the applicants in relation to the conditions they were to be employed under. Many of the participants, along with their classmates from the 2010 graduating cohort, appeared to be so excited to get a job they rarely discussed the nature of their employment conditions with their employers at the time. Their
understanding of being offered a position, at this time, was generally just that they had a job.

The participants in this study at this time remained relatively unaware of the conditions of the job offer. Beth for example thought she was offered an ongoing position, without fully understanding what the term ‘ongoing’ meant. The nature of the conversation in her interview and after, when she was offered the position, contained phrases implying that there was a position at the school for her well into the future, leading Beth to interpret the job offer as long term and therefore ongoing. Beth’s confusion about her employment conditions can be seen in comparing our conversation in Interview 1 with that in Interview 2:

Interviewer [I]: So … while you were on rounds … more than one teacher said to you, you should apply?
Beth [B]: Yeah – my supervising teacher said, and she was discussing with the AP at the time and he’s really the one who said I should apply. It just happened – I was staying after school one day and we just got talking and he said “What are your methods?” and I said “Drama and English” and his eyes lit up and he went “Ahhhh”. And then I was just joking and I said “Oh well, you can give me a job if you want” and I didn’t expect him – he stopped me in the hallway a few days later and said “We’ve got this job – you should really apply for it.”
I: And because it’s a government school did you have to wait until it came online to apply or did you give them an application?
B: I just gave them an application.
I: So was it an advertised position?
B: No – I don’t think so.
I: So what’s your contract?
B: Ongoing (laughing)
I: How’d you get ongoing without an advertised position?
B: I don’t know – I don’t know the rules about it all…One of Mum’s friends – she’s a teacher and she was like ‘What? No-one gets ongoing!’ As far as I know it is… (Beth Interview 1)

The next interview a few months later uncovered the realities of Beth’s employment conditions once she had developed a tacit understanding of the nature of contract employment at this particular school:
B: Oh – that’s another thing! Because when I was talking to you I thought it was an ongoing position, but it’s only a 6 month contract! ...They’re going to roll it over, but then I was thinking if I only get another 6 month do I get paid over Christmas? ...So I got this contract to sign on one of those PD days, read it, and it said expires 15th July and I was like “I thought this was an ongoing position?” and [the Assistant Principal] said “Because we didn’t advertise it we can’t legally give you more than 6 months.”
I: But they assume you’re going to be here for years?
B: Yeah – and he even said “It’s because we wanted you so much” then I was like “Yeah!”
I: Did [the realisation] put a bit of a dampener on things?
B: Yeah a little bit, mainly because I’d already planned to go to the bank and get a car loan and buy a new car, but now, only on a 6 month contract, going to a bank they’re not going to give me a whole lot of money. (Beth Interview 2)

Some might argue that Beth should have investigated her work conditions more fully before applying for or accepting the job. Having worked with these teachers during their undergraduate degree it has been my experience that despite many of them having a theoretical understanding of the nature of employment in Victorian schools, in reality their understanding can contain a number of misinterpretations. These misconceptions can come about in the process of applying for an advertised position for an extended or ongoing period where the position is offered to another applicant. In this context the administration team, having interviewed other applicants, tend to offer their second choice applicants short-term contracts to fill other existing or anticipated temporary vacancies. In doing so school administrators contribute to the collective understanding that 1yr teachers are of a lower status in being given more tenuous conditions than teachers with more years of service, who are in a sense rewarded with tenure. While short-term contracts are effective in schools where predicting future staffing depends on anticipating changes in student enrolments, the over-use of short-term contracts for 1yr teachers reminds these teachers that they are mere newcomers (Pierce 2007). Their misconceptions evolve to form a tacit understanding of the nature of employment with reference to their local context.
Like many of the representations in ‘The First Time’ the negative aspects of teaching are often countered with a growth in tacit knowledge, either in themselves or balanced against a positive experience or outcome. The participants’ successes were held in tension with their challenges. The contexts in which they work serve to shape what they know, and what they perceive as challenges or successes. Victorian schools are very diverse. They have a highly multicultural student body across public and private education sectors, with a wide range of socio-economic statuses of families across the state. As such there are a variety of contexts that teachers can work within. Many schools in Victoria have individual approaches to, and philosophies about, education. Some are quite traditional in their more didactic pedagogical approaches, while others are embracing new methods such as team-teaching within flexible learning spaces. In these diverse contexts 1yr teachers develop tacit knowledge in response to the situations they find themselves in. One participant’s experience with contract employment is not the same as another’s. Lara’s 6 month contract was automatically rolled over, whereas others’ were not. Maggie was informed early that there might not be a position for her on a contract in 2012 while Lachy was informed very late in 2011, leaving little time to seek other employment. The convoluted and context-relevant nature of contract employment in Victoria means that only a tacit, rather than explicit, understanding can be developed, causing yet another barrier to job security and retention of beginning teachers.

As the representative from ISV stated, there is much we still need to do to improve things for new teachers. In light of this comment it could be beneficial for schools to ensure they inform graduates fully about the context-based terms and conditions of the work being offered, so as to avoid any misconceptions on behalf of the graduate teacher when considering an offer of employment. In Table 1 it is noted that seven of the twelve participants were offered employment at a school they knew. They knew the
students and the staff, and had a clear idea of the context. Of the remaining five, all were employed at a school in an area they were familiar with, close to where they lived. Many spoke of understanding the context of the school well. Yet despite their understanding of the school and students, when they applied for their positions their understanding of the employment conditions they were offered was less clear. The lack of clarity in these instances contributed to continuously challenging the participants’ expectations of their 1yr, and their understanding of the nature of employment in general.

Many of the participants in this study discussed their 1yr teaching experiences in relation to the expectations they developed through their teacher education. Their experiences during teacher education in particular can shape the way pre-service teachers understand their work. These too can be positive or negative. Gravett et al (2011) suggest that teachers should be recruited with realistic expectations, which may lead to their retention in the profession. Yet it is difficult to prepare pre-service teachers fully for all eventualities they may experience. In Part Four Cassidy complains that “no one told me”, and “No one prepares you for those first few weeks. This is what they don’t tell you at uni! They neglect to tell you this part!” (Cassidy Interview 2). Her comments serve to draw attention to pre-service and 1yr teachers’ expectations of themselves: believing they should be a ‘real’ teacher like their colleagues in their 1yr. Yet coupled with the challenges of the classroom, 1yr teachers are faced with additional challenges in regards to their tenure and the uncertainty short-term contracts can bring. Some 1yr teachers wonder whether they should focus their energies to the extent that ongoing staff do, when their future at the school is uncertain. Yet their actions contradict their thoughts, as all the teachers in this study engaged fully in their workplaces. It is little wonder that some became disenchanted when their hard work was not recognised in an offer of more permanent employment at the end of 2011. While these 1yr teachers found themselves swimming in relation to their work, they discovered they were sinking when their contracts came to an end.
Looking back

I found it very moving to recall some of my teaching firsts. (Former Teacher)

The performance of ‘The First Time’ served to prompt participants and expert audience members to look back at their own moments of becoming a teacher, and their feelings of liminality in the transition to in-service teaching. Many in-service teachers see their own experiences as a 1yr reflected or refracted in their observations of the 1yr teachers they work with. Many audience members reacted to the 1yr teachers’ struggle with keys and lunchboxes. Looking back at epiphanies and revelations such as firsts can draw attention to how much has been learnt and achieved over time.

The reactions from the audience members during the performance – “… you could tell by the sighs from the audience how pertinent they were, like the ‘keys’ issue...” – were indicative of their connection between the scenarios presented and their own personal experiences. Their sighs indicated a collective acknowledgement of the difficulties teachers face. Their laughter recognised that often, with hindsight, experiences that were frustrating or hard can be viewed with a different perspective. Unfortunately, it can be difficult for the 1yr teacher to look forward in light of their negative experiences, as they do not have a ‘bank’ of a variety of experiences to draw from in order gain the perspective of a more experienced teacher. Timoštšuk and Ugaste (2012, p. 10) contend that strong negative incidents draw more attention and create more anxiety and are thus at the centre of teaching-related experiences. They suggest the intensity of negative experiences overshadow other emotions experienced at the same time and hinder a comprehensive overview and choice of positive strategies. If the 1yr teacher
has had a number of negative experiences at the start of their career they are likely to predict that their future teaching will continue in a similar vein; whereas a teacher with more experiences can predict a more positive outlook. The process of looking back allows the practitioner to reanalyse their past self in a way that assists them to understand who they are in the present and who they can be in the future. Beginning teachers are more likely to look past difficult experiences when they believe they can improve their situation (Shoffner 2011). Looking back allows the practitioner to rethink their professional experience against a background of interactions of emotions and knowledge.

For many of the participants, looking back at their pre-service experiences and 1yr allowed them to reflect on the transformations that had taken place since then. During their 1yr of in-service teaching the participants and their contemporaries were invited by the university to share their experiences with the current cohort of pre-service teachers. When invited to speak about his 1yr experiences Lachy reflected:

> actually that is something that makes me feel like more of a real teacher – looking back at the 4th years coming through now and they have to do those PDs, and I think “I’ve done that.” (Lachy Interview 3)

Given the opportunity to reflect on the past assists these 1yr teachers to acknowledge the developments they have made on their journey to becoming a teacher. Even the process of taking part in the research interviews served to assist some participants to allow themselves the time to reflect and respond to their experiences to date – to look back in order to look forward. At times the participants, like the audience members of the performance, recognised the strong emotions that emerged through the process of looking back. Emotion can have a powerful impact on memory, as emotional events are likely to be recalled more often and with more clarity and detail. As the audience member referred to earlier commented: “I found it very moving to recall some of my teaching firsts.” It is valuable to
recognise and understand emotions in teaching as emotions are important in solving and overcoming problems (Timoštšuk & Ugaste 2012).

The AEU (2009) report the main concerns for beginning teachers include student behaviour, being unsuccessful at permanency, feeling exhausted due to workload, and lack of respect. These and other contributing factors are reported as the reasons beginning teachers leave the profession. The participants in this study reported similar concerns early on in their 1yr. By the completion of their second year, they reported less concern in the areas of behaviour management and lack of respect, yet they retained concern over workload and tenure. The conditions of 1yr teachers’ work continue to impact on their commitment to the profession. Their experiences have shaped a discourse that recognises the status of 1yr teachers at this particular moment in time as very low. In light of their experiences, looking back after the completion of their 1yr, the participants report that while their concerns remain, they have gained an understanding of their practice that allows them to look forward with more clarity than they could during their 1yr. As Cassidy said:

I’m a bit more relaxed and settled and actually have started to feel like a teacher. And I know that I can take a lead role down at our end when we have the combined classes, and they all listen, so I do feel more like a teacher now. A lot more settled. (Cassidy Interview 3)

Summary of Discussion

Part Five: Discussion highlights both similarities and differences between participants’ experiences, within the broader extra-individual cultural-discursive, social, and material-economic features of their practice that have contributed to the shaping of their identity. Throughout the discussion the theme of status reveals itself. Through survival, liminal and hegemonic discourses the 1yr teacher is ascribed the status of a survivor. The discussion regarding mentoring and induction reveals the 1yr teacher as a more active agent in their practice where their status, while still largely shaped by the
sayings and doings of colleagues, can begin to be assigned rather than ascribed. 1yr teachers’ access to the tools of their profession encourage a sense of belonging, as do other aspects of their induction, through both positive and negative experiences, affiliations, and interactions. Part Five: Discussion also explores the material-economic conditions of teachers’ work through the contractual nature of 1yr teachers’ employment. Here the 1yr teachers develop situated and tacit understandings of not only their convoluted employment conditions, but also the low status ascribed to 1yr teachers employed under such conditions. Part Five: Conclusions and recommendations aims to address some of the issues raised in this chapter, namely how 1yr teachers might be encouraged to view their status as important in relation to their work, and thus increase their commitment to the profession.
Conclusions and Recommendations

In consideration of the overarching research question: ‘What are the experiences of 1yr teachers?’, I conclude by looking back at how teachers described their experiences of identity formation and transformation, and how their past and present descriptions and experiences continue to shape their professional identity. In this conclusion I review the revelations from the preceding chapters in order to address the research question, and sub-questions such as: How do 1yr teachers experience identity formation and transformation? What is the nature of 1yr teaching? What do 1yr teachers describe as the current conditions of their work? What are the discourses surrounding 1yr teachers’ work that impact on the transformation of their identity? Are beginning teachers’ intentions to leave the profession related to their dissatisfaction with teaching? Are beginning teachers’ intentions to leave linked to the nature of their terms of employment?’

Conclusions

Within the process of undertaking this research I have been afforded the opportunity to look back at my own experiences of being a 1yr teacher, and becoming a teacher. Like the participants in this study, my own experiences were full of firsts. These moments appear now, on reflection, as key liminal periods where I recognised shifts in my identity as a teacher. Some were positive, some less so. However, all my experiences were shadowed by the oppressive storm cloud of my contract status. When the storm finally broke and I was told my contract could not be renewed I felt as though all my hard work was being washed down the drain. Upon beginning employment at my next school I wore the weight of my previous experiences like a sodden coat, a constant reminder that there was a force outside my control impacting on my commitment to teaching. It took some time and an attempt at a career change to let this feeling go. Now the feeling has returned as I
see that little has changed for teachers bearing the weight of their contractual employment status as they come to understand their own teacher identity. The image of the enthusiastic 1yr teacher as portrayed in Maggie’s scene for example appears now in stark contrast to her talk of leaving the profession. As seen in Table 1, now in her third year of teaching Maggie is still employed on a contract, and reports this as “frustrating”. At the beginning of 2013 Maggie began to wearily consider what 2014 would hold for her. “It looks like there won’t be anything next year so I’m considering maybe doing something else. Not sure though. They don’t make it easy for us!” (email, 25th February 2013). Many other participants also described their experiences now with a weary or angry tone: “I really love teaching but I am so bitter about the job insecurity and flawed and unethical employment process, that I intend on changing my life direction in 2014” (Lachy, email, 2nd February 2013), or in a confrontational and threatening manner: “I am hoping they’ll offer ongoing after this, if not I'm going to chuck a tantrum because even though I love [teaching] there the contact situation is a bit of a joke” (Beth, email, 13th February 2013). In considering how these participants experience the phenomenon of identity transformation, what remains is a love/hate relationship with teaching that impacts on the teacher’s practice and identity. The frustration felt at constantly having to reapply for their job, apply for other jobs, to be seen to be striving to work towards a standard that will allow them to remain at the school a little longer, and to be constantly told that there might not be a job for them at the end of the year juxtaposes harshly with their “love” for teaching. It is little wonder that an understanding of their identity in this context can be difficult, and in turn can impact on their sense of agency.

There are many water metaphors in the literature concerning beginning teachers’ experiences. These are usually used to describe negative contexts of survival with particular reference to surviving transition shock and predominantly classroom management issues. I feel the survival discourse has now shifted to beginning teachers’ surviving the contractual nature of
their work. Understanding professional identity can be problematic when attempting it against the backdrop of uncertainty regarding tenure. At this point in time it seems that beginning teachers surviving the contractual nature of teaching are in a lifeboat. It appears that until they gain ongoing tenure they cannot operate beyond being a beginning teacher because they are operating without a base. They are neither sinking nor swimming in this liminal state. They cannot feel like a ‘real’ teacher until they can operate with certainty.

Feelings of liminality were heightened for some of the participants in this study as they withdrew their level of commitment to teaching in an attempt to protect themselves against external forces. In these cases ‘becoming’ takes on a new meaning. In some instances an understanding of who one is becoming is restricted by the contract period of their employment. Some of the teachers in this study such as Tash report experiencing a “big relief knowing that I’m secure and more importantly, not having to reapply and reinterview in front of my colleagues which was the hardest part last year!” (email, 22nd February 2013). Lachy mentioned earlier in Part Four his frustration over “this bloody contract. If I was permanent it would be great. They’ve got you by the neck – they’ve got you by the throat!” Many participants explained how they enacted roles that would please others (colleagues and administration), rather than be of benefit to themselves or their students. Their identity was transformed within the confines of their period and condition of employment, which led to frustration at having to prove themselves in a manner that was perhaps not who they would have been, given more security. Other teachers such as Sari reported that being granted ongoing status has allowed her to feel so unbelievably happy with it all! I could go on for hours, but third year, I have figured out who I am as a teacher, and everything is making sense, which is great. Still plenty to learn, but that’s what makes teaching so amazing – best job! (email, 14th February 2013)

We can sense in these examples the pervasive presence of Gee’s institution-identity – a position authorised by authorities in institutions through laws,
rules, traditions, or principles of various sorts – that allow authorities to ‘author’ the position of the beginning teacher and to ‘author’ its occupant in terms of holding the rights and responsibilities that go with that position (Gee 2000, p. 102).

The theatre-based research approach was employed as both a method of data analysis and to capture the first experiences of the participants. ‘The First Time’ reconfigures and represents selected aspects of what the research uncovered. It transforms the participants’ experiences into aesthetic substance upon their embodiment within an aesthetic form; producing disequilibrium within the audience of the work as they vicariously re-experience what has been designed (Barone & Eisner 2012). Employing firsts as a lens to focus the data generation on concise events meant when these events were translated to the play script and stage, audiences were prompted to recall their own firsts in light of the experiences represented. The phenomenographic orientation encouraged a richly detailed description of participants’ experiences of their 1yr of teaching, and what they described as the conditions of their work, to expand on and understand the experiences represented in ‘The First Time’.

The process of the interviews revealed that all participants felt the need to reflect for extended periods (beyond the suggested time of one hour) on their experiences. The participants’ choice to remain in contact with me suggests that there is a need for beginning teachers to be afforded the opportunity to reflect on their experiences with someone outside their school, who has a particular interest in assisting them to develop an understanding of who they are in relation to their work. While school-based mentoring, and induction, can be important and effective processes for the beginning teacher, there may also be an agenda of ‘socialisation’ within these processes that can impede the development of an understanding of identity formation and transformation. Many of the participants’ communication with me to date
regards the uncertainty they feel while employed on a contract contrasting with the relief they express at gaining an ongoing position.

The choice to employ teachers as actors to represent the experiences of the participants in ‘The First Time’ assisted to capture the nature of 1yr teaching in a sensitive manner. It was also particularly valuable to the process of data analysis to discuss the representations with the teacher-actors in light of their own experiences of 1yr teaching. Discussions revealed that little has changed with regard to the nature of 1yr teaching and the conditions of 1yr teachers’ work in the past 20 years. The teacher-actors’ practice of representing the participants’ experiences has been identified as an opportunity for further research. In particular I plan to investigate the critically reflective practices of the teacher-actors during the process of their representation – namely how their experiences of representation focused their attention inwardly on their own teaching practices and identity and outwardly at the conditions of teachers’ work and identity.

The results revealed through the analysis of individual participant’s experiences support the notion that understanding identity transformation as something fluid and shifting can be difficult, particularly when the more visible moments of becoming are described within a survival discourse. As identified in the literature, 1yr teachers experience a range of liminal moments in ‘becoming’ a teacher that place the beginning teacher in survival mode. Contrasts between feeling like a ‘real’ teacher and viewing themselves as ‘just a grad’ are heightened in relation to the contractual nature of beginning teachers’ work.

The discussion in Part Five recognises the shared experiences of 1yr teaching between the participants with reference to how they see themselves in relation to others, and how their own and others’ language, practices, and knowledge shape the way these 1yr teachers came to understand who they were being and are becoming in relation to their work. Again, the survival
discourse reared its head as a theme similar across all participants’ descriptions of their experiences. This survival discourse was often situated within the conditions of their work, which was revealed in later interviews when many participants undertook the process of renewing their contracts. Their earlier positive experiences of becoming and belonging were overwritten with descriptions of feeling undervalued, or having to ‘perform’ in order to be seen as having value. The shared experiences of these 1yr teachers among each other, and with colleagues in similar situations, contribute to the construction of a collective beginning teacher identity where certain artefacts, skills, and practices were valued among the group.

Looking back at their 1yr experiences now, in their third year of teaching, many participants who remain on contract employment report a sense of dissatisfaction with teaching as a profession. Conversely the participants employed under more secure terms report a greater sense of satisfaction towards their work, and also resilience in the face of difficult experiences. As a result of this research I contend that the conditions of beginning teachers’ work, namely their employment terms, directly impact on how they view, respond to, and describe their experiences and the transformation of their identity. Within this phenomenographic inquiry the results can be viewed as categories of description, as abstract instruments that could be used in concrete cases in the future. A phenomenographic inquiry focuses on the applicability of categories of description in concrete cases, considering the possibility of applying categories in order to ‘make a statement about an historical fact e.g. that individual X exhibited conception Y under circumstances Z’ (Marton 1981, p. 196). For example Sari exhibits an optimistic attitude towards her identity as a teacher under ongoing employment conditions, while Maggie exhibits a pessimistic attitude towards teaching under contract employment conditions. Having said this, individual stability across contexts and situations is neither denied nor assumed within this phenomenographic paradigm. I find it valuable to describe the participant’s ways of thinking in certain situations as exhibiting
characteristics of others’ ways of thinking. However, my understanding of what conceptions are held and how many people hold these conceptions caused me to consider the way ‘results’ are often reported. My aim in this research was to question that which has remained hidden by answers; therefore I do not propose to provide reductionist answers here. Instead I return to a discussion of attrition and retention.

Initially this research was undertaken in order to respond to the relatively recent concern regarding beginning teachers’ attrition. While this research was not designed to confirm or refute statistics that suggest up to 50% of beginning teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years, the data reveals that these beginning teachers still harbour concerns over the conditions of their work, and that their transition to teaching can shape their future practice and commitment to a particular school, or teaching as a profession. The experiences of these 1yr teachers as they described them, and as represented in ‘The First Time’, demonstrate that, as reported in the literature, experiences of liminality, survival, and the absence of status were borne by the participants in this study. Yet these experiences alone are not the sole contributing factors to their intentions to leave or stay. The stark revelation from this research is the extent of the impact of the conditions of these teachers’ employment terms on their understanding of identity transformation, and commitment to teaching. The impact of the participants’ terms of employment has had a profound effect on some participants’ willingness to commit to, and remain in, the profession.

Positive responses to their ongoing status were expressed by participants such as Sari, Amelia – whose ongoing status has allowed her to travel and teach overseas knowing that she can return and “I’m going to be a better teacher for it” (email, 17th February 2013), and Lara, who wrote:

the ongoing is a relief. It’s nice to know that I would never have to apply for a position again if I didn’t want to. Having just bought a house, it also meant security…[and if] I ever want to start a family, I will get some paid maternity leave, as well as a position [held] for 7
years if I wanted it. It’s also nice to know that if I do decide to move schools, the ongoing comes with me. I feel I have worked hard for it and believe every graduate who has been at a school for two years or more should get ongoing. (email, 25th February 2013)

These responses reveal an optimistic outlook with regards to their future in teaching. Interestingly, now that Lara has a mortgage to pay off she chose not to go on strike in February 2013. Conversely, less positive responses from Maggie, Beth and Lachy align with Janet’s description, that contrasts with Lara’s, when Janet states “it sux [sic] not being ongoing!! Especially because we are starting to think about having children, and I won’t get the 7 years no pay held for me when I leave ☹️” (email, 5th February 2013). These participants’ experiences demonstrate that the continued contractual nature of their employment is negatively impacting on their attitude to teaching.

The saddest indictment of the contractual nature of these teachers’ work is that external forces, rather than their own expertise, determine their terms of employment. Maggie for example was told that there was no job for her at her first school in 2012 because she was on a contract. No teacher at her school with ongoing status was asked to leave. Maggie may have been better suited than a number of ongoing staff at the school, yet she was the one told to seek other employment simply because her employment conditions were different. The nature of contract teaching in Victoria is problematic because of the inequitable treatment of teachers based on employment status rather than expertise. In other industries contract employment is far fairer, and contracts are renewed (or not) on the basis of the performance of the practitioner, not the employment conditions of colleagues. Unless every teacher in a school is on a contract, the conditions of employment determine the longevity of each teacher – not the performance of the teachers themselves. Yes, teaching can be difficult, and some of the more difficult aspects of teaching can certainly contribute to attrition. However, teaching is made all the harder when, despite the level of expertise of the teacher, some teachers are permitted to stay because they are ongoing, and others are told to leave simply because they are on a
contract. This inequitable construction of a lower status for contract teachers directly impacts on their sense of agency and professional identity.

As stated by a representative from ISV in the audience of the premiere performance of ‘The First Time’: “there is still much we still need to do to improve things for new teachers.” This research reveals that the contractual nature of beginning teachers’ employment shapes the way these teachers view their future in the profession. ‘The First Time’ continues to act as a stimulus for discussion about the experiences of 1yr teachers, particularly among stakeholders who have the means to bring about changes to improve the conditions of beginning teachers’ work. I believe that works such as ‘The First Time’, as a means of disseminating research results, can be deemed successful as tools to enact change. As such, to conclude this section I turn to a reminder of some of the participants’ experiences represented in the performance and the research, and the words of van Manen regarding how such a work can speak to its audience.

Illustration 11. Maggie and Sari

Perhaps such a text is ultimately successful only to the extent that we, its readers, feel addressed by it – in the totality or unity of our being. The text must reverberate with our ordinary experience of life as well as with our sense of life’s meaning. This does not necessarily mean
that one must feel entertained by such a text or that it has to be an ‘easy read’. Sometimes ... if we are willing to make the effort then we may be able to say that the text speaks to us not unlike the way in which a work of art may speak to us even when it requires attentive interpretive effort. (van Manen 2007, p. 26)

Consider the pictures of Maggie and Sari above in light of their comments regarding the terms of their employment three years later. Maggie’s sheer excitement at starting her teaching career is now tempered with her comment in 2013 “I’m considering maybe doing something else. Not sure though. They don’t make it easy for us!” Now consider Sari’s difficulties in coming to understand the kind of teacher she needed to become in her specific context, compared to her comment now that she has gained an ongoing position: “I have figured out who I am as a teacher, and everything is making sense.”

**Further research**

Many of the findings in this research are subtle and worthy of more intensive investigation. One such aspect that emerged from the research is the impact of employment terms on the work of beginning teachers. This includes the impact of employment terms on attrition, and on induction, in considering how teachers and schools understand ‘becoming’ in relation to the context of the conditions of employment. There is also scope for further research based on the use of the theatre-based research performance ‘The First Time’ in pre-service teacher education.

**Understanding the impact of conditions of employment**

The contractual nature of beginning teachers’ work is a circumstance in Australia, and more specifically in Victoria, which is having a huge effect on beginning teachers’ willingness to remain in the profession. As mentioned in Part One: The problem, and Part Five: Situated work, Victorian teachers in government and Catholic schools have been striking for better employment
conditions. While the media focused attention on the teachers’ demand for better pay, the strike campaign also included the following:

- That contract employment be monitored so schools no longer advertise positions as contract when they should be ongoing.
- After 3 years in one school or 5 years teaching in the system, positions should be made automatically ongoing. (AEU 2013)

The AEU report that 47% of beginning teachers are currently on short-term contracts. They contend that contract employment discourages people from entering and staying in the profession, and report that teachers on contracts say the lack of job security is very stressful. The participants in this study, who went on strike in 2012, were at the time all employed on a contract. They expressed a resentment of those with ongoing status, which caused them to feel unequal in status. This in turn shaped the way some of the participants such as Maggie, Lachy and Beth felt about a continued career in teaching. The participants’ experiences support the AEU’s contentions, yet the relationship between contract employment and teacher attrition is largely absent from the literature.

When the purpose of education includes preparing children for citizenship, the cultivation of a skilled workforce, the teaching of cultural literacy, and the encouragement of critical thinking, the teacher’s role in the attainment of these purposes is paramount. A teacher who feels secure and valued in their job is better able to understand their role in their students’ development towards these purposes. When external factors impact on and impede a teacher’s understanding of their professional identity, both the retention of the teacher, and the purpose of education, are at risk. Our concern needs to extend beyond strategies to assist the retention of quality teachers to creating an environment where all teachers are valued equitably for their commitment to improving the educational outcomes of their students. Whether a teacher decides to remain in the profession or not, they should be able to make this decision on the basis of their personal willingness to commit to the purpose of education, rather than on the basis of feeling an absence of status and value based on their terms of employment.
I suggest that a large-scale study following up on the findings between beginning teachers’ contractual nature of employment and their willingness to stay in the profession would be of great value in furthering our understanding of the impact of employment terms on beginning teachers’ attrition. The current literature focuses more strongly on psychological factors that impact on attrition, and the nature of Generation Y lifestyles. However, there are systemic factors at play in addition to these, in the current employment climate in Australia that postpone these teachers’ traditional rites of passage to ‘adulthood’. The media in particular talk about this generation as being transient by nature, though this research suggests that the contractual nature of the participants employment shapes them to be transient far more than any of them had expressed an interest in being. In the current employment market where so many ongoing employment opportunities have been casualised, workers have to keep looking for, and changing, jobs. This can create a casual mindset. The participants in this study want to have an ongoing job – they are seeking ongoing employment. They desire the opportunity of feeling secure, and of having equal status, just like their ongoing colleagues do. These teachers understand that while it is relatively easy to get ‘work’, there is a different process involved in getting a ‘job/career’, which they feel excluded from.

Investigating induction for teachers on a contract

The contractual nature of 1yr teachers’ employment has an impact on their induction to the school. As discussed in Part Five: Artefacts as symbols of belonging, the participants in this study report that being granted the tools of their practice can assist them to feel as though they belong. To their knowledge Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) note that teachers’ feeling of belonging to the school where they are teaching has not been systematically studied in research on teachers. All of the participants in this study were employed prior to the beginning of the school year, and received some form
of school-based induction before their first day of teaching. For primary teachers this process often began at the end of the year prior to the year of employment. For the secondary teachers induction began in the week before teaching resumed at the start of the year. The cyclical nature of teaching leads to the assumption that school-based induction takes place at the start of the school cycle. Yet many 1yr teachers are employed on contracts to fill temporary leave positions. These 1yr teachers can often enter the profession part way through the school year. The value of induction experiences reported by the 1yr teachers in this study caused me to consider whether teachers employed during the year receive the same induction support, and the extent of induction and support they receive in relation to the length of their contract.

Participants in this study said their induction experiences, and in particular receiving tangible artefacts as symbols of belonging, made them feel as though they belonged. Despite having to reapply or wait to be told their contracts would be rolled over, all participants in this study were led to believe they would be employed at their first school for the whole school year. In addition Janet, Maggie, Sari and Beth had undertaken a practicum at their school in the year prior to beginning employment there. They report a stronger sense of understanding of their identity within their contexts, and report a smoother transition to teaching than some of the other participants. In contrast Cassidy reported receiving the least amount of induction, being employed after the conclusion of the previous school year. She stated the rushed and at times dismissive attitude towards her induction was one cause of her feelings of anxiety upon beginning to teach, which were then exacerbated by additional difficulties. In light of these teachers’ experiences I began to consider the following questions: How does being on a short- or fixed-term contract change the way the school positions the teacher? How does being on a short- or fixed-term contract impact on the way this teacher develops affiliations and interactions with others? Do schools see it as worthwhile to invest time in inducting short-term contract teachers?
A research study designed to respond to the questions above could assist a deeper understanding of the impact of fixed-term employment conditions on teacher attrition, as well as the role of induction in retaining beginning teachers. In addition to the theme of induction, further investigation into how collegiate practices shape the experiences of beginning teachers could be included as part of such research. It was revealed through this study that often the shared physical spaces these 1yr teachers were working in assisted to create authentic opportunities for collegiate practices to develop between experienced teachers and the 1yr teachers. These types of mentoring relationships developed organically through shared spaces and experiences. Cassidy in particular found that moving into the custom-designed flexible learning space half way through her 1yr of teaching made a huge difference to her practice, her feelings of being supported, and her understanding of her professional identity. Sandra reports seeking out colleagues who taught similar students and subjects to her as “adopted mentors”, and Lara, Sari, Sebastian, Janet, Maggie, and Tash all reported the benefits of developing a collegiate relationship with one or more teachers who shared the same teaching space or office. The spaces created through the BER money in many government schools have also created discussions around the way teachers now work within the spaces, with their colleagues, and with the students. These institutional practices reflect the way an individual school, and schools in general, are organised, and how these new spaces are challenging the once traditional shape of schools and schooling of discrete classrooms where individual teachers undertake the day-to-day job of teaching in isolation from each other.

The focus of this research is on the social meanings and significances of beginning teachers in relation to the formation and transformation of their identity. Within the confines of this research there has been limited scope to investigate the social meanings and significances between 1yr teachers and their more experienced colleagues, and 1yr teachers and their students. A
study exploring how these relationships shape values and norms that are attached to 1yr teachers’ differing roles could be explored in future research.

**Employing the methodology in teacher education**

As mentioned in Part Two: Employing a theatre-based research method the performance of ‘The First Time’ evolved into an effective tool that was more significant than anticipated. ‘The First Time’ was performed at a number of conferences, and the recording of the premiere performance has been distributed to a number of interested parties who have used it as a stimulus for discussion. The Alberta Teachers’ Association – a group of educators from Alberta, Canada, who meet monthly to discuss educational issues – used ‘The First Time’ as both point and counterpoint for a discussion of teacher identity formation in Alberta. Working both across their own experiences of teaching *firsts*, to the *firsts* of new teachers the Alberta group have worked with and supervised, they considered “what the play said to us”. A Victorian Teachers’ Association is planning to use the performance in workshops assisting 1yr teachers in their transition to teaching. I am planning to use scenes from ‘The First Time’ as provocations in workshops for undergraduates in their final semester of teacher education. These workshops will include a combination of viewing, discussing, re-enacting, and re-working the scenes from ‘The First Time’ based on a Forum Theatre workshop format. I am currently developing this participatory action research pilot project on the use of Forum Theatre in teacher education, which will begin in July 2013. In a teacher education situation, Forum Theatre may generally focus on the views and experiences of the teacher. The predominant format of a Forum Theatre event is where the spect-actor voices their opinion and enacts change. In this way Forum Theatre in its simplest form can be a valuable and uncomplicated method of providing teachers with the opportunity to create alternate outcomes in response to a situation.
Forum Theatre can give pre-service teachers a chance to experientially explore how they might resolve problematic 1yr teaching situations. The physicality of the scene work makes it possible to consciously access and use tacit knowledge. After many years of schooling, most of us know what to expect from teachers and students. There are stereotypical actions and reactions that we recognise as belonging to classrooms, a vocabulary of educational habits that are a kind of ‘situated knowledge’, since it is inscribed in and on the body as the subject lives through certain experiences (Hewson 2007, pp. 3-4). This embodied knowledge is just one subset of our cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) – ways of talking, acting, and socialising, as well as language practices, values, and styles of dress and behaviour. Boal (1985) too recognised that we have physical habits based on our social and work experiences, which may limit responses to concrete situations.

I aim to investigate whether Forum Theatre might help pre-service teachers understand identity-making as a fluid and ever-changing practice. Forum Theatre scenarios based on real-life events such as the ones represented in ‘The First Time’ have an advantage over case study discussions as they present smaller slices of experience, encouraging the consideration of important contextual clues like body language, gesture and emotion that case studies may not be able to portray with detail or nuance. Forum Theatre scenarios offer the opportunity to actively test hypotheses, and they provide immediate, precise feedback on intuitive decision-making skills (Hewson 2007, p. 3).

The attraction of Forum Theatre is that in addition to the active participants in the scene, the audiences too can benefit from observation. ‘Acting in the mind’ (Jansma & Others 1997) as a tool has its roots in metacognitive and reflective approaches to learning and can be described as a neural activity that is very similar to the activity accompanying the actual behaviour. Acting in the mind can overwrite previous behaviours, which may have become instinctive reactions to situations. In teacher education this can be especially
beneficial in ‘reprogramming’ teachers to react to teaching situations in ways that may seem counter-intuitive, but have been previously judged to be ineffective. While acting in the mind is a behaviourist approach to forming new neural pathways in response to certain stimuli, it recognises the importance of active engagement of the audience of a Forum Theatre event to assist their reflective practices. This move from the audience’s inactive level of participation, as in traditional verbatim theatre or performance as imitation, towards a more interactive or proactive stance such as in Forum Theatre triggers, participatory behaviour in the audience, encouraging the audience member’s imagination to flesh out the suggestions presented (Pelias & VanOosting 1987, p. 226).

The series of workshops will conclude in October 2013. It may be an interesting follow up to reconnect with the participants of these workshops in 2014 when they are in their 1yr of teaching, in order to consider the question: What happens when Forum Theatre methods are employed to assist pre-service teachers to explore teaching scenarios? I feel that this research could provide some interesting data through re-shaping my original research question of: What are the experiences of 1yr teachers? into: What can be learnt from the experiences of 1yr teachers?
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# APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Word Task

## Appendix 1.1: Word Task words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CODE OF CONDUCT</td>
<td>PLANNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>POLITICIANS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRICULUM STRUCTURE</td>
<td>PRINCIPAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVERSITY</td>
<td>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH</td>
<td>REFLECTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETHICAL CONDUCT</td>
<td>REPORTING TO PARENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</td>
<td>RESOURCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>SCHOOL COMMUNITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING THEORIES</td>
<td>STANDARDISED TESTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES</td>
<td>STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERACY</td>
<td>STUDENTS’ BEHAVIOUR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANDATORY REPORTING</td>
<td>STUDENT LEARNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA</td>
<td>SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC FACTORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMERACY</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAGOGICAL MODELS</td>
<td>VIT STANDARDS</td>
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### Standards for Graduating Teachers

**Professional Knowledge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teachers know how students learn and how to teach them effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers know the content they teach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers know their students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Practice**

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<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teachers plan and assess for effective learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teachers use a range of teaching strategies to engage students in collaborative learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teachers reflect on, evaluate, and improve their professional knowledge and practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Ethical Behaviours**

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<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teachers are active members of their profession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Characteristics of Teaching**

The characteristics of teachers' knowledge, practice, and professional engagement have been identified by teachers and pre-service educators as essential for the preparation of effective teachers. These characteristics provide a guide to effective teaching practices that all teachers graduating from a course of pre-service teacher education should have.

**Appendix 1.2: VIT Standards**

**STANDARDS FOR GRADUATING TEACHERS**

**Professional Knowledge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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**Professional Practice**

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**Professional Ethical Behaviours**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My chronicle! It's all nice and fun and I've been putting in my timetable and planning in it, and put all my class lists in the marking at the back. That made me feel good.

Marking — I still think marking's fun!

"I told my brother about you and he wants you to know that he thinks you're hot!"

I honestly felt sick to my stomach all day until I walked into that first class.

I had my first detention last night — that was a fun bunch. I had a boy come in 25 minutes late to detention — for lateness!

I'm always learning new stuff and trying new things.

I had an interview with one of my girls and both her parents are teachers, and one is a teacher at the junior campus, and when I saw that she's walking in I thought Omg you're a teacher, and you're a really good teacher, and you're my colleague, but she totally treated me like she was just the parent. There was no — she was probably more professional than I was because she knew how I'd be feeling! But she made me feel like oh ok I'm a teacher.

Why isn't it — VIT, someone out to see if I'm competent in what I do. That's... everyone feels like it's a big pain.

Remember last time you asked me how long it would take to start feeling like a real teacher? I didn't feel like one after the first day! Just having my class — they're really beautiful.

On the first day because it was raining a bit and all the kids didn't know where to line up yet, when the music started going ALL the kids came into the class with ALL their parents, and that was like 'Oh, hello... and all the parents... like all this stuff and when they'd finished I just have like 'I have no idea who said what!'

You should have seen me after the first day — so happy. It's like the best thing ever!

I guess as a grad I do ask a lot of questions.

It's stuff that has shaped me from before, and I still learn about, but I don't sit there and think well according to Pasget I should be doing this.

Seeing the progress has been really nice, that they've made. And the stuff you've worked on — I'm like that was because of me!

Once you get in your own classroom that's when all the real stuff begins. You're the one in charge. And no one really watches you, and you're the boss!

I've been in a laminating frenzy.

The stupidest thing, but even just seeing my name on the door — even that will feel like I belong here.

When that kid wet himself — I didn't expect it.

So one of the first things I've realised is to just chill out! Things are going to happen — you can't control everything, so that's one of my big light bulb moments — you just have to go with the flow a little bit. I just need to chill out.

My very first day I felt really mania — I just felt like I was running around the whole day.

The whole day I was really strange the first time I had them on the floor on my own I was like I'm responsible for you!

When I got my VIT card my status is 'inexperienced!!!'

It's kind of sad though because you look at your kids and they're all so independent and I'm about to send them off to grade 1 and these kids are coming in and they're 4 years old and they're rolling around on the carpet and they can't write their name, and I'm like Oh God — it starts all over again!

They call me Mum accidentally sometimes — it's funny!

I guess I felt like I didn't know enough to be a teacher — if that makes sense. Like if a student asks me about something — you know — on the other side of the world, or a random question — I felt like I wouldn't be able to answer them at all.

I get anxious moments — you know — I'm dreaming about it too.

No one prepares you for those first few weeks — this is what they don't tell you about — they neglect to tell you this part!

I think you need that re-fresh — get that weight off your shoulders — all stuff that's been happening, so re-Fresh and start again.

Getting to know the students, students getting to know me and each other, feeling more settled, more confident.

I was freaking out here, and this one — everything was a drama! Been through all of that and now it's just like I just go with it, and I'm so much more relaxed. I haven't had stress since the start of 2nd term.

I had an issue with one teacher though, about 2nd week of when we knew someone was going to burst at her first and that just happened to be me. She has a way of making you feel small and like you're doing the wrong thing. And I said to her I'm a first-year teacher — get stuffin' and I left... and she apologised and then went around telling everyone they need to look after me because I am a first-year teacher — that annoyed me.

Getting that teacher's diary, I know it's shallow but that was like 'yeh!'

I think that's what I'm looking forward to — the first class! No one there watching me!

All right this — on my first day ever, on the Friday! I was up in the office and I went down to the staff room at 8:45 for briefing, and I had period 1 spare, so I was like this is good. I've got time to get ready and stuff. And I went down and the extra sheet was out and I looked at the extra sheet and I had an extra period one! And it was a year 7 class so their first high school class! That was like a really interesting day to kick off my teaching career.

In my 1st year Grade 8 half way through a kid puts up his hands in class and said 'are you our teacher?' and I was just like — I'm gone and literally bought for ½ an hour and he just didn't realise.

Every day I was like 'no I love it, I love it, I love it and I still do!' That's kind of like... for me that's really unexpected for my personality.

Being a teacher now I'm realising that content is just one small part of being a teacher. It's organisation, getting the kids to actually do their homework, to be quiet in class, to listen, to contribute. There's so much stuff, more than just taking notes and being part of a class — it's massive.
I want to go to the orientation day as well, for like a 3/4 day to meet some of the boys. It was good, fun. I didn’t know which kids were in my class yet and maybe then I did feel like a teacher ‘cause the boys were like ‘Oh Miss are you teaching us next year?’ and I’m like ‘Yeah, I’m teaching you next year’ and they’re like ‘Oh this is cool’.

They give you a timetable and I was like ‘Oh yes – I’m a real teacher’

I guess the first one is when you are in the classroom by yourself with the boys – it was pretty big, but then I thought this is so much easier with a supervising teacher in here, because you don’t feel any pressure and then you can quickly see if you’re doing the right thing or the wrong thing and reflect on it after class.

I think I’ve started off a bit too laid back and easy going.

Another big thing I think is just realising the big difference between kids – levels. I don’t think I ever really – I don’t think you ever get to realise that until you’ve got your own students and you see ‘OMG his reading levels are really low!’ and you don’t know what you can actually do about it, and then you’ve got to try and modify some work and try and think about that on top of everything else is pretty hard.

I actually hated the word pedagogy when I went to uni – I was like ‘why do they call it that’ – it took me a while to get my head around it.

I got really excited about buying all activity books and going through all those worksheets and I sort of thought ‘Oh now I have to wait another year before I can do all this!’ Everyone’s like ‘Oh I’ve decorated my classroom’ and I’m like ‘Oh I don’t really have a classroom to decorate’.

The first thing I noticed was that I really wanted to be in the job. It was with one particular grade and it was during sport up on the top oval, and one of the girls was absolutely crazy and it set off a few of the others and all of a sudden I went from having a lesson that was all planned out – I thought nothing can go wrong and they were all out of control – one’s running off in one direction, and one’s running off in the other direction and I was just ready to scream.

I was like ‘Yes’! That’s like the first part of making you feel like a proper teacher – I have a proper name badge – not like a little visitor badge or a sticker that you have to sign in every day and stick on you – yeah that was a big help in making me feel like a proper teacher.

I’ve been sick so many times, I was sick 2 or 3 times during the year, and I was like that’s fine, the usual ones, and at the end of the month and a half I’ve been sick 3 times – I’ve had 2 and a half weeks sick, one week off, then sick for another week and a half, then off, then I got sick again last week and didn’t come into work because I was dead practically.

Because that was all that was spoken about at uni for 4 straight years so I’m a little bit sick of seeing them.
Appendix 3: Participants’ Wordles & Word Task

Appendix 3.1.1: Janet’s Wordles
Appendix 3.1.2: Janet’s Word Task
Appendix 3.2.1: Maggie’s Wordles
Appendix 3.2.2: Maggie’s Word Task

17 Words partially obscured by sunlight in bottom left are (top down) ‘Things that annoy me’, MEDIA, TECHNOLOGIES, VIT STANDARDS, RESOURCES, POLITICIANS
Appendix 3.3.1: Lachy’s Wordles
Appendix 3.3.2: Lachy’s Word Task
Appendix 3.4.1: Lara’s Wordles
Appendix 3.4.2: Lara’s Word Task
Appendix 3.5.2: Amelia’s Word Task
Appendix 3.6.1: Cassidy’s Wordles
Appendix 3.6.2: Cassidy’s Word Task
Appendix 3.7.2: Richard’s Word Task
Appendix 3.8.2: Sari’s Word Task
Appendix 3.9.1: Beth’s Wordles

18 Beth did not undertake the Word Task
Appendix 3.10.2: Sandra’s Word Task
Appendix 3.11.2: Tash’s Word Task
Appendix 3.12.2: Sebastian’s Word Task