ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	"NOW I KNOW WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF, I JUST DIDN'T REALIZE IT BEFORE": PRE-SERVICE TEACHER READINESS TO TEACH WHILE CONDUCTING COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
	Melanie Hardy-Skeberdis, Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership, 2025
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Although teacher preparation programs have critically important material to cover, there is much debate across teacher education scholarship regarding what to prioritize. Presently, limited time and resources are dedicated to developing the pre-service teachers' (PSTs) own sense of readiness to teach. This is particularly important, since each PST will ultimately be responsible for their own classroom as the instructor of record upon graduation. All educational stakeholders in the PST's future (students, parents, colleagues, administrators) will expect the novice teacher to be ready to teach, and to take on all the professional roles and responsibilities of a teacher from day one of their career. Self-efficacy is a strong indicator of teacher retention while a lack of a sense of readiness to teach can lead to teacher attrition. With the understanding that teacher retention is desirable, and thus self-efficacy and a sense of readiness are important qualities to develop during PST preparation programs, my motivation behind this dissertation

was to identify a possible method of developing those qualities in PSTs without increasing their workload or extending their program completion timeline.

This study builds off the work of Manasia et al. (2020), who established four dimensions of readiness to teach: Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Professional Engagement, and Self-Management. According to Manasia and colleagues, professional skills contributing to these dimensions include: conducting research and identifying reliable sources, collaborating with colleagues, engaging in self-reflection, managing time and resources on a long-term project, engaging with community members, seeking feedback, and dealing with the ever-changing nature of schooling. This dissertation leveraged a required action research project to provide PST participants with regular opportunities to practice skills directly related to their readiness to teach, exploring the following research questions:

1. How does PSTs' membership in a community of practice with a focus on conducting collaborative action research contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?
2. How does a teacher educator's membership in a community of practice with a focus on conducting collaborative action research contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?

In this mixed methods study, I examined the ways a group of PSTs developed their own senses of readiness to teach throughout one school year. I framed their readiness both with Manasia et al.'s (2020) four dimensions of readiness to teach and also captured the ways the PSTs described their readiness in their own words. We formed a community of practice (CoP) with the specific goal of conducting a collaborative action research (CAR) study. This allowed me to create opportunities for the PSTs to explore and practice professional skills in the Professional Engagement and Self-Management dimensions of readiness to teach.

Findings indicated that the PSTs' readiness to teach increased in all four dimensions from the beginning of the school year to the end, with particular growth in several subdimensions of Professional Engagement and Self-Management. Furthermore, evidence of growth within some sub-dimensions of readiness could be directly attributed to participation in the CoP or conducting CAR. Although evidence of growth due to a participating teacher educator is minimal, the PSTs reported that having a non-evaluative teacher educator as a participating member of the CoP was particularly important to their involvement in the group overall. Teacher educator-guided CAR projects have strong potential to increase PST readiness to teach in dimensions that are often under-addressed in traditional teacher preparation programs without adding additional strain to the programs or to the PSTs themselves.

"Now I know what I'm capable of, I just didn't realize it before":

Pre-Service Teacher Readiness to Teach While Conducting Collaborative Action Research in a Community of Practice

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2025

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Preface: Teachers, Learners, and the Pre-Service Problem

"In some cases we learn more by looking for the answer to a question and not finding it than we do from learning the answer itself" -– Lloyd Alexander, The Book of Three.

This project was inspired by my students. I was the instructor for a course about teaching young adult literature in secondary Language Arts classrooms. My students at the time were getting ready for, but had not yet started, their student teaching experiences. I designed that course to model what I had used young adult (YA) stories for in my own secondary classroom, leveraging the dynamic plots and easy-to-understand themes to engage my students in meaningful group discussions. Yes, we were talking about novels; we read YA classics from authors like Mark Twain and Lloyd Alexander, all the way up to contemporary stories by Jason Reynolds and John Green. But we were also talking about ourselves and our experiences that constructed the lens through which we each viewed the literature. And in my students, I saw anxiousness and frustration and confusion. All those difficult emotions centered around the fear that they were not yet ready to be a teacher.

I felt that there was something wrong with the way we prepare teachers long before I began studying teacher education, but engaging with scholars and scholarship about pre-service teacher education has helped me put those feelings into words, and to commit those words to paper. Year after year, I encountered pre-service and early career teachers who expressed that they just did not feel *ready* to teach. I certainly did not feel ready when I first started my career as a teacher. Preparing students for the realities of teaching is an undeniably challenging task. An abundance of theories and pedagogical practices must be crammed into a short time span, generally four years or fewer depending on the teacher preparation program (NCATE, 2010).

Teacher educators are burdened with the responsibility of deciding what topics are prioritized during their coursework, and those decisions may lead to gaps in a student-teacher's knowledge.

Amidst all the frantic transmission of pedagogical and theoretical knowledge, it is easy to forget that each pre-service teacher is a unique individual who will soon leave our teacher education classrooms and be leading their own. We forget that, just as important as knowing the latest and greatest teaching techniques, our students need to build up their own sense of 'readiness to teach' and to feel ready to teach *before* graduation. Upon completion of their program, the newly minted teacher is expected to 'hit the ground running' in their first few years as teachers. While novices in most professions are given the time and space to learn, grow, and master their craft, teachers are often tasked with caring for other peoples' children as of day one of their career; parents, principals, and other education stakeholders expect teacher performance to be as effective as possible in raising student achievement and to cause as little harm as possible to the children under their care. How can we expect novice teachers to take all that on without solidifying a personal belief that they are ready to teach?

On top of these high expectations of teachers, a growing dissatisfaction with working conditions is leading to more and more teachers exiting the profession (Kraft & Lyon, 2022). A particularly high percentage of those exiting the profession are early in their careers, with many between their third and fifth year of teaching (NCES, 2024). Two major sources of this dissatisfaction are the increased pressures to perform at a high level and the decreased agency teachers have in deciding what goes on in their classroom in every aspect from behavioral policies to curriculum content. It has been well established in teacher education scholarship for over a decade that empowering teachers to generate inquiries in their own practice and to be agents of change in the classroom, school site, and community are critical skills to combat

difficult working conditions and to solve their own problems (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). An introduction into teacher inquiry through action research during the pre-service teaching years can not only develop, but solidify, that inquiry stance within novice teachers from the very beginning of their careers. Further, entering the profession with confidence in one's ability to investigate problems and create change in one's own classroom are key components to holding an overall sense of readiness to take on the daily challenges of modern teaching.

Many school districts are experiencing a shortage of teachers (*Teacher Shortage Areas - U.S. Dept. of Education*, n.d.). Perhaps more than ever, there is a significant need for a large number of well-prepared teachers to enter the profession and to flourish. But how is this possible? Expediting graduation risks the loss of critical content that pre-service teachers need. Taking extra time to ensure each teacher candidate is well-prepared risks extending program duration to unsustainable lengths. Running students through an assembly-line of 'one size fits all' teaching procedures conflicts with the promise of equitable, culturally sustaining, and humanizing education (Philip et al., 2019). What can we do with our existing timelines and resources to make teacher education as effective and efficient as possible while honoring the individuality and humanity of each candidate? How do we make time to develop a sense of readiness to teach, and when do we empower them to conduct their own research? These questions are, as Bettina Love (2019) would say, my North Star. These questions guided my work before I entered my doctoral program, helped me navigate my coursework, and set me on the path for this dissertation.

Foreword: An Open Letter to You, the Reader

Dear Reader,

There is a line often repeated in a book series I love very much by Garth Nix:

Does the walker choose the path,
or the path the walker?

Within the series, the line is spiritual in origin and many characters ponder its meaning when considering their personal relationship with the concepts of fate and destiny. Of course, this is from a book series in which magic is real, predicting the future is possible, and many of the main characters possess power over life and death itself, so their ponderings are perhaps a bit more dramatic than my own. I am not sure what my future holds, but are any of us?

I like this quote because I am not a strong believer in fate, but I am a believer in the power of saying "yes" to things. I set out on my doctoral journey with a seed of an idea for my dissertation in mind, but I remained open to things that came my way. Many people had said "no" to me in my path toward grad school, so when opportunities arose, I said "yes". When I was able to take courses that were very aligned with what I was thinking about doing, I said "yes". When I met the right people, I said "yes". This dissertation is not the ultimate expression of my life's work, nor do I think it should be. This is just the beginning of the work I want to do, the research I aim to conduct. I have so many more things to do, to try, to say "yes" to.

I could tell you that this will be short, but we both know that is a lie. You are capable of looking at the page count. I can, however, tell you that I've made every effort to make this interesting. I've tried to infuse bits of narrative and tell the stories of my students and of myself where I can.

I think you'll learn a great deal about me from reading this dissertation. I am, after all, the author. And the narrator, and a participant, and the focus of chapter 5, and the lead researcher, and a few other things. That's part of my point. If you don't already know me, or don't know me well, and come away from reading this dissertation feeling as though you know me a bit better, then I have succeeded in that regard. I hope you also come away feeling you know my four focal participants a bit more, even if I've had to change their names. They are four whole, real human beings who put their whole humanity into this project with me and I am forever grateful for the time I spent with them. I know they each have a bright future ahead of them, wherever path they choose. We are all real people, and so are you. My point is that the people who are part of this dissertation are very important, and you have become an important part of this dissertation by reading it. And I wonder how your path might be changed by reading it, or mine by you reading it. The world is a strange and vast but also tightly interconnected place. I'm glad you are here with me.

I am curious to know what you think when you've finished reading. When I ask myself if I chose the path of this dissertation or if this dissertation chose me, honestly, I am still not sure. But if you ask me which I believe to be the case, my answer will always be "yes".

Mel Hardy-Skeberdis

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Mr. Timothy McMullin, my 6th grade teacher.

Mr. McMullin was constantly encouraging of my writing, my filmmaking, my creativity, and my general weirdness and self-expression. He let me read whatever book I preferred in place of what was in the curriculum, provided that it was appropriately challenging – which it always was. He let me write short stories and read them for the class on Friday afternoons. He let me make videotaped book reports using paper doll puppets – and this was in the 90s, so the technology to make that happen was not easily accessible at that point in time. He allowed me to take every opportunity in his class to express myself creatively as long as it meant proving my learning, and I learned more from him than I did than from most of my other teachers combined. He encouraged to become the person I am today. I was always excited to show him what I would come up with next. After every video project, he would assert that I would win an Oscar someday, and he jokingly would ask me to mention him in my award-winning speech.

Mr. McMullin was taken from the world far too young. I became a teacher so that I could be just like Mr. McMullin for the next generation of students, and I became a teacher educator so that I could help other teachers be just like Mr. McMullin for their own students. If you have a teacher just like Mr. McMullin in your life who is still with us, I hope you take some time today to thank them.

Mr. McMullin, I didn't win an Oscar, but I'm pretty proud of this. This is for you.

Acknowledgments

There are many wonderful folks who have made this dissertation possible, and to whom I owe a great deal of thanks.

To my Core Four – Zoey, Robert, Benjamin, and Kaitlin – without you and your dedication, there would be no paper. There would be no project. It was an honor to bring your experiences and your voices to the page, and I hope someday soon we can publish some of our work as co-authors with your real names. You *are* teachers, and you *are* researchers, and I am glad to have been a member of your community no matter where in the world you end up.

To my dissertation committee – thank you all so much for your time and for your support. To Dr. Wexler, thank you for agreeing to be my Dean's representative, and thank you for encouraging me to keep the survey instrument as-is and to do a little bit of math in this dissertation. To Dr. Anthony – working with you has been a joy. I suppose it is a bit ironic that my work on my dissertation actually meant that we got to work together less this past year, but perhaps it will lead to us working together again in a different capacity. Either way, it was an honor and the EdD folks are lucky to have you at the helm. To Dr. Wiseman – you are the first person from TEPD that I met. It was because of you that I applied and it is because of you that I felt a sense of belonging at this university and within this program. Thank you for all the guidance, support, and kindness you have given to not only me, but to all the students in TEPD. To Dr. Turner – thank you for advocating for me to take Intro to Qual with you during my first semester of the program even though it was mostly filled with second-year students. Whether you realized it or not, that helped set me on a path that would allow me to complete my courses as efficiently as I did and allowed me to focus my time on my dissertation. Thank you for reminding us to take care of ourselves and to take care of each other. Your advice is, and has

always been, invaluable. To Dr. Peercy – it's funny to think it all started with organizing a few video clips on a spreadsheet. I don't think I would be able to properly thank you for the incredible mentorship you have given me over the last few years, certainly not in a few sentences. So I will just say thank you, thank you, thank you for everything. And sorry this is so long. I *did ask* if there was a page maximum.

I also want to thank Dr. Walkoe, Dr. Galindo, Dr. Elby, Dr. Brown, Dr. Liu (both of them), Dr. Fagan, Dr. Blazar, Dr. McGrew, Dr. Scribner, Dr. O'Flahavan, Dr. Polat, Regina Cole, Kay Moon, and the other incredible members of the TLPL faculty and staff who have supported me along the way in both my coursework and in generally surviving being a doctoral student. Thank you to Dr. Eubanks, Dr. Snell, Dr. Neumerski, Dr. Hunter, Dr. Callahan (can't stop me, it's in writing), the soon-to-be Dr. Blondonville-Ford, and the other folks at the CEii who gave me lots of opportunities to explore the innovative ways universities and public schools can interact, and to Dr. Imig, who put an immense amount of faith in my capabilities.

Thank you to Dr. Fredricks, Dr. Tigert, Dr. Jones, and Dr. Peterson (and Dr. Peercy, too) – you have each provided me with guidance as a mentor and with kindness as a colleague. I have loved co-writing and co-presenting at conferences with each of you (even when the schedules were crazy!) and I hope we continue to do so.

To Jess, Elizabeth, Faith, Doug, Rasha, Vivica, Tifanee, and Lindsey – thank you for taking the time to read my writing, answer my questions, look at my messages, laugh at my jokes, keep me sane. It is the least I can offer to do the same for you. For my other grad student friends, who I hope I do not offend too deeply for not offend by not listing by name but ultimately do need to keep this section under a dozen pages, I love you and I believe in you and I'll see you at AERA.

To my family and non-grad school friends – thank you for believing that I could possibly make it this far, even if you did call me Dr. Butthead sometimes. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for giving me access to a million different books growing up. Thank you to Bailey for always being on my side. Thank you Nana, Grampy, and Auntie for helping to make higher education something that was financially possible for me. Thank you to Sara, Margaret, Lillie, Jo-Anne, Julie-Anne, Kerrilynn, Emily, and Alissa for being the kinds of best friends growing up that made it fun to be smart. Thank you to Peapod Squad and the AMV Theater crew for being the kinds of friends that love and support me, even though I take everything too seriously (including having fun). Thank you to Dan for everything – for being an excellent cat-wrangler, proof-reader, truth-teller, and hug-giver. Thank you for still agreeing to marry me even though I turned in my Comps the day before our wedding. Thank you for staying married to me even though I wrote most of this dissertation at our kitchen table. Thank you.

Last, but not least, thank you to my teachers from North Smithfield, Rhode Island. The more time I have spent in public education, the more I realize how incredibly lucky I was to have an unusually high number of extremely creative, extremely dedicated teachers who were also particularly humanizing before humanizing pedagogy was part of teacher education curriculum. I would not have had such a love of learning, and would not have become a teacher, if I did not have so many positive teacher role models in my life. Thank you for that, and for everything else.

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List of Abbreviations

AR	Action Research	First used on p. 11
……CAR	Collaborative Action Research	First used on p. 12
……PAR	Participatory Action Research	First used on p. 17
CCA	Constant Comparison Analysis	First used on p. 125
CoP	Community of Practice	First used on p. 6
DP	Discursive Psychology	First used on p. 123
ELA	English Language Arts	First used on p. 88
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development	First used on p. 5
FIPR	Fully Inclusive Practitioner Research	First used on p.107
MCERT	Master's with Certification Degree	First used on p. 88
MT	Mentor Teacher	First used on p. 42
…….AMT	Accidental Mentor Teacher	First used on p. 218
PST	Pre-Service Teacher	First used on p. 2
TE	Teacher Educator	First used on p. 32
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	First used on p. 5

Chapter 1: Introduction and Contextualization of Pre-Service Teaching

It's Thursday, the first week of September. I'm sitting in the small graduate student workspace on campus with seven pre-service teachers crowded around me. Another two, tuning in through Zoom, are balanced in my hands as I try to angle my laptop to get everyone in frame. They're restless, tired, nervous. Most of them have just met each other for the first time this week. They'll be starting their student teaching internships soon, and they've spent all week staring down the informational firehose of what's to come this year. Working a full school day almost every day, plus a full course load, plus a daunting portfolio project, plus licensure exams, and none of it paid work. It's a daunting prospect. But I want to do something to help. Something to reduce the burden that doesn't also reduce their opportunities to learn and grow. From here, it seems impossible. But these nine students have put their trust in me, have showed up to build a little community with me. It wasn't that long ago that I was in their shoes. I remember.

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It's June, eight years earlier. I'm sitting in a room that the campus map labels as a classroom, but really seems like a closet. There's a single round table, and the room is so cramped that you can barely pull out a chair to sit before hitting a wall. There are twelve of us, plus Dr. Schafer. Our collective advisor, Dr. Moss, had just dropped off a photocopied checklist of everything we need to accomplish this year in order to graduate before informing us that she is going on a sabbatical to Europe and would be unavailable to us for most of the coming year. We are confused, worried, overwhelmed. I'm already working full time as a teacher along with three of my classmates, and we're going to have to find time to observe other teachers while also doing our own teaching jobs. Another two are back at school after a hiatus of being stay-at-home moms, wondering how their young families will get by with them spending so much time away.

The rest just finished their undergraduate programs and are lamenting having to leave their side jobs since student teaching and classes take up more time than their undergraduate work did. How are any of us going to make all this work? Dr. Schafer, who just graduated with her Ph.D. last year and has returned to teach one course as a favor to Dr. Moss, clears her throat. "I think," she says, standing, "that first we're going to need a bigger room."

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1.1 Prioritizing Teacher Readiness Within Teacher Education

The questions I want to examine in this dissertation (What can we do with our existing timelines and resources to make teacher education as effective and efficient as possible while honoring the individuality and humanity of each teacher candidate? How do we make time to develop a sense of readiness to teach, and when do we empower them to conduct their own research?) revolve around questions of teacher readiness and teacher preparation efficacy. It's important that I lay out the current landscape of university-based teacher education within the United States to create a shared understanding of where we are as I prepare to argue how we could improve. Academic debate in the field of teacher education tends to focus on what teachers should be able to do (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Britton et al., 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Peercy et al., 2022; Salazar, 2013) or what they must know (Bullock, 2011; Kereluik et al., 2013; Martin & Mulvihill, 2017; Shulman, 1987) to become fully licensed teachers. Teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy have been accepted as a strong indicator for longevity in the profession for several decades (e.g., Yost, 2006), and a lack of readiness to teach for pre-service teachers (PSTs) can be an indicator of early attrition (e.g., Ávalos & Valenzuela), yet there are few studies that deeply explore the development of a sense of readiness to teach from the pre-service teacher's perspective. Much of the literature focuses on the perspective of the evaluators:

professors, university researchers, mentor teachers, and other teaching program personnel are often the ones who have the programmatic authority to deem a PST as 'ready or not.' This is in contrast with broader psychology research in job readiness for positions that require cognitive and interpersonal skills wherein findings suggest that self-efficacy and trainee perceptions of job readiness are more reliable indicators of future job performance than evaluators' perceptions of job readiness (Keim & Strauser, 2000; O'Brien, 2003). Furthermore, empirical studies of pre-service teacher readiness from the last two decades are often contextualized around a specific aspect of readiness to teach, as in readiness to teach in inclusive classrooms (e.g., Loreman et al., 2013; Taylor & P. Ringlaben, 2012), readiness to address controversial topics (e.g., Nganga et al., 2020), or readiness to incorporate classroom technologies (Boloudakis et al., 2018; D. Brown & Warschauer, 2006; R. J. Chen, 2009). This dissertation adds to the significantly smaller body of teacher education literature that examines what factors contribute to PSTs' broader sense of readiness to teach, specifically examining their own feelings of readiness to take on all the complexities encompassed by professional teaching.

Broadly, readiness for teaching can be defined as "the preparedness of student teachers for the teaching profession" (Mohamed et al., 2017a, p. 153) with a level of professional competencies that would allow them to effectively assume all future job responsibilities and a vision that is beyond the conventional practices (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). For the purposes of this dissertation, teacher readiness is defined as *an internal notion, possessed by the pre-service teacher themselves, that they are prepared to handle both the standard competencies of*

the teaching profession and the non-standard challenges[1] *that may arise in their future work.* This definition is aligned with one presented by Manasia et al. (2020) in their publication that introduced an instrument to evaluate PSTs' readiness to teach. The instrument itself, as well as conversations stemming from the use of the instrument, are used extensively during the data gathering stage of this research.

Manasia and her team build their work upon frameworks of teacher professionalism and posit four central dimensions of teacher readiness: (D1) Professional Knowledge, (D2) Professional Practice, (D3) Professional Engagement, and (D4) Self-Management (Manasia et al., 2020, p.4). Their conception of (D1) *Professional Knowledge* is derived from the cross-examination of teaching standards across multiple countries, and includes knowledge of learning and learning outcomes, didactic transposition and curriculum, and knowledge about instructional strategies and learning activities to support instruction. In preparing their definition of (D2) *Professional Practice,* Manasia and her team directly mapped their work onto a portion of Danielson's Framework for teaching (2007), a commonly used framework for the professional evaluation of teachers with widespread use in US-based school systems (*Danielson Group: About Us*, 2024), focusing on the ability to translate professional knowledge into practice. *Professional Engagement (D3)* is defined as "a pillar of professional learning required to support career development and teacher professionalism" (Manasia et al., 2020, p.5) that includes reflection, school service, personal development, and ethical conduct. The final domain, (D4) *Self-Management,* is also rooted in Danielson's (2007) framework and centers project

[1] In this definition, "non-standard challenges" refers to the uncertain and unpredictable nature of teaching, and that not all aspects of the teaching profession are something that one is able to be fully prepared for (Helsing, 2007).

management and a teacher's ability to allocate time and resources to achieve goals. Manasia and her team align their instrument not only with current conceptions of teacher readiness, but with an international initiative stemming from UNESCO[2] (2017) related to education for sustainable development (ESD).

The UNESCO sustainability initiatives, which has been in progress for just over two decades with a goal of achievement in 2030, are an extremely complex and ambitious attempt to address global challenges to humanity. This initiative centers education, as educators are needed to enable future generations to keep pace with the progress of technology, globalization, and the new challenges they will encounter. Most specifically, a global cohort of teachers with an understanding of ESD is needed to address global conditions that "require creativity and self-organized action because the complexity of the situation surpasses basic problem-solving processes that go strictly according to plan" (UNESCO, 2017, p.10). Guidelines for teacher educators focus on developing proficiencies with collaborative research and communal problem-solving, communication, and with equitable and culturally sustaining educational practices. Although current local teacher education legislation does not explicitly state adherence to the UNESCO ESD initiative, this dissertation is rooted in this international call for future educators to be well-versed in collaborative problem-solving. Most specifically, I focus on collaboration to examine the intersection of teacher readiness and teacher research through the following research question:

[2] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), most specifically the education sector within UNSECO.

How does PSTs' membership in a community of practice (CoP) with a focus on conducting collaborative action research contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?

A second research question emerged during the study related to the ways in which I, as a teacher educator with more classroom and research experience than the PSTs, influenced the group's sense of readiness to teach through my participation in the CoP. This second research question is:

How does a teacher educator's membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting collaborative action research contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?

I first examine the intersection between the significant workload required of PSTs during their education and the call for a greater programmatic focus on readiness to teach, particularly the tensions within teacher education related to my line of inquiry about readiness to teach: what teachers must know and must be able to do, whether content or pedagogical knowledge is more important, and when we make time and space to prepare our PSTs to engage in humanizing work with their diverse learners. I also aim to clarify certain assumptions within teaching and teacher education about who gets to 'decide' that a teacher candidate is ready to teach in order to provide foundation for my work on how PSTs develop a sense of readiness to teach, and how readiness is fostered through their participation in collaborative action research. This is inspired by my personal experiences and observations within teacher education as well as calls within the teacher education community to find programmatic time and space for more humanizing support for PSTs (e.g., Kondo, 2024; Peercy et al., 2024; Reid, 2024). In Chapter 2, I examine the current body of literature about conducting action research with PSTs and the ways in which reported outcomes of conducting this research are aligned with commonly accepted domains of teacher readiness. In Chapter 3, I outline both the research procedures as well as a rationale connecting

my methodological choices with my research questions. In Chapter 4, I present findings related to my first research question. Chapter 5 houses the findings of my second research question. I conclude with a discussion of the findings, the implications of said findings for the field of teacher education, the limitations of this study, and potential areas of future research in Chapter 6.

1.2 Embedding Collaborative Engagement Within Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education research surrounding collaboration between PSTs during the preparation program report that it is largely beneficial. Studies related to PST collaboration in the past decade or so include, but are not limited to, examining the professional competencies gained by PSTs when collaborating with others (Gentry, 2012), establishing professional learning communities of PSTs in order to emulate a collegial work environment (Hoaglund et al., 2014), and capitalizing on the rise of social networking to create more informal collaboration opportunities for PSTs in similar programs (López Solé et al., 2018). Each of these studies regards the skills developed and assets gained during peer collaboration as fundamental to their future teaching careers. Research on PST collaboration also indicates that the relationships that emerge during this time, as well as the interpersonal skills that develop as a result, are crucial in reducing teacher attrition during the first few years of service (Hoaglund et al., 2014).

There are, however, some difficulties with incorporating official spaces for PST collaboration into teacher education programs. A recent study by Bush and Grotjohann (2020), for example, found that PSTs attitudes towards collaboration were increasingly negative during the time when they were also interning at a school site. Another study (Brown et al., 2018) specifically investigating potential issues with PST collaboration reported that a lack of buy-in from all participants, difficulties aligning topics of focus, and having limited time for deep

reflection as challenges that could emerge while PSTs collaborate in their teacher education program (pp. 13-14). Each of these three challenges occurred, in varying degrees of severity, during the course of the dissertation study and will be described in Chapter 4. Across the literature, however, there is a strong indication that the benefits of collaboration among PSTs during their teacher education program far outweighs any potential challenges.

A recent literature review conducted by Willegems et al. (2017) found that collaboration while conducting research was particularly beneficial for PSTs, and multiple studies examined in their review report overall improvement in knowledge and attitudes toward collaboration, reflection, inquiry, and student-centered teaching (Willegems et al., 2017, p. 242). The specific collaborative structures present in the current body of teacher education literature regarding PST-conducted action research, as well as the specific collaborative structure of this study, will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

1.3 Situating Teacher Research Within Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education scholarship over the past several decades has repeatedly found that providing teachers with the tools they need to conduct inquiries in their own classroom is overwhelmingly beneficial (e.g., Burns, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Despite this scholarship, not all teacher preparation programs include a research or inquiry-based component in their coursework. Within the United States, requirements for teacher licensure are decided at the state level, and there is no national requirement to include teacher inquiry as a component of licensure. Amongst calls from leading teacher education researchers to implement best practices in teacher education programs (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2023), there is still resistance to change.

1.3.1 Tensions Surrounding Teacher Prep Curriculum

As previously noted, there are significant tensions within teacher education scholarship about what we 'make time for' during the very limited window of a teacher preparation program, which can be as long as four years but is often much shorter. My research embeds conversations around readiness to teach within existing program work, and thus the tensions determining what kinds of work take precedent are particularly relevant.

A foundational article by Ken Zeichner and colleagues (2015) declared that traditional teacher induction programs are viewed by the general public as a failure, and recent scholarship from Kraft and Lyon (2022) that examined a number of quantitative studies and surveys shows that public perceptions of teaching is critically low. Efforts to combat these perceptions, and to revitalize and reorganize teacher preparation programs within the last two decades have generally fallen into two camps: those who seek to standardize pedagogical practices to educate a large cohort of 'high quality' teachers, and those who seek to dismantle and rebuild a new program that no longer perpetuates harmful minoritization and othering of peoples. To express this in an overly simplified way, programs and individual teacher educators can be oriented on a spectrum between prioritizing practices for teaching that could be impactful in any classroom (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Grossman, 2021; McDonald et al., 2013) and prioritizing humanizing, individualized approaches that address each student holistically (Andrews et al., 2019; Bartolomé, 1994; Price & Osborne, 2000; Salazar, 2013), though multiple teacher educators have been exploring the ways in which these two priorities can both be addressed in an equitable and justice-oriented way (Peercy et al., 2022; Philip et al., 2019; Schiera, 2021). This middle ground is also where I situate my work, as it is most aligned with my motivation to

harness available resources of teacher preparation programs while still advancing calls for equity and inclusion in a meaningful way.

1.3.2 Situating PST Research in Teacher Preparation Curriculum

Programs and the content that is prioritized differ considerably from state to state, institution to institution, and even from program to program. Thus, it is extremely difficult to situate action research generally within teacher preparation, and this will be addressed in depth in Chapter 2 through a literature review of PST action research projects. Due to the high variability between programs, scholarship regarding research requirements across institutions is rather limited and outdated (e.g., Hansford & Maxwell, 1993). It is standard practice, however, to include research as a requirement for graduate degrees (Bourke & Holbrook, 2013) though a degree of variability between rigor and requirements is still present.

Many states require some level of graduate degree to teach or to make advancements on the teacher pay scale, and most graduate-level teacher education programs include a research component of some kind (Hill, 2007). The existence of this programmatic requirement indicates that, at some institutional level, there is value in fostering academic research skills for future teachers. Despite this notion, the research produced by PSTs and practicing teachers alike is significantly undervalued when compared to knowledge produced by university scholars (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This reveals a gap across teacher education literature: an overall absence of authentic PST voices as co-researchers and co-authors. Research generated by PSTs is generally viewed as a simple completion of a degree requirement, and examples of published research (e.g., Hamilton & Margot, 2019) are often written from the perspective of teacher educators. It is within these required research assignments for PSTs, however, that there is space to address my mission of more readiness-affirming teacher education work. This can be done by

infusing more intentional opportunities for PSTs to engage with teaching skills that are more difficult to practice during their teacher preparation program, such as engaging in research that supports their personal professional development. Further, I endeavor to use methods in my own research that accurately capture authentic PST dialogic data and to represent PST participants' voices purposefully and thoroughly throughout this dissertation, even though a paper of this kind is traditionally written solely from the singular author's perspective. By doing so, I aim to demonstrate the value of my PST participants' research and honor the significant impact PST research had on this dissertation.

While conducting research may not be the primary focus of the teaching profession, teachers engage in ad hoc research on a daily basis. Throughout their text describing teacher inquiry stance, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) clearly position the daily activities of teaching in alignment with research practices. Further, they highlight the various pedagogical and professional benefits of weaving an inquiry stance into one's teaching practice, such as an increased awareness of gaps in instruction, an increased professional growth mindset, and an improved sense of trust within the school community. An inquiry stance underpins three interrelated concepts: teacher inquiry, teacher research, and action research (AR). Teacher inquiry is investigatory action stemming from that teacher's inquiry stance, usually related to questioning classroom practices to improve student outcomes. Teacher research involves the intentional engagement in systematic investigation, usually also with the intention to improve student outcomes or classroom conditions. AR is a specific subset of research practices, not directly aligned with teaching but can be engaged in by teachers, that involves cycles of intervention (taking action) within the investigation rather than just observation. While teacher inquiry is not always research, teacher research is not always AR, and AR does not need to be

conducted by teachers, there is an alignment of mindsets that remains relevant to the teaching profession. Here, I am drawing on the works of both Cochran-Smith and Lytle and of Burns to tease out differences in these three concepts that are sometimes used interchangeably when describing research within teacher preparation. This dissertation focuses on AR, but with the hope that participants will engage in their own teacher research in the future. Preparing student teachers to engage in formal research or informal inquiry work is as important as any other topic of focus during their preparation program. As mentioned previously, there is a noticeable incongruity between the research requirement for teachers pursuing a master's degree and the ways in which that research is valued in academia. This incongruity will be explored in the Literature Review section of Chapter 2.

1.4 The Intersection of Teacher Readiness and Teacher Inquiry

Throughout *Inquiry as Stance* (2009), Cochran-Smith and Lytle, as well as the authors contributing to each chapter in their book, repeatedly reference the benefits of conducting teacher research. They describe the ways in which teachers can create practitioner inquiry CoPs both locally and broadly, consider and reconsider notions of what it means to be a professional teacher, rethink and renegotiate the relationships between research, practice, and policy, and connect the researchers to social justice and school change efforts. In her book titled *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers* (1999), Burns describes the benefits of collaborative action research (CAR) as allowing teacher researchers to engage with the realities of curriculum change, facilitating collaboration with other teachers in generating solutions to school problems, gaining a positive sense of professional and personal growth, increasing self-awareness, and gaining new clarity about their classroom practices (pp. 14-15). The benefits of engaging in teacher CAR that Burns describes are aligned with the same

outcomes Manasia et al.'s (2020) instrument seeks to measure, yet there is a gap in teacher education literature examining the ways in which PSTs engaging in CAR might influence the researchers' collective sense of readiness to teach.

It is common for new teachers to enter the profession with feelings of uncertainty about their teaching abilities, and perceptions of their own limited readiness have proven to be a key factor in novice teachers abandoning the profession (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016). Examples of in-service teaching apprenticeships and a gradual training/release of responsibility process for early career teachers are rare though emerging (Waterman & He, 2011). What is much more common is a model where unlicensed PSTs hold internships in one or more classrooms during their teacher education program, and then graduate from that program as newly licensed teachers. As it currently stands, a newly licensed teacher is generally granted their own classroom and cohort of students to teach as instructor of record for the school year immediately without much, if any, day-to-day oversight and support. It is for this reason that, while the opinions of other stakeholders may influence the hiring and placement of novice teachers, when the first day of school begins novice teachers generally must rely on what they learned in their teacher preparation program and on themselves. This is why PSTs' self-conceptions of readiness are a powerful link to their early career confidence, and ultimately, to their performance and retention within the profession (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Kelly et al., 2020; Van den Borre et al., 2021). For this reason, I seek to understand how teacher education programs can leverage existing research assignments that are part of PSTs' preservice preparation program to build a sense of readiness to teach within and among PSTs.

It is important to note that, while I conducted a CAR project with my study participants, my study is not specifically *about* CAR. By this I mean that the purpose of this dissertation is not

to dig deeply into the logistics and findings of conducting a CAR project with PSTs, but to examine the ways in which a collective sense of readiness to teach emerges during the process of collaborating as a CoP (further defined in section 1.5.3) while conducting CAR. In response to a relative absence of naturalistic PST dialogue about their readiness to teach within teacher education literature, a significant focus of the design of this dissertation was to identify a focus for the CoP that would likely generate authentic conversations about readiness without the focus being readiness itself. In the case of this dissertation, conducting CAR as the central focus of the CoP served my overall purpose by simultaneously being (1) a group activity around which CoP meetings can be centered; (2) a task that satisfies a teacher education program requirement, therefore not generating any additional work for PST participants that they wouldn't already be doing; and (3) an endeavor with research-backed likelihood of PSTs experiencing change to their collective sense of readiness to teach.

Teacher research and teacher inquiry both work from the understanding that "practitioners are deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself and that the goal of teacher learning initiatives is the joint construction of local knowledge, the questioning of common assumptions, and the thoughtful critique of the usefulness of research generated by others both inside and outside contexts of practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 2). CAR, as described by Burns (1999), is designed to "strengthen the opportunities for the results of research on practice to be fed back into educational systems in a more substantial and critical way" (p. 13). The centrality of practicing teachers and PSTs as critically important agents of change within education, the importance of encouraging and empowering teachers to conduct their own research, and the value of teachers working together in a CoP are all features from the teacher research and AR literature that are critical to my dissertation project.

1.5 A Note About Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, specific terms have been selected to represent various roles within teacher education that are sometimes referred to by other names. In this section, I will both define the specific parameters of each term and explain the reasoning behind their inclusion or exclusion within this writing.

1.5.1 Pre-service Teacher

Most prominently used throughout my writing is the term *pre-service teacher*, or PST, indicating an individual who is actively engaged in the process of teaching but is also not yet a fully licensed teacher. These individuals are enrolled in a teacher preparation program and are often, but not always, placed at a PK-12 public school site local to their program's geographical area to practice teaching with supervision. A common term used as an alternative is *student teacher* (or *student-teacher*), which appropriately situates the individual as both a student and a teacher depending on situational context. Though this term is widely accepted academically, it will not be utilized in this paper as repeated usage of 'teacher', 'student', 'student-teacher', and so on could lead to confusion in descriptions of individuals and their roles. PSTs are also sometimes referred to as *teaching interns* or simply *interns* in academic literature. These terms will not be utilized to prevent confusion with other types of interns, or other types of internships a PST may participate in outside of their school-site teaching placement. Other authors will sometimes refer to individuals in teacher preparation programs as *future teachers* or other similar terms that indicate the person will someday be, but is not presently, a teacher. Though these terms are valid for students prior to the practicum component, I intentionally choose to frame PSTs as current teachers who have not yet completed full licensure. This terminology is also best aligned with the motivations underpinning this study, as the ways in which PSTs are framed by

others as learners, teachers, and/or researchers have profound implications for the way PSTs perceive themselves and their own readiness to teach.

1.5.2 Mentor Teacher

Within the field of teacher education, the roles and responsibilities of the professional teacher who hosts one or more PSTs in their classroom are frequently debated but rarely defined (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010) and the term used generally reflects the author's orientation within that debate. While *cooperating teacher*, *associate teacher*, or *participating teacher* are all used within academic contexts, these terms position the teacher as hierarchically lower and less influential on the PST's development than university personnel. The term *supervising teacher* is also used, though this term indicates the teacher holds a good deal of authority over the PST and often performs an evaluative role. *Mentor teacher* is the preferred term within the context of this writing as it best describes the holistic, interpersonal relationship that supports the development of the PST (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005).

1.5.3 Community of Practice

The official term "community of practice" originates from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and was further developed by the work of Wenger and colleagues over the past thirty years (Wenger, 1999; Wenger et al., 2002). Lave and Wenger do not provide a precise definition of a CoP in their original publication, though they do provide some broad guidelines, noting that the word "community" in this context does not necessarily imply co-presence or an identifiable social group with rigid boundaries, but instead indicates participation in an activity system in which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.98). Wenger does supply a formal definition for a CoP in their later work, and defined a CoP as

a group that is bounded by mutual engagement on a specific enterprise and works to create a common repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p. 125).

Within this dissertation, the term *community of practice (*or *CoP)* will be used to describe the specific CoP that consists of both the PSTs participating in this dissertation research and me. The framework underpinning the CoP formed for this research is described in Chapter 2, and specific practices used to establish and facilitate CoP meetings are outlined in Chapter 3. When on its own, I use the term *community* more broadly as an indicator of social grouping. For example, *community* may indicate a grouping based on geographic proximity, such as the residents local to a school. The word could also be used to describe a grouping based on occupation, such as all teachers within a school site or school district.

1.5.4 Action Research

Several terms describe the type of research my CoP conducted, such as *action research*, *teacher research*, and *practitioner inquiry.* Using the term *action research* presents some challenging nuances with its use, as authors may label a similar form of inquiry to my own with a different term, and other authors may use *action research* to describe a very different form of inquiry to my own. For consistency within this dissertation, I use *action research* (AR) or *collaborative action research* (CAR) to describe the research I conducted in collaboration with my co-researchers, though there are times when I use the terminology of other scholars when it is relevant to preserving their intended meaning. There is a section of the literature review in Chapter 2 that analyzes terms and definitions employed by various authors included in the review.

The design of the research project featured within this dissertation was heavily influenced by guidelines laid out in Participatory Action Research (PAR). In the case of PAR, the term

participatory refers to the notion that participants from the community of focus are represented in the research team (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Many PAR studies are motivated by a need from within a specific community, and members of that community are active participants in the gathering of data, analyzing said data, and engaging in action steps emerging from the analysis in order to improve community circumstances surrounding the originally identified need. The CAR study embedded within this dissertation follows similar procedures by involving the PST participants as co-researchers who will gather, analyze, and engage in action surrounding a research topic relevant to their practicum placements.

The boundaries of what constitutes PAR studies versus CAR studies are often unclear, and many AR studies could fall under either label. There are some distinctions, however, that can indicate differences between the two types of AR. While a PAR study could potentially be a self-study and therefore have only one researcher with no collaborative components, a CAR study must have multiple researchers collaborating. A CAR study could exist without any members from the population of focus on the research team. The study within this dissertation does include members of the population of focus (the PSTs) on the research team and could be classified as a PAR study. The focus of this dissertation is ultimately regarding what emerges from the collaborative nature of what is traditionally an individual AR assignment. Therefore, while PAR studies are referenced throughout this dissertation, and while best practices for PAR are heavily utilized in the structure of this study, the AR project in which my participants engage is labeled as a CAR study throughout this writing.

1.5.5 Co-researcher/Participant/Informant

A distinct component of PAR, of which CAR is a methodological cousin, involves including members of the population of focus as co-researchers (Herr & Anderson, 2005) which,

in this case, means PSTs. As part the driving force of my study is to build up an inquiry stance within my PST collaborators, as well as to disrupt traditional hierarchies of who 'gets' to do research, labeling them as *co-researchers* is particularly appropriate. In describing any of our CAR work, the collaborating PSTs are often described as *participant co-researchers*.

In reporting my findings related to the sense of readiness to teach that developed within our CoP, the consenting PSTs are referred to as *participants* whether or not they were fully involved in our CAR work. Additional individuals with insider insight into the research being conducted or the growth of the PSTs, such as mentors, supervisors, and other colleagues, are referred to broadly as *informants*.

1.5.6 Professional Development

Though many organizations have shifted from using the term *professional development* to *professional learning* (Easton, 2008), the particular counties surrounding the university at which this research took place utilize the term *professional development*. For ease of understanding with the PSTs and their school site partners, the term that they are most familiar with was used when referenced during the CAR study and at other points throughout the dissertation.

1.5.7 Readiness to Teach

This dissertation seeks to identify changes in the PST participants' *sense of readiness to teach* throughout the course of the study, as impacted by their participation in a CoP that focused on CAR. For the purposes of this writing, a *sense of readiness to teach* should be understood to be a person's internal conception of their own preparedness to enter the teaching profession (or not). This *sense of readiness* was measured and described in one of two ways: either by using metrics of teacher professionalism as outlined by Manasia et al. (2020) and utilized in their

instrument for measuring PSTs' readiness to teach, or by recorded PST discourse identifying themselves as ready to teach (i.e. stating during a CoP meeting "I am ready to teach" and variants of this sentiment).

1.6 Intended Significance of the Proposed Research

In summary, we know that PSTs experience challenges juggling all that is required of them during their teacher preparation programs. It is possible that by re-imagining large assignments to grow PSTs in multiple domains we can better address the challenges of modern teaching without increasing the students' workload or extending the program duration. It is my hope that through an examination of how a community of PSTs collectively develop a sense of readiness to teach while engaging in CAR, we can come to better understand how future teacher education efforts might support teacher readiness through AR assignments. In order to better understand how PSTs are currently conducting AR within teacher education programs, and to understand what aspects of teacher readiness are currently being supported by that work, I look to existing literature in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

It's November, the week before Thanksgiving. I didn't want to meet this close to the holiday but we're still struggling to find a regular meeting time that fits everyone's schedules. Two participants have already had to bow out, so our group is down to seven – plus me. We're working on refining individual research questions that stem from our overarching group research question. They didn't go over this in their research course and I can tell they want more guidance from me, but I want to push them to think of something meaningful to them. I remind them that I don't want this to feel like they're checking a box in order to graduate, and that I'll do whatever I can to help them feel like this work has a purpose. We're talking about teacher burnout and work-life balance, and I'm grateful that they voted for this topic over student cell phone use. We're circled around my computer screen again, this time I'm showing them how to look up academic articles on the university library's website. We're talking about what commonalities we're noticing in different articles. Kaitlin remarks that almost every work-life balance study we've found has centered women, most of them looking at how female teachers balance their school-based work with the duties of motherhood. We agree there's a gap here. Robert timidly clears his throat, and tells us that he'd like to look into the extra burdens that come with being a male teacher of color; he describes how he's been called upon to serve as a surrogate father figure, how he's been pulled out of class to translate for a Spanish-speaking student, how he feels like an outsider in staff meetings with his predominantly white female colleagues. This sparks something for us. We're talking. We're making this work meaningful.

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Everyone in my cohort agrees that Dr. Schafer's was our favorite summer course. We've turned the group text thread she set up for reminders into our main chat, and we use it to send each

other jokes, encouragement, updates on our daily school drama. Dr. Schafer is back at her main job as a middle school teacher, and she's been keeping up with our chat as well. Now that the school year has started and everyone is in a classroom full time, my cohort-mates and I are feeling the crushing demands of our evening coursework. On this particular night, we're in Dr. Eschweiler's class. She's kind and supportive, but she maintains a strict "no complaining" policy so we don't have much space to bring up things that are troubling us. Class runs from 7pm to 10pm because the middle school teachers in our cohort can't leave work until 4pm, so we bypass the preferred 4-to-7 time slot. It's almost 10 now and we're all exhausted, but we're also excited because Dr. Schafer is coming by after class to have a group advising session, since Dr. Moss is still unavailable to talk to any of us. Finally, we'll be to ask questions about what has been bothering us about our coursework, our classrooms, our lives, and how we can possibly survive the rest of the year balancing all three.

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As my research situates itself at the intersection of two broader issues within teacher education literature, narrowing the scope of my literature review was necessary to remain focused on my goals and aligned with my research questions. Referring back to my North Star questions (*What can we do with our existing timelines and resources to make teacher education as effective and efficient as possible while honoring the individuality and humanity of each candidate? How do we make time to develop a sense of readiness to teach, and when do we empower them to conduct their own research?)* I selected literature focused on conducting AR with PSTs to analyze how this kind of work is being situated within programs of study as well as what outcomes related to teacher readiness were discussed by each author. This is ultimately in service of my research questions, which ask:

1. ***How does PSTs' membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?***
2. ***How does a teacher educator's membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?***

2.1 Literature Review: Pre-Service Teacher Action Research

In his recent literature review of published PST AR studies, Rutten (2021) noted that no articles that met his inclusion criteria discussed outcomes or results of the student research in any substantial way. There are numerous publications dedicated to 'Teacher Action Research' and how it can be conducted with PSTs, yet almost all of these are guidebooks or how-to's (e.g., Forster & Eperjesi, 2021; Sagor, 2010) rather than empirical studies on the value of research conducted by student teachers. Knowing that research is a common component of teacher certification programs, this begs a question regarding the purpose of this research requirement: if PST-generated knowledge is not shared beyond their specific university classroom, how are we to expect PSTs to value their own research beyond 'checking a box' to complete their program? This wondering, coupled with my first research question, guided my initial approach to this literature review.

Conducting research as a component of PST learning is hardly a new idea (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Price & Valli, 2005). AR was recommended as a component of teacher education over a decade ago (NCATE, 2010) to instill PSTs with an inquiry disposition as a core component of their preparation (see Table 1 below) and is included in many programs in both the United States and abroad (Davis et al., 2018). Across the literature are numerous accounts of the benefits of PST AR, which are presented in the following table.

Table 1

Claimed Benefits of AR by Theme

Theme	Sources
Embedding reflective practice [19]	Arefian, 2022; Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Bendtsen et al., 2021; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Kinskey, 2018; Kola, 2021; McIntyre et al., 2007; Nettleton et al., 2020; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Polly et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Tan et al., 2020; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Yan, 2017
Increasing PST agency in problem solving and analytical thinking [18]	Arefian, 2022; Dahl, 2014; Davis et al., 2018; Esau, 2013; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Kinskey, 2018; Klima Ronen, 2020; Kola, 2021; McIntyre et al., 2007; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Polly et al., 2020; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Tan et al., 2020; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023
Contributing to teacher/researcher identity development [13]	Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Dahl, 2014; Davis et al., 2018; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Kinskey, 2018; Nettleton et al., 2020; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023
Providing opportunities for emancipatory work [12]	Dahl, 2014; Esau, 2013; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Klima Ronen, 2020; Kola, 2021; McIntyre et al., 2007; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Price & Valli, 2005; Villacañas de Castro, 2014
Strengthening connections between theory and practice [12]	Arefian, 2022; Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Esau, 2013; Kinskey, 2018; Klima Ronen, 2020; Kola, 2021; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Tan et al., 2020; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Yan, 2017
Developing a lifelong inquiry stance [7]	Arefian, 2022; Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Bendtsen et al., 2021; McIntyre et al., 2007; Polly et al., 2020; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Yan, 2017

Many publications bring concerns or tensions from conducting AR with PSTs to light, such as the level and kind of support the students receive, how their project is designed or conducted, and issues that lead to dissatisfaction with the project. This literature review synthesizes publications from around the world to examine the variety of ways in which PSTs engaged in AR during their student teaching experience.

2.1.1 Methodology for the Literature Review

This literature review analyzed peer-reviewed publications regarding PSTs engaging in AR during their teacher education program. The literature described how the AR was conducted, why it was included in the program, the purpose behind its inclusion in the program, and any reported outcomes for PSTs from conducting that research. The formal search process for this literature review began with the EBSCO Academic Search Ultimate engine. To ensure alignment with my focus, I utilized the Boolean search phrase tool to identify articles that included "pre-service teacher(s)", "student teacher(s)", "teacher candidates(s)", or "preservice teacher(s)" and also included "action research" or "teacher research" as article keywords. I limited the search to peer reviewed publications that were published in or have been translated into English. The search yielded 31 results. Due to the highly specific nature of the search terms, only 7 articles were eliminated based on their titles and abstracts. All 7 eliminated articles centered the author conducting AR *on* rather than *with* their PST students and were therefore not relevant to this study. This left a total of 24 articles for a close read.

During the reading process, I created a table (n=24) to organize and compare methodologies, frameworks, definitions of relevant key terms[3], successes and challenges within each study, and any other emerging themes relevant to my research. Additionally, I tracked citations across the initial set of articles and obtained copies of frequently cited literature (more than five times across the original 24 articles) for further reading. Adding these studies to the table resulted in 4 additional articles (n=28) which were closely read. The body of literature for this review includes 25 qualitative studies, with 2 mixed methods (Davis et al., 2018; Garin, 2016), 1 literature review (Rutten, 2021), and no quantitative studies. Scholarship covered a wide geographic range, represented in Table 2. In addition to geographic context, the programmatic context was recorded and is represented in Table 3 with distinctions made between undergraduate and grade-level degree programs, and whether the AR conducted was to fulfill a mandatory AR requirement within that program of study. Sources not represented in Table 3 did not disclose the specific program or programmatic requirements their PST participants were engaged in during the AR process.

Table 2

Geographic Context

Location	Sources
Argentina [1]	Banegas & Consoli (2021)
Australia [1]	Zeivots et al. (2023)
Canada [1]	Tan et al. (2020)

[3] As noted in the first chapter, teacher education literature does not present a consistent definition, or even use of, key words and phrases that describe the pre-service teaching experience. Additionally, the broad parameters of AR/practitioner research lead to significant differences between studies. For both of those reasons, it was particularly relevant to track the authors' use of teacher education and action research-related terms and definitions.

Chile [1]	Pellerin & Paukner Nogues (2015)
China [1]	Yan (2017)
Finland [1]	Bendtsen et al. (2021)
Hong Kong [1]	Trent (2010)
Iran [1]	Arefian (2022)
Ireland [2]	Hennessy & Lynch (2019); Hennessy & Lynch (2021)
Israel [1]	Klima Ronen (2020)
Kenya [1]	Dahl (2014)
Norway [1]	Ulvik & Riese (2016)
The Philippines [1]	Ugalingan et al. (2022)
South Africa [2]	Esau (2013); Kola (2021)
Spain [1]	Villacañas de Castro (2014)
United Kingdom [1]	Hulse & Hulme (2012)
United States [10]	Davis et al. (2018); Garin (2017); Gore & Zeichner (1991); Kinskey (2018); McIntyre et al. (2007); Nettleton et al. (2020); Polly et al. (2020); Price & Valli (2005); Rutten (2021); Rutten & Wolkenhauer (2023)

Table 3

Programmatic Context

Program Type	Sources
Undergraduate PSTs, Required AR project	Kinskey (2018); Kola (2021); Trent (2010); Ugalingan et al. (2022)
Graduate PSTs, Required AR project	Bendtsen et al. (2021); Davis et al. (2018); Ulvik & Riese (2016); Villacañas de Castro (2014); Yan (2017)
Undergraduate PSTs, Elective AR project	Arefian (2022); Banegas & Consoli (2020); Dahl (2014); Esau (2013); Zeivots (2023)

Graduate PSTs, Elective AR project	Bendetsen et al. (2021); Rutten & Wolkenhaur (2023)

Note. The study conducted by Bendtsen et al. (2021) appears twice in the above table because they conducted a comparative study between two programs - one in which AR was mandatory and another in which it was optional.

2.1.2 Assumptions About Teachers and Teaching

To best clarify some often-assumed concepts about education that are present throughout the reviewed literature, what follows are some assumptions about teachers and teaching in contemporary society. These are not universal truths and do not span the full scope of the teaching profession across time and space. Yet these ideas are representative of the current teaching climate, and therefore it is important that these assumptions are explicitly named as the foundation upon which my analysis of literature is built.

2.1.2.1 Pre-Service Teachers as Learners.

Despite the lexicographical inclusion of the word *teachers*[4], PSTs are, above all else, students. They are generally framed as being learners, as students of teaching, until their induction program is complete and their teaching license has been issued (Britton et al., 2003; Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; Oreshkina & Lester, 2015). Though this may seem like a mere matter of semantics, the assumption that PSTs are positioned as learners throughout their program is an important concept girding this study. This positioning is done by many stakeholders: professors, university supervisors, mentor teachers, students in their practicum

[4] As described in section 1.5.1, the term *pre-service* teacher is a common, but not fully standardized, label for the role of a student in a teacher education program. This word choice was made intentionally by me to position their role as a novice teacher above their role as a university student.

classrooms, and even themselves. While this is certainly not the only identity PSTs are assigned, it remains a consistent and dominant identity across the narrative of teacher induction, and therefore this literature review operates under the assumption that, unless otherwise stated or clearly demonstrated, PSTs are positioned as learners by the authors.

2.1.2.2 Undervalued Teacher Knowledge.

Academia has a long history of foregrounding knowledge produced by university researchers in university settings. Other kinds of knowledge, from personal experiences (Freire, 2000) to PK-12 teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) receive little to no academic attention. If we hold true the assumption that teacher research is undervalued, we can further assume that PST knowledge is also undervalued. This puts PSTs in an interesting position; they are border-crossers between the university and the PK-12 school site (Chan, 2019), yet this is rarely leveraged as an opportunity to create new, valuable knowledge that bridges the gap between theory and practice.

2.1.2.3 Teacher Identity Development.

Identity is comprised of different aspects of our social, personal, and professional selves. It is both internal, meaning that it is developed within oneself, and external, meaning that the way others perceive an individual also influences their identity (Gee, 2000). Teacher identity is generally regarded as residing in the professional domain of one's whole identity, though it is heavily influenced by other identities held within each individual (Beijaard et al., 2004). For the purposes of this study, teacher identity is most easily defined as the different aspects of one's internal and external identity that make up the "face" a teacher uses in educational settings. Teacher identity begins developing during the practicum, or perhaps earlier with some individuals who have, for example, served as a babysitter or camp counselor (Chang-Kredl &

Kingsley, 2014). While teacher identity, and indeed many aspects of one's identity, are fluid and change throughout a lifetime, this literature review approaches mentions of developing teacher identity with the notion that having at least the foundations of a teacher identity by the time of program completion is a desirable outcome.

2.1.2.4 Readiness to Teach.

Most metrics of a PST's readiness to teach evaluate this "readiness" through an external teacher educator rather than a self-evaluation by the teacher candidate. Within the literature review, expressions of readiness to teach are largely from the author's perspective unless otherwise mentioned. I assume that feeling "ready to teach", or at least a stronger sense of readiness at the end of the study when compared to the beginning of the study, is the desired outcome. When sources analyzed for the literature review remark on teacher readiness, I will attempt to clearly note if the authors are evaluating that readiness through the lens of the teacher educator or through the PSTs themselves.

2.1.2.5 Inquiry Stance.

According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, 2009) an *inquiry stance* is "a particular way of knowing and being… [and is] a grounded theory of action that positions the role of practitioners and practitioner knowledge as central to the goal of transforming teaching, learning, leading, and schooling" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 119). Broadly, an inquiry stance is conceptualized within four dimensions: knowledge in global and local contexts, practice as the interplay of teaching and learning, communities as catalysts for learning, and inquiry for democratic or social justice purposes. These four dimensions are aligned with metrics commonly used to evaluate teacher effectiveness, for example the instrument for teacher evaluation based

on the work of Charlotte Danielson (2007). The Danielson instrument[5] examines teacher practice in four domains: (1) planning and preparation, (2) the classroom environment, (3) instruction, and (4) professional responsibilities. While not a one-to-one alignment, each of the Danielson domains is further broken down to prioritize reflective practices, learner-centered teaching, active engagement in professional development, and equitable classroom culture. For these reasons, as well as for other benefits reported throughout the literature below, we must assume that holding an inquiry stance is a valuable teaching skill with long-term career benefits. Further, Danielson's work was one of the foundational pieces utilized by Manasia et al. (2020) when constructing their instrument to evaluate teacher readiness. Thus, we can view development of an inquiry stance as a concept related to teacher readiness in the analysis of outcomes presented across this literature.

2.1.2.6 Socio-emotional Wellbeing.

There has been a significant increase in literature and in school-site initiatives regarding student socio-emotional wellbeing of students, and many teacher education programs now incorporate methods for supporting student mental health (e.g., Choquette et al., 2024; State et al., 2011; Stipp, 2019). While this is still an emerging area of study within teacher education, there is significant evidence that supports the importance of considering PST wellbeing during their preparation programs (Pishghadam et al., 2016; Teng, 2017). Pishghadam and colleagues (2016) coined the term "*emotioncy*" in their scholarship and used it in several different fields within education to describe the ways in which the frequency of experiences related to both

[5] The Danielson Teacher Evaluation instrument is currently used in the school districts in which my PST participants were placed for their practicum.

positive and negative emotions influence a person's perception of the experience. For its use in their teacher identity formation framework, Pishghadam et al. (2022) use *emotioncy* to describe how PSTs conceptualize aspects of their teacher identity in relation to good and bad experiences they have during their teacher preparation program. Pishghadam et al. note that positive experiences are generally more beneficial, but also that some challenging experiences are needed to foster growth (2022, p. 6). They caution teacher educators that PSTs should encounter challenges but that these experiences should not result in a high frequency of negative emotions, as the PST may then exit the program before completion (Pishghadam et al., 2022, p. 6). As this literature review explores outcomes of PST AR as reported by the authors, all descriptions of PST emotions will be considered through the lens of emotioncy in order to better identify challenges and limitations in other studies that could lead to beneficial PST growth or to detrimental socio-emotional damage.

2.1.2.7 The Teacher Educator's Role.

Within the context of this dissertation, it is important to understand who teacher educators (TEs) are, what they are expected to do within the context of that role, and how they relate to PSTs. Defining the TE's role is somewhat challenging when there is not a clear definition of who a TE even *is* beyond someone who educates teachers. Murray and Male's (2005) exploration of emerging TEs in the field found that several of their participants (10 out of 28) never directly identified themselves as TEs, with 2 participants directly declaring that they did not feel the label applied to them at all, even after 3 years of study and having been labeled as TEs by the researchers (and potentially others) the whole time. A review of TE identity literature (Izadinia, 2014) found themes of self-doubt and uncertainty in TEs taking on the label. For the purposes of the literature review within this chapter, I will assume that any individual

serving in a position that educates PSTs (professors, formal and informal mentors, university supervisors, program leaders, school-site instructional coaches, etc.) is a TE, whether the author assigns this label or not. Further, applying this broad assumption solidifies my own label as a TE, as I did provide educational support to PSTs during this dissertation study while in my role as a CoP member. A deeper discussion of my role and the implications of that role are discussed throughout this dissertation, primarily within Chapter 5.

It is also worth noting that, because we have assumed that TE is a broad term that can be applied to anyone who is educating teachers, defining more specific labels whenever possible is also important. The ways in which a PST understands their relationship with each TE in their support network is through their assigned label. For example, a PST is likely to perceive their relationship with a graduate student who serves as the teaching assistant in one of their university courses very differently from the department chairperson for their content area at their internship school, even though both of these individuals are TEs for this PST. Some TEs are put in positions where they are evaluating or grading the PST's performance, some are giving verbal or written feedback, and others are simply providing emotional or logistical support (O'Dwyer & Atlı, 2015). Some TEs see the PSTs every day, some every month, and some very rarely. This significant variance demonstrates the clear need to identify a relational label between the PST(s) and the TE whenever possible to best understand the dynamics in play.

2.2.2 Analysis of the Literature

As described above, the initial review of each article focused on the definitions and conceptualizations of AR, the outcomes of the study, as well as emergent themes. I also recorded the methods and frameworks utilized and noted the degree of PST involvement and agency granted during each study. I also noted if the AR being conducted by PSTs was an individual or

group research project, and to what extend CoPs or similar collaborative groups may have been utilized during the PSTs' research process. Due to the influence emotions have on a PST's sense of readiness to teach (Chen et al., 2022; Manasia et al., 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2022; Teng, 2017), I also analyzed moments of tension or dissatisfaction reported to help me better understand aspects of conducting AR that could lead to negative PST emotions or experiences. Lastly, I considered how the knowledge created by the PST researchers was valued (or not) by relevant stakeholders in each study with the aim of conceptualizing the future for PST research generated during my own study.

Analysis of the 28 articles generated five larger themes: (a) PST AR as a border-crossing activity; (b) AR as a community builder; (c) AR as a lifelong teaching skill; (d) AR as a facilitator of teacher agency; and (e) AR as a disrupter of mainstream power/knowledge dynamics. Broadly, most PSTs who participate in AR are offered more opportunities to collaborate, reflect, and take action than PSTs who engage in individual, less structured inquiry projects.

It is critically important that teachers graduating from preparation programs are equipped with the skills and confidence to take ownership of their classrooms. Decades of research show that teachers tend to mirror pedagogical moves they have observed other teachers make throughout their schooling experiences (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Lortie, 1975; Westrick & Morris, 2016). The average PST is between 20 to 30 years old, and most individuals in that age group who attended US public schools have been predominantly exposed to standardized, test-driven instruction (Sleeter, 2019) with 'banking-model' instruction, which positions teachers as the exclusive holders of knowledge and students as the exclusive recipients of knowledge (Freire, 2000). Not only are these pedagogical practices counterintuitive to most

teacher preparation programs' mission statements (e.g., *UMD College of Education*, 2023), but scholarship around the cyclical nature of education policy (Bullough, 2014; Cuban, 1990) indicates that we could be approaching a period of teacher emancipation from standardization – that is to say that, in the not too distant future, teachers may be given much more agency over the curriculum and pedagogical practices they employ. As AR is a common, but not universally required, component of teacher preparation programs, I seek to determine if purposeful AR with PSTs can be a powerful tool in preparing teachers for that vision of the future that draws upon our current university resources and capabilities without overburdening PSTs or TEs.

In section 2.2.2.1, the definitions of AR present in the literature are synthesized and discussed, showing the variability of approaches and purposes that the umbrella term of *action research* covers. Sections 2.2.2.2 through 2.2.2.7 provide a detailed examination of the five themes highlighted above coupled with an analysis of each theme's connection to the four dimensions of readiness evaluated in Manasia et al.'s (2020) instrument: (D1) Professional Knowledge, (D2) Professional Practice, (D3) Professional Engagement, and (D4) Self-Management. These sections, when relevant, also explore the emergent literature review themes through the lens of CoPs as defined by both Lave and Wenger (1991) and Brown and Duguid (2001) and the involvement of any TEs as CoP members or as guides during the AR process. The final section of the literature review explores various challenges and concerns that authors describe when conducting AR with PSTs.

2.2.2.1 Definitions of Action Research.

As described in section 1.5.4, *action research* is a broad term that encompasses a number of more specific methodologies, generally labeled with an additional descriptor at the beginning of the phrase (i.e., participatory action research, teacher action research, collaborative action

research, practical action research, youth participatory action research). Therefore, it is not surprising that a number of different approaches and definitions emerged across the literature. Many studies cited the model for educational AR described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) directly as their methodology (Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Klima Ronen, 2020; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017), and others referenced the AR cycle established by Kemmis and McTaggart that utilizes stages of planning, acting, reflecting, and revising (Davis et al., 2018; Kinskey, 2018; Kola, 2021). My own model for research, which is thoroughly described in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, is primarily based on Burns' interpretation of Kemmis and McTaggart's cycle (Burns, 1999, 2005, 2009; Burns et al., 2022). Banegas and Consoli (2021), Villacañas de Castro (2014), and Yan (2017) also directly cited Burns as the model for their study design.

The concepts of PAR are rooted in South America, stemming from the emancipatory and liberatory work of social scientists and scholars like Ignacio Martín-Baró (1996), Orlando Fals-Borda (1991), and Paulo Freire (2000). In her thorough writing about the origins of PAR in the 1960s and 70s, author Joanne Rappaport notes that "in the early years of PAR, the political action that practitioners called for was revolutionary. While it was intimately local, based in grassroots communities, the intention of participatory research was to transform the broader social system" (Rappaport, 2020, p. i). The reviewed studies from Chile (Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015) and Argentina (Banegas & Consoli, 2021) cite these scholars for their model of AR, as do several other authors who focused on the liberatory qualities of AR (Dahl, 2014; Esau, 2013; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; McIntyre et al., 2007). Others (Bendtsen et al., 2021; Esau, 2013; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Rutten, 2021; Villacañas de Castro, 2014) reference Kurt Lewin (e.g., Lewin, 1946), known as a pioneer of organizational psychology in the United States.

While simply citing Freire, Lewin, or another emancipatory research scholar does not inherently mean that the authors themselves engaged in emancipatory practices, this heavily implies the author's inclinations toward change-making efforts of some kind.

Another common citation across the body of literature I examined is *Inquiry as Stance* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), or, for studies written prior to that book's publication, the authors' initial piece regarding teacher inquiry from a decade earlier (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), or even earlier foundational works by the two authors. Approximately half of the studies included in this literature review explicitly cited Cochran-Smith and Lytle within the methods section of their writing (Arefian, 2022; Davis et al., 2018; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Polly et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Trent, 2010; Ulvik & Riese, 2016; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023). The foundational nature of this book is one of the purposes for its strong presence throughout this dissertation, and its longevity in the field is evident in the number of recent studies that still reference the text. In both publications, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999; 2009) express teacher research (or inquiry) as a systematic interrogation of one's own teaching practice, positioning the teacher as an agent of change at their school site and capable of addressing inequities in their local contexts. Cochran-Smith and Lytle defined their conception on *teacher inquiry* as being "critical and transformative, a stance that is linked not only to high standards for the learning of all students but also to social change and social justice and to the individual and collective professional growth of teachers" (Cochran-Smith et al., 1993, p. 38).

Lastly, there were a few articles within this literature review that took their methodological inspiration from completely different sources. Villecanas de Castro (2014) focused exclusively on the work of John Elliot (1991) as their methodological guide. Elliot

draws his work from both Lewin and from Kemmis. He notes that "the fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. The production and utilization of knowledge is subordinate to, and conditioned by, this fundamental aim" (1991, p. 49), and authors citing this work made frequent allusion to the goal of their PSTs' AR work was intended to improve their teaching practice. Tan et al. (2010) takes some inspiration from Elliot as well, but predominantly draws from the "learning study" model from Lo (2012), which is also deeply practice-focused. There were a number of other authors cited across the body of literature that built each specific author's methodology rationale, but these citations are representative of the majority of influences on the AR design.

Across these different approaches to AR, a common thread of enacting change becomes visible. Change is an implied component of AR (Price & Valli, 2005), but there is a distinction between the purpose for that change. As noted from the variety of scholars described above (Elliott, 1991; Freire, 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Lewin, 1946; Rappaport, 2020), the motivation to conduct teacher AR can broadly be placed into either practical or critical camps. Practical [teacher] AR involves identifying and analyzing a problem from within the school, and usually classroom, context and designing, implementing, and evaluating a potential solution for that problem. While not all the studies in this literature review provided clear descriptions of the PSTs' research questions, most examples of PST research questions provided are practical AR questions. A student in Trent's (2010) study was curious about the effects listening to podcasts would have on listening skills for secondary students (p. 157). One of Polly et al.'s (2020) participants investigated how iPad games helped students in their classroom to enjoy math (p. 40). These two examples illustrate some common features of practical PST AR: they are looking

into a topic that allows them to build their pedagogical or content knowledge, and their implemented change is directly aligned with enhancing their students' learning.

Critical [teacher] AR is significantly more aligned with the principles of Freirean education (Freire, 2000), focusing more on changes made within the school environment that advance equity or social justice issues. We see some, though fewer, examples of critical AR conducted by PST participants, for example addressing "the silence of racism: closing the gap of communication and misunderstanding in the school system" in Esau (2013, p. 7). Gore and Zeichner (1991) note that while academic and technical skills are worthwhile lines of inquiry, criticality in AR needs to remain central to work lest the research benefit only learners in the dominant social group.

Across the next sections, the themes that emerged throughout the literature are discussed, both generally and with explicit connections to teacher readiness. The themes will be examined as follows:

1. PST AR as an act of border-crossing is explored in detail;
2. The ways in which AR contributes to building community with faculty, with in-service teachers, and with other PSTs;
3. An exploration of how AR develops lifelong professional skills;
4. How AR facilitates increased agency for PSTs; and
5. Examining AR as a disruption of power and the status quo for PSTs.

These sections will also explore the above themes as they relate to the framework for Teacher Readiness and frameworks for CoPs I utilized for this study; the frameworks themselves are described in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 respectively.

2.2.2.2 PST Action Research as Border-Crossing.

AR is, by design, inclusive of the population of focus. Most models of AR center the commitment to doing research *with* rather than research *on* (Anderson, 2017; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). Many forms of teacher AR prioritize the inclusion of both teachers and students, as in teachers doing AR in their own classrooms, though not all models of teacher AR dictate that the students should be positioned as co-researchers. PSTs are inherently situated between the university and school site contexts during their practicum. Even if regular university coursework is siloed from student teaching responsibilities[6], PSTs interact with university faculty in the role of University Supervisor or Professional Development Coordinator throughout their practicum. Scholarship regarding the tensions and triumphs in school-university partnerships (Chan, 2019; Johnson et al., 2016; Wentworth et al., 2017) clearly establish that there is, more often than not, a noticeable division between these institutions and that individuals are generally aligned with one particular institution. Only two studies in the reviewed body of literature (Garin, 2016; Nettleton et al., 2020) named a pre-existing partnership between the school site and the university. Garin (2016) positioned the inquiry project, which was conducted by a team of in-service and PSTs, as a strategy to enact educational reform on a small scale. Though participants reported positive outcomes from working together, Garin did not particularly explore any tensions or triumphs that may have arisen from the PSTs existing as insiders in both spaces. The longitudinal study conducted by Nettleton and colleagues (2020) surveyed in-service teachers who had previously

[6] Students enrolled in the teacher preparation program of focus (as well as in many other teacher preparation programs) have a period of "protected" time in which they focus solely on their student teaching practicum and are not assigned additional coursework. This is not a standardized practice across programs, and most publications in this literature review did not reference whether or not this was the case for their PSTs.

completed a preparation program, and the data presented focused on the ways in which participating in an AR project during their PST years has influenced their practice. Perhaps because the study participants were no longer university students, Nettleton et al. (2020) exclusively positioned the study participants as belonging to the school site. These two studies were, however, exceptions to the norm presented by the rest of the literature.

The obligations that PSTs have to both institutions are present throughout their experience, and across much of the rest of the literature student participants reported challenges with those obligations. Hennessey and Lynch (2019) eloquently expressed this by noting that "for the majority of participants however, the potential for practitioner research was noted to be limited by the perceived 'split line' mutually exclusive endeavors of the teaching and research" (Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, p. 604). Drawing on the liberatory scholarship of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), PSTs are often referred to as border-crossers that exist in the fraught space between PK-12 schools and their university (e.g., Chan, 2019; Daza et al., 2021). Multiple studies reviewed (Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Polly et al., 2020; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Tan et al., 2020) described these acts of border crossing in their findings, which I explore below.

2.2.2.2.1 Professional Practice in Border Crossing.

Broadly speaking, crossing back and forth between the university and the school site creates an excellent opportunity for PSTs because it exposes them to a variety of professionals to learn from on both sides of the border. Many of the articles reviewed featured at least one author who engaged in or taught students about AR at their university (Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Dahl, 2014; Davis et al., 2018; Esau, 2013; Garin, 2016; McIntyre et al., 2007; Nettleton et al., 2020; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Polly et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005; Villacañas de Castro,

2014; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023), and were displaying their researcher identity for the students to model. Some authors also explored the role ways they observed PST's mentors acting as positive professional role models, both as teachers and as researchers. There is general agreement across the body of literature that later-career teachers engaging in research or inquiry practices in a way that is visible to the PSTs is a valuable contribution to PSTs' development.

It is also risky, however, to assume that all school-site personnel will provide a positive role model of teaching, researching, or a combination. Current scholarship about mentor teacher training and support reveals that very few institutions are providing mentor teachers (MTs) with the tools to interrogate their own practices and reflect upon how they might be perceived as a role model by PSTs (Ambrosetti, 2014; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Crasborn et al., 2011; Ellis et al., 2020; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). Individual researchers have even less influence over school site faculty, and therefore almost no say in who the PSTs are mirroring. Ulvik and Reise (2016) remarked that "in the programme there is a shortage of placements, and the university was not in the position to select mentors" (p. 446). Though they informed all mentors about the research project, Ulvik and Reise reported significantly different PST experiences depending on their assigned mentor. The focal case study participant in Kinskey (2018) described the intimidation she felt when transitioning between mirroring her university supervisor and her mentor teacher. While the PST demonstrated confidence in the university space, she reported that "I still get nervous to teach science because I feel like I do not know nearly as much as [my MT] does on the topics in general and I just don't want to let my students down" (Kinskey, 2018, p. 1807). In this example, the MT was attempting to be supportive but was unintentionally making the PST feel as though she was not skilled enough to mirror her mentor's behavior. While tensions of this kind can be resolved through conversation and reflection, other articles described specific

mentors who were dismissive or disinterested in research practices and provided a negative role model for PSTs (Garin, 2016; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015).

2.2.2.2.2 Professional Engagement in Border Crossing.

Two reviewed articles (Garin, 2016; Nettleton et al., 2020) conducted their research with groups of pre-service and in-service teachers working together. Both studies were conducted at professional development schools, spaces in which a symbiotic partnership between the school site and a nearby university has been established outside of the singular study. Both Garin (2016) and Nettleton (2020) reported that opportunities for the PSTs to collaborate and converse with in-service teachers was beneficial to the PSTs' professional growth. Garin (2016) reported that "often the group readings and discussions led seamlessly into the teacher candidate's action research" (p. 18). Nettleton and colleagues (2020) reported similar findings in their longitudinal study, which examined the feedback from eleven cohorts of AR groups at a professional development school location. They found that participants reported more positive results long term in the cohort years that had engaged in collaborative discourse with later-career teachers. Also worth noting is that Garn's (2016) study compared reflective responses they received at a professional development school with responses from a non-professional development school. Though the non-professional development school participant group reported some positive collaboration, there was significant difficulty in generating a group for collaborative discourse amongst the later-career teachers and led to some negative experiences with specific teachers that were cited in the previous section. While these two studies only represent a small portion of the literature examined, their findings indicate that discussions between PSTs, in-service teachers, and university faculty were beneficial when all parties have 'bought in' to the

collaborative process. They also indicate, however, that buy-in can be significantly more challenging to achieve if that type of relationship does not exist prior to the specific AR study.

2.2.2.2.3 Self-Management in Border Crossing.

Border crossing is described by Anzaldúa (1987) as a fugitive act, and that those who existed in the 'in-between' status were constantly highlighted and punished for not conforming to the dominant culture – their existence defined by perceived "abnormality". The domain of self-management within teacher readiness looks at the power PSTs hold over their own wellbeing, motivation, adaptability, and resilience. Restoring power to the border crossers gives agency and status to the PSTs that positions their diversion from the dominant culture as an asset. Authors describe the benefits of 'border crosser status' through instances of MTs placing high value on PST knowledge (Davis et al., 2018; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023), affirming the anecdotal evidence MTs benefit from learning about current research from the university-connected PSTs. Of note is that no publications within this review touched on the reverse of this dynamic – that is, PST knowledge of what is happening at the school sites providing valuable insight for the outsider research team. This poses a question for future inquiry as to why this component seems to be absent from the literature.

While there is evidence that conducting AR provides students with a level of school-site agency that feeds into their self-management skills, the nature of PST status and their ability to self-manage within the university setting was rarely defined within the literature. Rutten and Wolkenhauer (2023) specifically name the "inside/outside dynamic" that PSTs engage in: they have been invited to engage as insiders in both institutions, yet they are novices who still have much to learn (and are rarely paid employees of either institution) which leaves them on the

outside when it comes to power and influence over institutional affairs. This, in turn, limits the PSTs' abilities to practice self-management in meaningful ways while adhering to university schedules, expectations, and guidelines.

The literature also reveals that, while PST status within both the school and university settings are typically of a "free agent" not specifically employed by institution, there are exceptions to this with their own set of problems. The participants in Price and Valli's (2005) study were received a small stipend and were considered school site employees, a perceived boost compared to "the typical guest status of traditional student teachers" (p. 64), yet at least one student example provided by the authors experienced challenges exacerbated by this differing status. The student wished to conduct a study which many of her school-site colleagues agreed would be worthwhile, but the nature of her suggested AR project appeared to be a direct critique of a policy championed by their school principal; the school, and the principal in particular, were under district-level scrutiny for low test scores at the time and openly challenging this policy could have been seen as seriously insubordinate. This put the PST's employment status in danger and a potentially beneficial AR study was abandoned for a less inflammatory topic. This level of increased agency offered by employment status resulted, in this particular case, in a reduction in the ability to practice self-management as it increased the PST's management by others.

The general consensus across the literature indicates that PSTs' status as institutional border crossers has minor benefits, but not enough to grant them 'full' insider status. Opportunities to engage with professionals at both the school-site and at the university, and to be in discursive communities with these professionals, often result in positive experiences for the PSTs. While creating these communities and honoring the positive attributes a PST has as a

border-crosser reduces some of the barriers toward developing a sense of readiness to teach, the current literature reveals that there is still more work to be done in truly placing PSTs in a position of value in order to support their developing readiness more richly.

2.2.2.3 Action Research as a Community Builder.

While the steps of an AR cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) could be conducted by a single individual in a vacuum, AR was designed to incorporate the ideas and perspectives of multiple people. This manifests in several ways across the literature. First, there are examples of PST participants being inducted into a professional community by interacting with other teachers who are further in their career (Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023). A common practice at schools is for teachers to engage in CoPs (Wenger, 1999) for purposes like collaborative lesson planning, discussing problems of practice, or analyzing student data. Rutten and Wolkenhauer (2023) took advantage of existing work groups at their local PK-12 school sites to establish CoPs that identified school-site issues that could be researched.

CoPs are also well-aligned to support the conducting of AR, as multiple studies across the literature leverage existing communities to support their focal PSTs in research work. Trent (2010), for example, utilized the inherent community of his university classroom to develop a CoP with his participants. Their CoP's focus was discussing problems of practice that arose during their individual research projects. Zeivots et al. (2023) used a similar approach but grouped students in their course with alike research interests into small CoPs with a focus specifically oriented toward their collective research topics.

The second way communities were developed through AR studies is in building a cohort of support with other students tackling similar issues. One common practice across the literature

was for the professor leading an AR course (often also the PI and first author of these articles) to place students in peer groups, and for those groups to conduct one AR study that all group members agreed upon and contributed to (Ugalingan et al., 2022; Yan, 2017). This sharing of responsibility within the peer group seemed to alleviate some issues of stress reported by solo research projects. Participants in the study conducted by Ugalingan et al. (2022) reported feeling "a sense of relief that they were able to share the 'load' with their partners" (p. 272).

A number of studies also set up specific peer groups to discuss their research with fellow PSTS, even if the specific research assignment was a solo project (Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Ulvik & Riese, 2016; Zeivots et al., 2023). While the responsibilities of the research were not distributable in this scenario, students were still able to benefit from conversations with their peers. This will be explored in depth below.

2.2.2.3.1 Professional Knowledge in the Community.

Developing personal relationships with in-service teachers, particularly ones with positive attitudes toward research and classroom inquiry, provide opportunities for PSTs to deepen their professional knowledge through observation and engagement with those professionals. One pair of mentor/PST participants in the study conducted by Rutten and Wolkenhauer (2023) developed an AR project together. In this case, the MT had identified a weakness in instructional technology and encouraged the PST to conduct AR in that area in order to help the MT learn and grow. That PST participant was reported to have experienced significant growth across multiple domains of teacher readiness, most relevantly in developing a rich appreciation for sharing knowledge through observing her mentor's excitement to learn from her.

A similar example in Price and Valli's (2005) study showed that the associated MT learned about a new pedagogical practice that she might incorporate into her own teaching, and praised her PST for introducing her to the practice. On the other side of the institutional spectrum, PST participants in Banegas and Consoli's (2020) study, McIntyre's (2007) study, and Polly's (2020) study reported that engaging in community with their professors helped them identify knowledgeable role models whilst conducting AR on their own. Participants working with Klima Ronen (2020), Villacañas de Castro (2014), and Yan (2017) reported developing a deeper appreciation of professional reflection as a concept by witnessing instances of vulnerability and willingness to learn while in community with their professors. All of these cases are aligned with Lave and Wenger's (1991) definition of a CoP by acclimatizing the novices into the professional group through socialization with experienced group members and through the PSTs' peripheral participation in research activities. Across these cases, the reported findings indicate that there are strong benefits to building communities of support for PSTs that contain supportive professionals at multiple levels.

2.2.2.3.2 Professional Engagement in the Community.

Collaborative discourse tends to come hand in hand with a CoP, and articles in this literature review that established those communities as a component of their study generally reported positive findings related to community discourse. In their findings, Zeivots et al. (2023) remarked that 68% of their participants reflected on the benefits of having fellow students to discuss their research with on a regular basis "despite an absence of any prompt reflection questions on these groups" (p. 10) and noted that the groups were integral to the success of the research projects. Interactions of this type are more aligned with Brown and Duguid's (1991) notion of a CoP than Lave and Wenger's, in that these groupings of participants operated as

equals rather than as masters and novices, and also that discussions and solutions were improvised and conducted without guidance from the course instructor.

In their comparative study, Bendtsen et al. (2021) confirmed that the most participants in their collaborative research group named the collective as a strong asset, while participants in the solo research group mostly reported frustration and overwhelm in 'having to do it all themselves'. Ulvik and Riese (2016) reported similar results with the students in their peer groups, and added the additional element of providing specific times for a professor to join and converse with each small group. The study co-authored by Banegas and Consoli (2020) utilized a slightly different approach in which the first author was the course instructor and the second author taught at a different university a few hundred miles away. PSTs in their study engaged in collaborative discussion groups that met with both faculty members separately, with Consoli serving as more of an experienced 'critical friend' who was supportive of and engaged with the PSTs' research processes but had no specific control over their evaluation. These studies support Lave and Wenger's (1991) assertion that the transmission of knowledge from master to novice is a key component to a CoP's functionality.

Reflective responses from PST participants overwhelmingly reported the benefits of having both their peer group and Dr. Consoli to converse with throughout the research process, and that their support and advice made the research process more transparent. Through these examples, it is clear that PST AR benefits not only from intentional collaboration, but also from incorporating later-career professionals to engage in and provide support for these discussion-based communities. The ability to engage with multiple communities for a variety of purposes is a key component of the professional engagement domain of teacher readiness, though there seem

to be mixed results based on the hierarchical structure (or lack thereof) within each community that the PSTs engage with.

2.2.2.3.3 Self-Management in the Community.

Prior examples make it clear that building a supportive community is a generative ground for positive experiences, both by giving members of the community positive feelings of belonging (Yan, 2017; Zeivots, 2023) and by supporting each other to overcome challenges collaboratively (Ugalingan et al., 2022). Both of these aspects of CoPs are reflected in Lave and Wenger (1991) and in Brown and Duguid (1991). Not all community emotions were reported as positive, however. Several instances of community members struggling with the research lead to them disengaging with the group (Villacañas de Castro, 2014). “Most students found themselves impotent and incapable of making comments or asking questions. Anxious as they were, they did not answer the questions their peers addressed to them, except with reluctance” (Villacañas de Castro, 2014, p. 542). Furthermore, participants in Klima Ronen’s (2022) study experienced significant negative feelings when a TE other than the author was brought in to work with the PSTs and then was reported to belittle and dismiss PST participants' research efforts. These tensions bring forth an issue that emerges across the literature with PST AR: PSTs reported mostly positive results within studies that brought in multiple peers and TEs to collaborate in the process, yet the actions of just one individual could quickly turn the community experience into a negative one that significantly damages a PST’s sense of readiness in the Self-Management (D4) dimension.

2.2.2.4 Action Research as a Lifelong Skill.

Throughout the literature, many articles echo the need for research skills to extend beyond the practicum into professional practice. This is one of the central points of Cochran-

Smith and Lytle's (2009) inquiry stance work, and the authors across the literature that cite this work (Arefian, 2022; Davis et al., 2018; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Polly et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Trent, 2010; Ulvik & Riese, 2016; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023) also highlighted the benefits of developing an inquiry stance early in a teaching career. Some of the international authors (e.g. Hennessy & Lynch, 2019) remarked that their national department of education had initiatives in place to encourage in-service teachers to conduct research in their classrooms, and thus introducing the skills during teacher education was an effort to set PSTs up for success in their future careers.

Other authors (Davis et al., 2018; Esau, 2013; Kinskey, 2018; Klima Ronen, 2020; McIntyre et al., 2007; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Tan et al., 2020; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017) described the effectiveness of AR/teacher inquiry to solve their own "problems in the classroom". This ability to address one's own problems of practice is often positioned in contrast to the current neoliberal conditions of schooling that provide rigid curriculum and pacing to teachers without also providing tools or resources to adapt that curriculum or pacing to meet the needs of actual students. For example, the ability to inquire into the reason why most of the students in a particular class seem to be struggling with one algebraic concept while grasping another with ease is positioned as a highly useful teacher skill because it aids the teacher in addressing the issue on their own rather than requiring outside help or ignoring the issue altogether.

2.2.2.4.1 Professional Practice and Lifelong Skills.

Examples of TEs placing explicit value on research outcomes, both from their own research and from PST-generated research, provide a model of later-career appreciation for

conducting and consuming research; broadly speaking, instances of role models exhibiting Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) conception of maintaining an inquiry stance throughout their career were present throughout the literature. The values placed on research and inquiry practices provided PSTs with ample opportunities to engage in the professional practice domain of readiness. One of Davis et al.'s (2018) participants was able to find an excellent example of a later career teacher-researcher in her mentor, with whom she was able to identify the value of research in the classroom. She was quoted to say:

> I had a lot of fun doing [the research] and I was able to…present with [a faculty member] on my research, which was very exciting and made me feel very professional in my career. We always talk about professionalism in the classroom and how educators really are professionals, and that it's important to keep up with current research, and so I thought that was very rewarding to be able to contribute to that (Davis et al., 2018, p. 66).

Several articles in the review modeled appreciation for PST-generated knowledge by co-authoring studies that published PST findings (McIntyre et al., 2007; Polly et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2020). Other authors, such as Dahl (2014), provided students with an affirming space to present their findings to each other in a way that intentionally placed high value on the research. These actions demonstrate an appreciation of research in a way that PSTs can mirror and can carry into their own professional practice. Though rarely explicitly stated, the number of studies that did not describe the PST research outcomes in any meaningful way may have unintentionally projected a stance of devaluing PST research; also described challenges related to PSTs feeling that conducting research was 'too time consuming' or 'pointless' (e.g. Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; 2021) and thus reduced their ability to engage in professional practices in a way that felt meaningful to them.

2.2.2.4.2 Professional Engagement as a Lifelong Skill.

One aspect of the professional engagement domain is the ability to engage in reflection and metacognition. Multiple notable scholars in teacher education highlight the value of intentional reflective practices as one of the best methods of continuous professional development (Evelein & Korthagen, 2015; Graus et al., 2022; Korthagen, 2014) and a highly valuable skill to develop with PSTs (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Ellis et al., 2020). Reflection is a core component of the AR cycle, and many authors across this body of literature chose to use AR methodology as a way to introduce or reaffirm reflective practice skills with their PST participants (Arefian, 2022; Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Davis et al., 2018; Esau, 2013; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Kinskey, 2018; Klima Ronen, 2020; Kola, 2021; McIntyre et al., 2007; Nettleton et al., 2020; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Polly et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Tan et al., 2020; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023). Reflection is a key component of being able to address the previously mentioned classroom problems of practice, as it gives the teacher an opportunity to consider what they are doing that may have been contributing to the problem and how any interventions they implement have changed the problem (or not).

Broadly across the literature, a number of studies required PST participants to keep reflective journals (Arefian, 2022; Kinskey, 2018; Klima Ronen, 2020; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022), which were often used as data sources within their AR study. There were also examples of other forms of consistent, structured reflection like regular debrief sessions (Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Kinskey, 2018; Kola, 2021; Yan, 2017). Journaling and

reflective debriefs are both practices that show a strong connection to teacher readiness through the professional engagement domain.

It is worth noting is that several authors (Davis et al., 2018; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Nettleton et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005) included a remark about the importance of reflective practices as a component of AR methods but did not include a specific description of how reflection took place during their study of focus. This is not to say that they did not properly include reflective practices in their research, simply that reflection was named as important but no specific structure of reflective practices was elaborated upon.

2.2.2.4.3 Self-Management as a Lifelong Skill.

There are still significant issues with the education system when it comes to race and equity. There is only so much time in teacher preparation programs to teach PSTs everything they need to know *and* encourage them to 'fight the system', yet culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy are critically important and should not be relegated to a single course, or worse a single unit within a course, during teacher training (Carter Andrews & Castillo, 2016; Grudnoff et al., 2017). We must also acknowledge that PSTs aren't always given the time, space, or authority to address inequities in their practicum classroom. While the ability to confront and address inequities is folded into all four domains of teacher readiness, it is most present in the self-management domain, as this is the domain in which PST's feelings of readiness to confront difficult situations on their own is measured. Nearly half of the articles in this literature explored some of the ways in which AR can have emancipatory qualities, and encouraged their PST participants to consider the ways in which AR could help them conduct social justice work in their future classrooms (Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Esau, 2013; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Klima Ronen, 2020; Kola, 2021;

Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Price & Valli, 2005; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017). Experiencing success with this kind of disruption and seeing value being placed on the changes and actions they are able to implement can serve as both motivation to continue disrupting in meaningful ways, and provide the tools they need to generate future research-based disruptions. At the conclusion of their 1991 paper, Gore & Zeichner comment that "in fact some staff development personnel in the district have recently expressed interest in focusing some of the teacher research that the district supports on issues related to racial equity" (Gore & Zeichner, 1991, p. 134), a call that is still critically important thirty years later.

2.2.2.5 Action Research as a Facilitator of Agency.

Engaging in AR can help PSTs enact change in an observable way, as the *action* part of the name generally involves at least one cycle of intervention and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Burns, 2005). This demonstrates to the PSTs that they can create some level of change within the school space. Fifteen of the studies included in this literature review (Arefian, 2022; Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Polly et al., 2020; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023) named increasing teacher or PST agency as a reason for conducting AR. Though more than half of the included studies noted the value of teacher agency, these efforts were not always reported as a success.

More often than not, school and district policies function as a reduction of teacher agency through standardization (Sleeter, 2019). PSTs have even less agency in their practicum classroom, as they are beholden to both the district/school-site policies and the curriculum their mentor wants the PST to teach. This perceived lack of agency is often compounded by the

current neoliberal schooling agenda that pushes prefabricated curriculum for teachers, constrains their metrics of success to standardized test results, and fills all available teaching time with predetermined tasks (Kraft & Lyon, 2022). Constraints of this kind were frequently reported as a source of struggle for PSTs or named as a limitation to conducting AR in the classroom; these issues will be explored in depth in section 2.2.2.7.

2.2.2.5.1 Professional Practice and Agency.

Opportunities for PSTs to exercise their school-site agency were mostly present in studies where PSTs worked within an institutionally supported CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or CAR team that contained other teachers at their school site (Garin, 2016; Nettleton et al., 2020). Garin's PST participants reported an overall benefit of seeing in-service teachers creating change in their classrooms and school-sites, and that change of this kind seemed to be more likely to 'stick' since the agents of change were long-term school employees. Garin also noted that 31 out of 54 participants described ways in which school-site administrators were encouraging or supportive of the teachers creating change through attending meetings, purchasing materials for them, providing time and space for group meetings, and for acts of recognition and encouragement (p. 21). Nettleton et al.'s (2020) longitudinal study of program graduates demonstrated that 68% of their participants look back on their PST AR projects as a form of leadership training, and that most participants from that 68% also currently consider themselves up and coming school leaders. Reasons named for this are largely focused around the MTs and other school leaders they engaged with during the AR project who not only valued the research, but created professional development opportunities and conference presentation opportunities for their research collective. They noted for one participant that "the principal who first hired her commented on the fact that she seemed to be a seasoned teacher in her first year of teaching"

(Nettleton et al., 2020, p. 21), and that this participant wholly attributed that to her AR collaboration with experienced teachers. Having both the freedom and the leadership support to enact change was noted to be an overall positive example for the PST participants, and these affordances helped counteract other named issues such as tight time constraints.

There were also studies that demonstrated agency in more subtle ways. Bendtsen et al. (2021), for example, were very transparent with their participants in allowing PSTs to choose their own topic of inquiry. The researchers also clearly explained their desire for PSTs to mirror this by allowing future students to choose their own inquiry topics in tasks like project-based learning. Participants in Arefian's (2022) study reported that they developed a stronger sense of agency in advocating for their own professional development needs in the future through working with and observing more experienced teachers demonstrating that advocacy. These more subtle opportunities to exercise agency still fed into a sense of readiness to teach by allowing PSTs to drive the professional practices they were engaging in.

2.2.2.5.2 Professional Engagement and Agency.

Broadly speaking, instilling PSTs with a sense of agency over their own research and in their own future classrooms is one of the strongest positive emotional outcomes reported in the literature (Bendtsen et al., 2021; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Price & Valli, 2005; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Zeivots et al., 2023). A participant in Hulse and Hulme's (2012) study was quoted to say:

> It makes you feel like you belong. You fit in somewhere because we have done this research and it's not just a pointless exercise…I have contributed to that school and I could contribute to any school I work in. It puts you on that step of 'I actually am a teacher' (Hulse & Hulme, 2012, p. 323).

Other authors reported similar stories, such as Price and Valli's (2005) focal participant who received overwhelmingly positive enthusiasm and support for her research even though the results of her actually study were inconclusive, while one of Arefian's (2022) participants described how teachers in other content areas at their school site became supportive and excited about their research project which lead to even more school-wide change than the participant had originally expected. Though the reactions of school-site personnel outside the study can be highly unpredictable, it is clear that positive reactions from the broader school community directly correlate with positive development for the PSTs. This is particularly salient, as the Professional Engagement (D3) dimension of teacher readiness includes engaging in activities that benefit the school and the broader community that the school serves.

2.2.2.5.3 Self-Management and Agency.

Providing PSTs with agency prepares them to confront policies or practices that they find problematic, either in a subversive way in their own classroom (i.e. creative insubordination) or more overtly through a CoP in their school. The motivation and ability to address problems on one's own are at the core of the self-management domain of teacher readiness. The *action* in AR almost always results in some form of change, which is in turn some form of disruption to the current 'ways of being' that the researcher is exploring (Anderson, 2017). Though not every action cycle produces successful outcomes, almost every example discussed in the sections above highlights the ways in which granting PSTs and their co-researchers some agency over their circumstances is generally beneficial. A deeper examination of these benefits to disruption are explored in the next section.

2.2.2.6 Action Research as a Disrupter.

At its historic core, AR was designed for emancipatory and liberatory purposes (Rappaport, 2020). In some reviewed writing, this spirit was infused throughout the work conducted with PSTs. One author writes that:

> It so happens that the tide of justified indignation that has swept across the country…has stirred an activist and critical stand in the younger generations, as a result of which university students are – among other things – no longer afraid to express their discomfort within and outside university walls (Villacañas de Castro, 2014, p. 537).

Several studies (Dahl, 2014; Esau, 2013; Kola, 2021) discussed PST AR with social just work as the primary purpose, while other authors (Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Price & Valli, 2005; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017) allowed students to choose to engage in emancipatory AR if desired and reported at least one PST participant who chose to do so.

Other studies demonstrated the disruptive possibilities of AR in another way. While the first author was the PST's professor, the co-authors of McIntryre et al. (2007) were all PSTs who had conducted emancipatory research with their own students, specifically a group of young women of marginalized racial identities. This disruption in AR is not only present in the type of study conducted, but in disrupting the hierarchical model of research publishing. Though examples of this work with PSTs in the lead were sparsely represented in this body of literature, it is similar to the excellent PAR work being conducted with youth by later-career educators (e.g., T. M. Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Mirra et al., 2015).

Not all papers centering the emancipatory nature of AR focused on social justice issues. Zeviots et al. (2023) positioned their approach as serving to "disrupt some of the above dynamics

[tensions with practitioner research], while not being too disruptive" (p. 2). They noted that centering collaboration amongst PSTs was disruptive to the traditional schooling characteristic of competition that ranks students by their performance, and that the mindset shift was challenging but ultimately rewarding for their PST participants (p. 14). This notion is well-aligned with Brown and Duguid's (1991) conception of CoPs as a disruptor of institutional hierarchies and traditional problem-solving. In summary, a disruption does not need to be a massive alteration to the circumstances of schooling to be a positive disruption.

2.2.2.6.1 Professional Practice and Disruption.

Students seeing that other teachers, professors, and peers value liberatory practices sets a good example, particularly for PSTs 'less in the struggle' (Casey & McManimon, 2020). Esau (2013) describes that "teachers and students are not only concerned with changing and improving their practice in the classroom, but also with changing unequal relations in the wider social context" (p. 3). Similarly, engaging in emancipatory AR as PSTs can create teachers who are capable of leading emancipatory actions in their future classrooms; this leads to more and more young people, who typically have little influence of policy, to mirror the behaviors of their teachers and continue a cycle of emancipatory actions (Villacañas de Castro, 2014). The ability to educate young people on collaborative problem solving is not only one of the driving forces in Manasia et al.'s (2020) motivation to create their readiness instrument, but is also the driving goal of the Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017) initiative. One of Dahl's (2014) participants took inspiration from her professor's support for the PST research process by providing her own students (who were the focus of her PST AR study) space to discuss their thoughts and feelings about challenging topics without the presence of any adult supervision. Though she reported finding it difficult to fully trust the process to students, those student

participants interviewed members of their community and brought a whole new perspective to her study. At the conclusion of his paper, Dahl notes that "many student-teachers raised their voices and initiated education changes in what they experienced as 'from worse to better'" (Dahl, 2014, p. 172). Across these examples, as well as some others already described in other sections, it is clear that experienced teachers and TEs demonstrating 'good' disruptions can lead to PSTs generating their own 'good' disruptions, and even passing that on further to their practicum students. This is not only a strong indicator for teacher readiness, but one of the core activities that UNESCO's (2017) initiatives want educators to be ready for.

2.2.2.6.2 Professional Engagement and Disruption.

Disruption within AR is a disruption of some sort of social construct and therefore takes more than one person to occur at all. Being able to talk and reflect on liberatory practices - i.e. having difficult dialogues - benefits all participants, provided the talk eventually leads to actions. A participant in Dahl's (2014) research group expressed that previous attempts of being in groups talking about enacting change failed due to a lack of direction and follow-ups, but that "trying [action research] out in practice has really changed my attitude" (p. 171). Similarly, Garin's (2017) found that there was a much higher level of 'buy-in' from participating in-service teachers at schools with established Lave and Wenger (1991) style of CoP when compared with schools that did not have formal discursive communities prior to the study.

One of Gore & Zeichner's (1991) participant examples had focused the research exclusively around herself as more of a self-study because she was nervous to be critical or disruptive to others, but that through discussion she was able to change her thinking and incorporate others into her actual study. A participant in another study was able, through collaborative discourse, to introduce their ideas to other teachers at the school who then

implemented the new intervention and allowed the PST to come visit and observe the results (Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015). In this way, discourse was used not only to facilitate one AR project, but also to spread the findings to others and to create more expansive opportunities for disruption than originally thought. Contributing to the betterment of the school or broader local community in this way is a key component of teacher readiness through engagement.

2.2.2.6.3 Self-Management and Disruption.

Throughout this analysis, it is clearly established that areas of struggle can lead to negative emotional experiences for participants (Pishghadam et al., 2016), but this is particularly apparent when those struggles are directly related to liberatory work. A participant in Dahl's (2014) research was discouraged from, and ultimately abandoned, a topic that was very important to her as it was deemed 'too taboo' at the time (p. 169). Other authors (Davis et al., 2018; Kola, 2021; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015) gave more general remarks about guiding students away from social justice topics that were simply too large in scope for the PSTs to be able to address. Issues of racial inequity cannot be solved with one AR project, and it is understandable that TEs may want to avoid negative emotions related to conducting 'impossible' research. Examples of successes with difficult topics, however, show that it is possible for TEs to guide PSTs towards a manageable scope without deterring them away from a critically important cause.

Some authors also provided us with examples of societal issues completely outside the AR context as causing negative emotions for participants. Many of the PST research studies in Banegas and Consoli's (2020) work were sidelined due to nation-wide teacher strikes, and much of the reported student dissatisfaction was directly aligned with the missed opportunities the strike created. Multiple participants in Villacañas de Castro's (2014) AR course expressed

frustrations that they were not guaranteed a job in education, even after obtaining a Master's degree (p. 546). This was the result of significant labor market struggles in their country at the time, and many students dedicated their extra time engaging in protests. While this kind of engagement is well-aligned with readiness to teach, the specific situation in this context may not have contributed to the PSTs' sense of readiness.

Despite the multitude of personal and societal struggles PSTs may be experiencing in tandem with the practicum, making a difference does lead to positive emotions, just as avoiding disruption because it is difficult leads to those 'in the struggle' feeling abandoned; we need to keep those folks supported and in the profession (Kohli, 2018). One of Gore & Zeichner's (1991) participants stated:

> I also felt somewhat 'empowered' by action research. I was no longer 'just sticking things out', so to speak. I was not simply plodding along or going through the motions in spite of how I felt toward/about the problems I saw in my classroom/the general educational world…I was preparing to make changes where I saw the need" (p. 130).

A PST co-author of McIntyre et al. (2007) described experiences of feeling racially marginalized and dismissed in many spaces, and that conducting AR with her students of marginalized identities was both personally and collectively rewarding. She reflected that her AR helped her "to develop strategies for addressing the daily experiences of being a member of a minority group in the US" (p. 751). Though there are significant challenges associated with conducting AR, which are summarized in the next section, authors across this literature review seem to agree that working towards an equitable future is worth it, and that fostering a generation of novice teachers who value advocacy is an important indicator of readiness to work in a field as challenging as public education.

2.2.2.7 Challenges and Concerns with Action Research.

Throughout the body of reviewed literature, there was fairly consistent agreement regarding the challenges and limitations of conducting AR with PSTs. One consistently reported issue was a lack of PST agency to enact change when their school-site mentor or principal did not demonstrate 'buy-in' (Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; McIntyre et al., 2007; Polly et al., 2020; Zeivots et al., 2023) or a noted lack of engagement from one of more collaborators (Arefian, 2022; Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Bendtsen et al., 2021; Garin, 2016; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Kinskey, 2018; McIntyre et al., 2007; Nettleton et al., 2020; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Tan et al., 2020; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023). As one author eloquently points out, "PSTs have little, if any, say in the what, how, or why of teaching. This can be problematic as these teachers then pass on to their students these values, strategies and practices that they internalise during pre-service" (Zeivots et al., 2023, p. 4). Others encountered issues that stemmed from a lack of support from one or more TEs during their research process (Klima Ronen, 2022; Ulvik & Riese, 2015). While some authors make suggestions to improve these situations in the conclusion of their papers, the general takeaway is that the level of engagement in AR will vary between individuals, and that leaders of AR projects are perhaps better off supporting those who do exhibit engagement than forcing disengaged folks to participate.

Price and Valli (2005) argue that PSTs are positioned as holding relatively low power, especially over TEs, and that bringing about change in unsupportive environments is made all the more challenging in their position as novices. One of their PST cases, for example, hesitated to implement an intervention for students in their internship classroom due to feedback from the

MT and a fear that the intervention would be too different from the "usual way of doing things" for those students. Ultimately those concerns were addressed and the intervention turned out to be a success that the MT even considered adding to her own curriculum in the future (Price and Valli, 2005). Unfortunately, not all cases of this kind resolve so happily. Some MTs may be unwilling to critically examine their own classroom practices, to engage in experimental pedagogy, or simply to do anything outside of the "usual way". These MTs hold authoritative, and sometimes evaluative, power over the PSTs who are guests in their classroom space; furthermore, they are not employees of the university and, though they may receive some training and a stipend for their mentorship, are also outside of the researcher's ability to influence.

Almost all authors across this literature review (25 out of 28) agreed that time played a significant factor in these projects (Arefian, 2022; Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Bendtsen et al., 2021; Dahl, 2014; Davis et al., 2018; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Kinskey, 2018; Kola, 2021; McIntyre et al., 2007; Nettleton et al., 2020; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015; Price & Valli, 2005; Rutten, 2021; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023; Tan et al., 2020; Trent, 2010; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Ulvik & Riese, 2016; Villacañas de Castro, 2014; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023). Several authors noted that participants specifically commented that the research process was too time consuming (Davis et al. 2018; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hulse & Hulme, 2012; Ugalingan et al., 2022; Ulvik & Riese, 2015; Yan, 2017), a difficulty that is compounded by other factors such as semester-based time constraints and assignments from other courses. Some students had other types of logistical issues, such as PSTs who suggested projects that were not feasible in their setting or timeframe

(Esau) or were rejected by their MT because the mentor was unwilling to enact the suggested changes within the necessary timeframe (Trent, 2010).

A final concern echoed across multiple authors was difficulties with training PSTs to conduct research. Several authors note that a lack of prior experience with research or under-developed research skills could lead to issues (Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Davis et al., 2018; Garin, 2016; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019, 2021; Polly et al., 2020; Trent, 2010; Yan, 2017; Zeivots et al., 2023). Among these issues are potentially unethical research practices, invalid data, inability to complete the research project, or – much more mildly – general frustration and/or disappointment with the research.

Broadly speaking, there are a number of issues that seem to be common across a variety of AR projects involving PSTs. While it may be possible to utilize this prior research in limiting or reducing the influence of these challenges when conceptualizing new AR projects with PSTs broadly, much of this stems from the unpredictable nature of human subject research and the unpredictable nature of schooling. While a personal motivation of mine was to work toward positive experiences for my PST dissertation participants, it was realistic to expect a few negative experiences as well. A thorough synthesis of this body of literature was critical in conceptualizing the specifics of our study design and the efforts I took to avoid known issues where it was possible.

2.2.3 Literature Review Conclusions

Throughout the literature, examples of PSTs inquiring about, reflecting on, and taking action toward an improved educational practice spotlight the possibilities for increased readiness to teach that AR provides. Most of these authors are also deeply practical, providing insight into the ways in which AR can be a difficult undertaking for teachers so early in their careers. When

synthesized, the narrative of this body of literature provided significant insight toward what should and should not be done with my own research.

There is significant, intentional work that must be done by multiple stakeholders toward building professional confidence when working with PST co-researchers. Though I secured some level of buy-in from a few associated TEs, there were many more stakeholders who proved difficult to persuade. Price and Valli (2005) described that PSTs struggled to position themselves as professionals, and the circumstances elucidated in their case studies demonstrate how this could lead to second-guessing themselves, fear of taking action, and ultimately not reducing their own senses of readiness to teach. Yet "action research helped eliminate the fear of taking risks in the classroom" (Kinskey, 2018), so there is hope. The literature reveals that establishing an intentional community of support is critical to guard against individuals who may discourage or block the actions of the PSTs, and thus an important component of my study design. Several authors lamented the challenges of serving as the sole TE with an AR alignment in the program (Yan, 2017), while others celebrated the benefits of having multiple colleagues to support the students in their research undertakings (Banegas & Consoli, 2021; Tan et al., 2020; Ugalingan et al., 2022). Within my study, students had at least one faculty member instructing them on research methods, and at least one faculty supervisor to act as an advisor who was encouraging of research. These two individuals are, at a minimum, an asset to mitigate some of the challenges reported by other authors. I also acknowledge, however, that the kind of research we conducted together is different from the norm and that further tensions arose from doing something different.

Another consideration in study design revealed by the literature is the need to ensure that the purpose and content of the AR project is *genuine* (Le Fevre et al., 2015), and that PST

investment is not superficial or begrudging. Zeivots and colleagues (2023) warn that such behavior might mimic engagement but could potentially result in students disengaging from the research at hand *and* be resentful of research in their future careers. In my own study, I intentionally left the topic(s) of our AR project vague during participant recruitment in order to leave this decision fully open to the collective when assembled. Yet I, as other researchers within this body of literature note, must also acknowledge that my prior knowledge and epistemology may have caused me to direct the group away from certain AR topics. In my case, I was most aware of navigating the CoP away from topics that were not feasible within our timeframe or possible with our set of resources. For this, the literature indicates that building a foundation of communal respect, as well as a basic understanding of collective funds of knowledge, provide the best possible foundation in selecting a topic that is productive and feasible while also within the PSTs' comfort zone and, most importantly, genuine. I was also aware that I harbored a slight personal bias against potential research topics that may ultimately be perceived as 'boring' by some members of the CoP (and, admittedly, myself). For additional validity, I also shared full transcripts of the CoP meetings in which we discussed research topics with my critical friend to confirm that I do not drive decisions towards or away from any feasible topics. I describe the role of my critical friend in section 3.5 and provide a full narrative description of the CAR project in section 4.1.1.

When examining the CoP's developing sense of readiness to teach through both the Manasia et al. (2020) instrument and in the participants' own words, there are significant concerns that participants may try to determine what the 'preferred response' would be rather than giving genuine answers to questions throughout. This concern was brought forth by several authors in the body of literature and in studies of teacher readiness outside of this literature

review (e.g., Mohamed et al., 2017b; Trent, 2010). These same authors seem to agree that the two methods of guarding against this behavior involve building that previously mentioned communal respect and trust, and to embed multiple different methods of confirmation into our regular discourse. For this dissertation research specifically, I benefit from the fact that I am not responsible for evaluating my co-researchers in any way. Although they received course credit for our work together, the notion of this advantage is supported due to many authors who suspected 'preferred answers' in their findings also reported that they served as instructor of record for the course in which their participants were enrolled. This was not my case, but worth noting for scholars who may be building off my work in their own contexts who are in a grading role.

This brings to light an additional concern supported throughout the literature: the absence of a clear label the specific type of TE role I took on within the CoP. In order to address this, I conducted a supplementary literature review with the goal of determining an appropriate label for my role within the CoP. The label of mentor seemed to be most appropriate, and I describe my alignment with the roles and responsibilities expected of an MT in section 5.1, but an MT is a formally assigned title to someone serving in a teaching position and thus not accurate of this context.

Academic literature about mentors and mentorship acknowledges the existence of both official and unofficial mentors, with official mentors being defined as individuals formally assigned to the mentoring role by a supervisor or accepting a formal request from a mentee. An example of this would be an experienced teacher assigned by her school principal and by a local university to guide a PST through their internship. Unofficial mentors are generally defined as being individuals who were not formally asked or assigned to the role but have chosen to fill

some or all the expected duties of an official mentor. An example of this might be an experienced teacher providing guidance to an early career teacher in their school building without having been asked by the principal or a university to do so. There is also an acknowledgement of a third type of mentor, one who finds themselves fulfilling the role of a mentor without volunteering or having been formally asked. An example of this would be an experienced teacher in a collaborative planning group finding herself providing frequent guidance and feedback to the novice teachers in the same group. This third type of mentor, though rarely written about in academic literature, has been referred to as an 'accidental' mentor.

The concept of an accidental mentor expands outside of teacher education, such as in the medical field (e.g., Levy et al., 2004; Mills et al., 2007) or organizational leadership (e.g., Hester & Setzer, 2013). Accidental mentorship is also discussed in the trans-disciplinary *Handbook for Women Mentors* (Rayburn et al., 2010). These pieces, which center the experiences of an 'accidental' mentor specifically, represent the majority of current publications focusing on this type of mentorship. In a search for academic literature featuring "accidental mentor/ing/ship" as a keyword only 155 results emerged, and of those only 9 were articles published in peer-reviewed journals or books. Of those remaining 9, none were specific accounts of TEs working with PSTs. By providing an account of accidental mentorship in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I address this gap as both a case study in accidental mentorship within teacher education literature and as a study of accidental mentorship that contributes to the broader body of mentorship literature across fields.

Lastly, the literature reveals that awareness of participants' workloads and course expectations are critical in conducting AR with PSTs. Several authors reported student concerns

with how they would be graded (Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Villacañas de Castro, 2014), and thus a non-grading coordinator of PST AR projects should ensure that students are receiving fair grading from other faculty members throughout the process. More important than grades, however, is the importance of protecting their social-emotional health. Being a PST during the practicum is an extremely taxing undertaking; these individuals are students with coursework and academic obligations while simultaneously also being teachers who engage in full workdays of teaching, grading, lesson planning, and supporting their own students – all this often without pay, and often without enough 'extra' time to take on an additional job for income[7]. These compounding factors make the practicum year extremely stressful for most PSTs, and this is a major driving factor behind my motivation to keep following my North Star by leverage existing resources and repurpose existing assignments rather than to overburden my co-researchers with more than they can handle.

2.3 Teacher Readiness and CoP Frameworks

As previously mentioned, the need to measure and evaluate a PST's sense of readiness to teach requires quite a bit of work. I selected Manasia et al.'s (2020) instrument and framework for several reasons. First, Manasia and her colleagues built their own work on the foundation of an extensive literature review. Through cross-walking multiple frameworks for teacher professionalism, including (Danielson, 2007; OECD, 2016; Wang et al., 2014), their team was able to derive a model of PST readiness to teach that draws on four central dimensions: (D1)

[7] Some PST internship programs do offer pay, including an experimental one at the university of focus. None of my participants, however, were members of that particular program. Also worth noting is that one of my focal participants did need to take on an additional part-time job for income, which is only tangentially mentioned across the data, but did cause complications for the CoP in terms of scheduling and workload distribution.

Professional Knowledge, (D2) Professional Practice, (D3) Professional Engagement, and (D4) Self-Management (Manasia et al., 2020, p. 4). Their team then examined teacher readiness deeply across each dimension and incorporated both the works of diverse international scholars and multiple teaching evaluation frameworks from across the globe. Through this process, their team developed a framework for evaluating a PST's sense of readiness to teach that was well-aligned with the United Nations calls for sustainable education while also not being constrained to the expectations of the researchers' geographical contexts.

Second, I chose this framework over others because it is completely oriented towards the PSTs' perceptions of their own self-readiness. This is in contrast with models that orient almost exclusively towards the perceptions of a supervising TE (e.g., Haigh et al., 2013) or models that utilize high-stakes standardized testing graded by individuals who never even meet the PSTs and know nothing of them beyond their submitted portfolio, such as edTPA (Zhou, 2018).

My final reason for the use of Manasia et al.'s (2020) framework is related to collaboration. While the instrument itself is intended to measure an individual's readiness to teach, the principles underpinning the development of the instrument stem from UNESCO's (2017) directives to increase collaborative work across all areas of education. Their alignment towards collaborative work significantly mirrors my own alignment. Their instrument is well-suited for use in context where the PSTs are both consistently working in groups with one another, and many components of their readiness model across their four dimensions reflect collaborative competencies such as "applying different communication techniques to foster collaborative learning" or "collaborating with parents and community members" (Manasia et al., 2020, p. 7).

The orientation toward collaboration present in both my motivations and in my framework for readiness to teach reveal a need to understand the structure within that collaborative group. The dynamics between individuals working in small groups to generate knowledge and work towards a common goal are best examined through the lens of CoPs. The notion of a formal CoP, first described by Lave and Wenger (1991) and later expanded upon by Wenger and their colleagues (1999; 2002), conceptualize the participation of novices as an important component of their learning and socialization into their profession. My work further incorporates the assertions of Brown and Duguid (1991) that knowledge generated within CoPs should be independent of institutional knowledge and rely more on the collaboratively generated and improvised knowledge of the CoP members. The synergy between a framework for understanding group dynamics during a learning task and a framework for examining readiness to teach that highlights collaborative competencies allow for a thorough understanding of the ways in which engaging in collaborative research contribute to PSTs' sense of readiness.

2.3.1 Framework for Teacher Readiness

The concept of readiness to teach, as described by Manasia et al. (2020), is underpinned by an understanding of teacher professionalism. They note that, across their reviewed literature, teacher professionalism is a core issue across cultures and geographical locations leading to educational reform, but that the socio-political conception of professionalism and the types of reform generated because of that conception are not consistent across cultures or geographical contexts. Sexton (2007) noted in their review of teacher professionalism literature that there is an absence of scholarship that universally defines teacher professionalism in a rigorous way, and that gap is still largely unaddressed today. Despite this, we can understand teacher

professionalism broadly to be represented by the collection of skills, attitudes, and practices that a teacher needs in order to deliver high-quality educational services.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, Manasia and colleagues also built their work on the foundation set by the United Nations in their global ESD (education for sustainable development) efforts. The ESD framework specifically guides educators to prioritize problem-solving, critical thinking, complex situation analysis, and decision-making skills within their classrooms. The Manasia et al. (2020) framework for teacher readiness represents both an understanding of the broader skills, attitudes, and practices of a high-quality teacher and the prioritization or ESD-aligned initiatives. Their framework groups alike concepts into four dimensions, each of which includes a number or competencies. Their dimensions and competencies are outlined below in Table 4.

Table 4:

Summary of Teacher Readiness Competencies by Dimension

(D1) Professional Knowledge	(D2) Professional Practice	(D3) Professional Engagement	(D4) Self-Management
• Understanding learning processes • Understanding inter-individual differences in learning • Aligning instruction with learning outcomes • Curriculum interpretation and use	• Translating knowledge into practice • Setting goals and objectives • Designing effective instructional strategies • Designing assessments • Use of feedback • Creating a positive learning environment	• Participating in professional learning • Engaging in reflective practices • Serving both the classroom and society • Upholding school and local values and ethical conduct expectations • Networking	• Managing school-related processes • Managing school-related activities • Allocating time and resources • Setting goals • Empowering self-regulation

• Understanding instructional strategies • Knowledge of instructional activity design • Use of educational technology	• Fostering self-regulated learning in students • Meeting individual student needs	• Demonstrating respect for others

It is important to note that, within this framework, competencies are weighed equally across all four dimensions. This may not fully align with the ways in which different school systems around the world evaluate their PSTs' sense of readiness to teach or their in-service teachers' professionalism. In the United States, for example, recognition of excellence in ESD alignment prioritizes schools and educators who work specifically around environmental sustainability (i.e. ecosystem conservation, research in alternative power sources, or consumption reduction) rather than work related to problem-solving or critical thinking (United States Dept. of Education, 2024). As of the time of this research, none of the courses offered at the university of focus within the College of Education focused on ESD standards in any significant way. Despite this lack of total alignment within the PSTs' teacher preparation program, the principles represented across Manasia et al.'s (2020) framework for teacher readiness is still deeply aligned with the motivations behind and the research questions for this dissertation.

2.3.2 Communities of Practice Framework

As noted in Chapter 1, the research for this dissertation is structured around a CoP. Aligned with the original ideas of Lave and Wenger (1991) and with the definition laid out by Wenger (1998), our CoP is comprised of individuals with a similar professional goal and a

mutual understanding of the purpose of the CoP. According to Wenger (1998), a formal CoP adheres to the following characteristics:

1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversation and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
6. Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
8. Mutually defining identities
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and procedures
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing some new ones
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
14. A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world. (pp. 125-6)

These fourteen characteristics each serve an important purpose in the decision to define and align our CoP with this framework. Characteristics 1 and 2 address the participation expectations of a structured CoP, reminding members that remaining in the group through interpersonal conflict and coming to agreements around ways of executing tasks are both important to the group's functionality. Characteristics 3 through 5 reflect both the importance of collective understanding,

but also the importance of time. The PSTs participating in this research were constrained by the duration and time-based milestones of their teacher preparation program. Our CoP needed to be formed at the beginning of a single school year and reach the conclusion of our primary task before the end of the same school year. For this reason, it was critical that all members of the CoP valued the importance of sharing information rapidly, reducing the need for re-explaining key points, and framing each CoP meeting as a continuous conversation. While in some ways, the CoP members did not have a say over the definition of who does and does not belong in the CoP due to constraints laid out by my inclusion criteria in section 3.1.1.1, CoP characteristics 6 through 8 helped lay out an understanding of belonging for all CoP members. It was also important for CoP members to have a clear understanding of their role within the group, as well as an understanding of the roles, strengths, and weaknesses of other CoP members. These characteristics facilitate dividing tasks and managing the expectations of one another during our CoP work. I found this to be particularly important, as anyone who has worked on a group project for a course can attest that struggles can arise when the responsibilities of each group member are not clearly defined or well-balanced. In thinking of my North Star efforts to reduce the workload for the PST participants, a critical component of that effort is to *not* reduce the workload of some by increasing the workload of others. Characteristics 9 and 10 serve to remind all CoP members that having a shared understanding of methods, in our case an understanding of AR, is important to CoP functionality. While our CoP is not in itself a course, nor is it an extension of a course, the PST participants were enrolled in an AR course that was being taught parallel to this study. PST participants were expected to extend their learning from that course into the CoP CAR work, and that I would share supplemental information as a fellow CoP member to address any gaps of knowledge not addressed during their coursework.

Characteristics 11 and 12 of Wenger's (1998) definition of a formal CoP assist in addressing my second research question regarding the rapport between CoP members (***How does a TE's membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?)*** Understanding this rapport and how it may or may not contribute to PST readiness to teach is a critical component of my second research question. Although this framework was selected prior to the emergence of that question, its inclusion in the framework is nonetheless important to my work. The understanding of that rapport additionally supports my first research question regarding the PSTs' developing senses of readiness to teach while participating in the CoP. My first research question ***(How does PSTs' membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?)*** is further supported by characteristics 13 and 14 by providing a framework against which I can align and define the PST participants' understanding of themselves and their work across time while members of the CoP. Broadly, utilizing these characteristics to define our CoP helped shape my own and my participants' understanding of our work together, and ensured that a framework beyond "group project" guided our actions throughout the research process.

It is important to note that Wenger's (1998) definition of a CoP is not the only model that contributes to the conception of a CoP used in this research. Our CoP is partially inspired by the work of Brown and Duguid (1991), scholars who built a similar CoP model published by Lave and Wenger (1991) but present some differences in the ways learning and knowledge are honored within the CoP. Brown and Duguid describe "canonical" and "non-canonical" groups and knowledge, arguing that "group theory in general focuses on groups as canonical, bounded entities that lie within an organization and are organized or at least sanctioned by that organization" (p.49). They continue to explain that non-canonical groups, that is to say groups

forming informally or independently of the structure of an overseeing organization, are also valid and important forms of CoPs. These non-canonical groups often form non-canonical knowledge, focusing on innovative and improvised solutions to problems rather than the transmission of more traditional methods of problem-solving sanctioned by the overseeing organization. This notion is far more aligned with our CoP, as we exist as a fully informal group intended to operate outside the boundaries of the associated institutions (i.e. the university and the PSTs' school sites). Although we were granted permission to conduct our work from key stakeholders within those institutions, our CoP existed as a counterpoint to other formally sanctioned groupings like all students enrolled in the AR course or students meeting regularly with a formal advisor – both of which are examples of communities my PST participants belonged to in addition to our CoP.

The notions of Brown and Duguid (1991) are also more aligned with PAR. This branch of AR prioritizes power and representation from the community of focus among the research team, and our CAR work is deeply influenced by that principle. While Lave and Wenger (1991) initially framed the involvement of novices within a CoP through "legitimate peripheral participation", a concept that positions novices as working directly under more experienced CoP members for the purpose of learning, Brown and Duguid assert that all members are equal within their model of a CoP. Further, Brown and Duguid support that experiential knowledge generated by anyone, of any experience level, holds value even when it is at odds with the traditional 'ways of doing things' touted by the associated institutions. This research specifically frames PST participants as my co-researchers within the CAR project as not only equals to myself, but in some ways as direct leaders that have a say in my actions and directives. Further, I position the PSTs as capable generators of knowledge in opposition to the traditional hierarchies of

knowledge upheld broadly by most academic institutions. This notion is significantly more aligned with Brown and Duguid's (1990) understanding of knowledge valuing.

2.3.3 Framework Conclusion

The application of these two frameworks, Manasia et al.'s framework for teacher readiness and the framework for a CoP that draws from both Lave and Wenger and from Brown and Duguid, for this research is rooted in the fact that, despite AR being recognized as both a valuable component of teacher preparation and longevity and as a widespread requirement for a graduate-level degree, studies reporting on different aspects of PST AR rarely framed said research on having an effect on the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach from the PSTs' perspectives. The centralization of the PST perspective in Manasia et al.'s (2020) work led me to select their framework for understanding teacher readiness, and their orientation towards collaboration when combined with my own motivations for this project lead me to select a CoP framework that outlined structured group interactions and also valued participant equity and generated knowledge.

Both frameworks do exhibit shortcomings that are not necessarily a perfect answer to my research questions or other lingering questions from other scholars related to PST AR. Manasia and her colleagues note that education for sustainable development standards were not an explicit part of teacher preparation curriculum for PSTs in their sample study, nor was their work a longitudinal study (Manasia et al., 2020, p. 18). As of writing, no published studies utilizing this framework have reported longitudinal data about participants once they began their teacher career or provide reflections on whether their sense of readiness to teach was aligned with their abilities at the beginning of their careers. While my own research is also focused on PSTs' sense of readiness during their time as a student rather than as a novice instructor of record, and is

therefore still well-aligned, questions related to their future careers will remain unanswered. While the CoP framework combining the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998), and Brown and Duguid (1991) creates a framework best aligned with the context of my CoP conducting their CAR work, there is little in any of those publications related to understanding the ways in which knowledge generated by a CoP is valued or not outside the boundaries of that CoP. As Chan (2019) notes, there is still little work being conducted that positions PSTs not only as border-crossers but as high-value holders and constructors of knowledge over their in-service colleagues. Without a framework to fully address those dynamics, questions related to the ultimate value of knowledge generated by my co-researchers will not be fully answered. Efforts to make sense of the perspectives of all participants and informants, related to both their sense of readiness to teach and the valuation of their generated knowledge are best addressed by my methods of data collection and analysis, which focus more on implicit meaning emerging from dialogic data than from explicit statements provided during the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Winter break has already started, but we're meeting one more time before a two-week hiatus. We were originally going to take three weeks off, but the students suggested and coordinated one more meeting on Zoom. It's been a mild winter so far, but today we had snow. The traffic was so slowed down that I barely made it home in time, so I'm logging on to the CoP tag up with my hat and scarf still on. The students hope this means a snow day since that would kick off their breaks early. Despite this, tonight we are focused. We start talking through the interviews we've done so far and collaboratively reflecting on whether we should rephrase any of our questions for the next round – which will either be tomorrow or in two weeks depending on that snow day. Then the conversation turns to coding. This is something they didn't learn in their action research course, so we've set aside extra CoP time to go over questions and concerns. I can tell they want to "get it right". Zoey, the perfectionist, Benjamin, the pragmatist, Robert, the advocate, and Kaitlin, the detective. We've been working hard on this research project for months. And I've seen changes in them during that time. They're becoming more confident in their teaching, and our check-in conversations have drifted from being nervous about tomorrow toward being stoked about something good that happened that day. And I can tell that they're proud of the research they're doing and want to show it off to their cohort-mates. And I'm proud of them.

The teacher prep program I'm in isn't enough courses to fill a full Master's degree requirement, so I'm taking classes in the English department. I was told that I could have just done the teaching courses and taken a certificate of completion and endorsement on my teaching license since I'm already teaching in my own classroom full time. But you can't get your doctorate without getting a Master's first, so I'm here at night taking all the courses I can that have a

research component. A lot of the professors offer alternate assignments for those who don't want to do research, and even the doctoral students I'm in courses with try to avoid doing research. "Why bother," I'm told, "nobody's expecting you to do research when you're an English teacher."

In this study, I examine how 10 Secondary ELA PSTs (4 focal PSTs) develop their collective sense of readiness to teach while they engage in a CAR project. The methodology of this study is guided by my first research question:

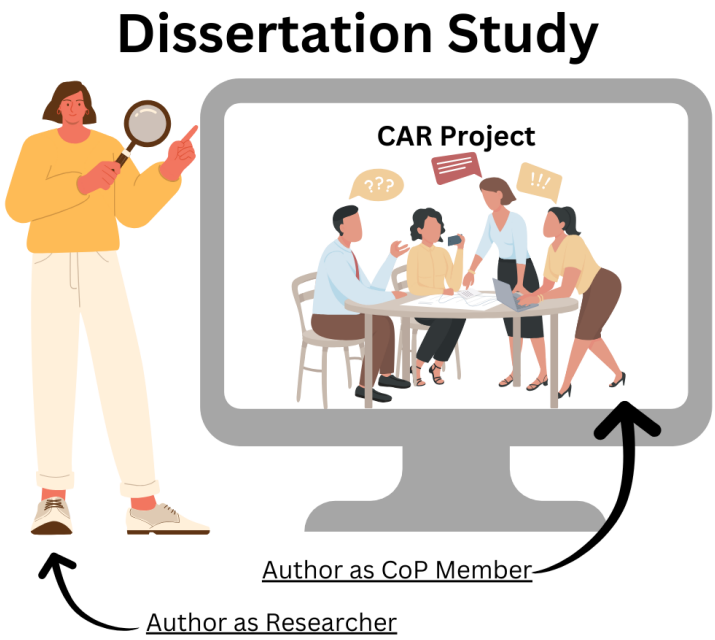
How does PSTs' membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?

With this inquiry, I aim to investigate how PSTs' collective engagement in an AR project where they get to determine the topic and research procedures may offer them the opportunities to develop a stronger sense of readiness to teach through the experiences that conducting AR can generate. These include, but are not limited to, making connections between theory and practice, increased professional engagement opportunities with in-service teachers and other PSTs, hands-on experiences identifying and addressing problems of practice in a classroom or school, exposure to basic research techniques and resources with which to address future inquiries, and opportunities to engage in reflective cycles related to their teaching practice.

Because I performed the dual actions of conducting AR with my participants as co-researchers and collecting data on their sense of readiness to teach throughout the process, the sections below describe the research procedures for both components separately (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Dissertation Study Design



The AR component of this work is a CAR project conducted in collaboration with the participants co-researchers, and the procedures associated with that project are described in section 3.2. The exploration of the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach while engaging with a CoP, in which the participants are not co-researchers, is a qualitative analysis of the data collected throughout the CoP's time together and is discussed in detail below in section 3.3. Section 3.3 also contains a full table of all data artifacts that were collected.

3.1 Teacher Readiness Study Design

The phenomenon of focus is the ways in which PSTs' sense of readiness to teach is influenced by conducting AR on an educational issue relevant to their practicum teaching contexts, in this case specifically the ways in which their sense of readiness to teach evolves while conducting collaborative AR as a CoP. Traditionally, the program in which the PSTs are enrolled requires the PSTs to conduct an individual AR study focused on a problem of practice

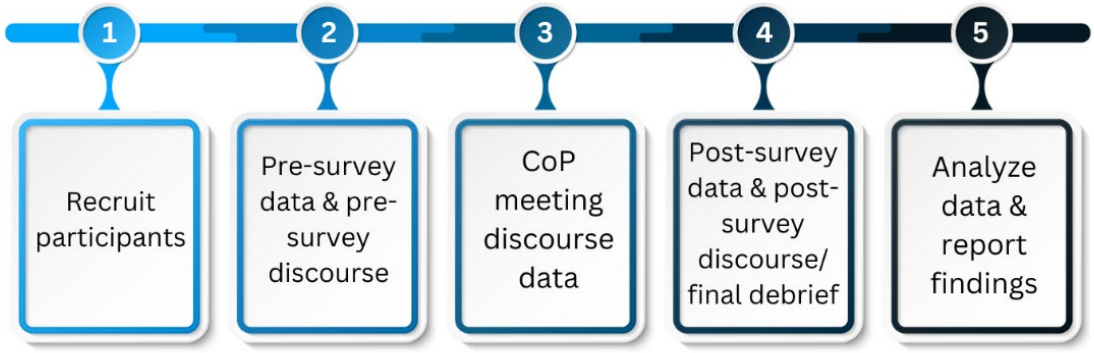
or topic of interest related to their student teaching. Because I want to examine the ways in which a sense of readiness to teach might develop within a CoP, the shared focus of our CoP was a singular topic upon which the whole team collectively conducted collaborative AR. I provided each CoP member with the Manasia et al. (2020) readiness pre-survey, which each member answered individually at the first CoP meeting and then again at the last meeting as a post-survey. Both the pre- and post-surveys were identical except that pre-survey also captured demographic information. We utilized a portion of time during both of those CoP meetings to discuss the readiness instrument in order to also capture qualitative dialogic data regarding the instrument and the PSTs' personal reflections on their own sense of readiness to teach at that time.

The remainder of the time in both the first and last CoP meetings, as well as the entirety of the time for the 8 other CoP meetings conducted in between, centered discussions of both practicum experiences and CAR project matters. The conversations that took place during meetings of the CoP forms a large portion of the data for analysis in this study. This is supplemented by PSTs' and my own reflective journaling about the CoP's work, as well as field notes I wrote during CoP meetings. I also collected text-based conversations related to the CoP's work, including messages in a group text messaging thread, emails, and the chat function during our online meetings. The participants collaboratively conducted AR within a focus of their choosing related to a problem of practice or school-site issue with relevance across their collective student teaching experiences, and they shared their findings of their AR with both school-site colleagues and non-participating cohort members in order to receive credit for an assignment in their teacher education program. Details about the topic and results of the CAR study are described in Chapter 4.

In addition to the pre- and post-survey results, group conversations, and journaling, I also conducted one-on-one final debrief interviews with four participants. I will refer to these focal participants, who were able to complete all parts of the study, as the "Core Four" moving forward. The Core Four were asked to look back on the process after the final presentation was complete as a last source of data. The steps of this study can be summarized as follows: (1) recruit participants who meet the selection criteria [see section 3.1.1.1] to form a CoP; (2) provide CoP members with a pre-survey [see section 3.3.2.1] and collect both the survey results and the CoP's discourse about the survey as data; (3) engage the CoP in regular semi-structured meetings centering the completion of CAR project [see section 3.2] and collect all writing and discourse generated in these meetings as data; (4) provide all CoP members with a post-survey and collect both the survey results and any debrief discourse at the conclusion of the project as data; (5) analyze data and report findings.

Figure 2

Dissertation Study Timeline



Because nearly all data sources are discursive in nature, and because one of my primary goals is to understand the PSTs' expression of their own sense of readiness in its most naturalistic form, discourse analysis is the main research method of my data analysis. I used constant comparative

analysis as a companion method of analysis for non-discursive data. I described this process and rationale in section 3.4.1.

3.1.1 Study Participants

I invited all members of the 15-person cohort group to participate in my study. Four declined to participate, and one was unable to join us as they had completed their action research requirement the previous year. Ten PSTs agreed to participate in the study and signed consent forms, and they will each be described below. It is important to note that of these 10, all but four of them had to drop out of the study during the process. Each participant who dropped out gave consent to utilize any data collected from them up until their departure, and those data will be touched on in my chapters that report and analyze findings when applicable. I will also discuss their reasons for departure at length in the Limitations section of Chapter 6. The Core Four participants who were present for the entire duration of the study were the sources of a large portion of the data and are analyzed much more thoroughly in subsequent chapters. A summary of all 10 participants is illustrated below in Table 5. The second "Status" column on the table indicates which six participants were only partially involved, and which were full Core Four participants. All names of participants, informants, and schools used throughout this dissertation are pseudonyms.

Table 5

Participant Summary

Pseudonym	Status	Age	Self-described Race	Practicum Placement
Chris Acosta	Partial	21-23	Colombian-American	8th grade ELA
Zoey Ai	Full	21-23	Chinese-American	9th grade ELA & AP ELA
Megan Elliot	Partial	18-21	White	10th grade ELA
Benjamin Everett	Full	21-23	White	11th & 12th grade ELA
Deanna Isaac	Partial	18-21	Black	6th & 9th grade ELA
Samaira Kang	Partial	18-21	Chinese	6th & 7th grade ELA

Rebecca Lawrence	Partial	18-21	White	8th grade ELA
Gia Loukas	Partial	18-21	White	7th & 10th grade ELA
Robert Martinez	Full	24-26	Latino	6th & 8th grade ELA
Kaitlin Moore	Full	21-23	White	7th grade ELA

3.1.1.1 Selection Criteria

For my dissertation study, I chose to work with a cohort of PSTs currently enrolled in a Secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teacher education program at a large public research-intensive university in the mid-Atlantic US. The PSTs were enrolled in a 16-month intensive program in which they were completing both a master's degree and teaching certification (MCERT). They were therefore taking a full load of coursework while also completing their practicum during the 2023-2024 school year. Students in this particular group program had previously taken a mix of English courses (some within the College of Education and some with the English Department) and pedagogy-focused courses. During the course of the dissertation study, the PSTs took courses in designing and grading advanced writing assessments for secondary ELA, methods for teaching special education students, methods for teaching multilingual learners, ethical and equitable use of educational technology, and a regular seminar course for their cohort; these were all in addition to a required AR course, which was delivered across the fall and spring semester. The PSTs' courses during the 2023-2024 school year are summarized below in Table 6.

Table 6

Summary of PST Courses

Fall 2023 Courses	Spring 2024 Courses
• Professional Seminar in Education, Secondary ELA • Conducting Research on Teaching	• Professional Seminar in Education, Secondary ELA • Conducting Research on Teaching

• Assessing, Diagnosing, and Teaching Writing • Teaching Students with Disabilities • Internship in Education	• Digital Learning Tools and Communities • Secondary Language Acquisition • Internship in Education

Students also needed to teach full time at their internship school and were regularly observed by a university supervisor in order to complete their program. They also needed to assemble two portfolios of their teaching work for university-based assessment and one portfolio for standardized external assessment called the edTPA[8]. Despite their heavy workload, I opted to offer participation in my study to any member of the 2023-2024 secondary ELA cohort. Selection criteria were chosen for three reasons:

1.) Students enrolled in a MCERT program are expected to fulfill a Masters-level research requirement, which involves 3 credits in *Conducting Research on Teaching*; the university in which this research takes place has a required course on AR for students in this program, and various iterations of this course have included a component similar to my Collaborative Action Research (CAR) work. A professor who taught a section of the course in the 2023-2024 school year agreed to give my participants course credit for their collaboration with me provided they completed all expected assignments for said course or completed pre-approved alternate assignments.

[8] edTPA, or educative teacher performance assessment, was developed by Stanford University and is currently standardized by Pearson Education, Inc. It is a performance-based assessment of teachers initially based on standards for the state of California that has since been adopted by multiple states as a metric of standardized assessment. Its use as a standardized assessment for teacher certification is currently a contested issue in teacher education scholarship (e.g., Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016). Scholars argue that the assessment is evasive of racial issues, creates disparity amongst institutions with differing resources they can provide their PST students to pass the assessment, and that it disincentivizes teachers from working with high-needs populations such as minoritized racial groups, special education students, and multilingual learners because of perceptions that a PST's ability to pass the assessment is directly linked to their students' academic performance.

2.) Accessibility to students focusing on secondary ELA was increased due to my personal background. As a former secondary ELA teacher, I have a strong working relationship with the ELA program coordinator at the university of focus and have met with students in this program multiple times to chat and share experiences.

3.) Many graduates and collaborators with the university's ELA teacher education program are currently employed in nearby high schools that host PSTs during their practicum. The likelihood of study participants being partnered with an MT who has engaged with the program previously (and therefore have more familiarity with the AR course requirements) was relatively high, and this increased the chances that the MT would be amenable to the school-site components of this study.

While this research has implications for other content area specializations, PSTs focusing on Secondary ELA are the sole population of focus for this research. Provisions were made during the recruitment phase of this study to allow for PSTs in other specializations, but circumstances to make that possible did not arise. Students in Secondary ELA were made accessible to me through collaboration with university faculty who oversee this branch of the program. Although my role as a former secondary ELA teacher correlated with an increased likelihood of involvement with the aforementioned faculty during my Ph.D. coursework and graduate assistantship work, this was not actually the case and all faculty members associated with this study were previously unknown to me.

In order to have been chosen to participate in my study, the person must have maintained the following statuses throughout the duration of the research: 1) remain enrolled at the university as a student, 2) be a member of Secondary ELA program cohort for the entire school year of focus, and 3) participate in a school-site practicum during both the fall and spring of the

2023-2024 school year.

3.1.1.2 Partial Participants

The six PST participants who were only able to engage in part of the research project were Chris, Megan, Deanna, Samaira, Gia, and Rebecca. Rebecca and Gia, both of whom self-identified as white females in their early 20s, initially expressed great enthusiasm for the project but were unable to attend the first CoP meeting and, though they were able to attend the second, departed from the group soon after. Megan, who also self-identified as a white female in her early 20s, expressed a deep interest in academic research as her motivation to join. She was able to attend the first few sessions but departed prior to the start of the CAR project's data collection phase. Deanna, who self-identified as a Black female in her early 20s, and Chris, who self-identified as a Latino-American male in his mid-20s, remained in the CoP through the data collection process, but did not participate in the analysis phase. Deanna, who has family members who are also educators, was deeply motivated to conduct research that would benefit practitioners. Chris described to the group that he had previously studied journalism before switching to education and that the investigative aspects of research were interesting to him, particularly conducting interviews. Samaira, who self-identified as an Asian female in her early 20s, remained in the CoP the longest of the six. She participated throughout data collection and analysis phases but departed just before the final presentation of CAR study results. As it is important to me to represent PST voices where I can, I have included some of these participants' contributions throughout my findings and even more in my appendices, though most of my presented findings do ultimately focus on the Core Four as they were present throughout my data collection process.

3.1.1.3 The Core Four Participants.

Robert, Zoey, Kaitlin, and Benjamin are the four participants who remained active in the CoP through its entire duration, and the only four who completed the readiness post-survey or participated in one-on-one final debriefs. Each of these four composed their own statement of identity and positionality, presented in the sections below. Each of these statements are shared with edits only for protecting confidential information, and all names used are pseudonyms. As these statements were composed during the course of our CAR project, there are some references to our collaborative research embedded throughout their writing, which I have left intact for ease of understanding their other points. Mentions of teacher work-life balance are most specifically related to the CAR research project, which is described in full across other sections of this dissertation.

3.1.1.3.1 Zoey.

> To me, a teacher's physical and mental health are invaluable to our success. We cannot pour from an empty cup while attempting to give our utmost to the education of our students, so we have to figure out how to prioritize. In my placement, I have noticed that the tendency for our Science and Technology program students to overwork themselves due to the rigorous demands of their curriculum. My mentor and I agree that in intense academic environments, it is vital for educators to model a healthy work life balance for their students. The population that I am serving at Clara Barton HS is predominantly Hispanic and Black, with white and Asian students being in the minority. The high school that I attended had a predominantly white and Asian student population with Black and Hispanic students in the minority. While my background as a Chinese-American individual differs from the racial demographic of most of my students, I have faced

similarly rigorous academic pressure. I approach our research with the goal of learning about educator work-life balance to model healthy practices for my students. (Zoey Ai, Final paper, 3-22-2024)

3.1.1.3.2 Benjamin.

My name is Benjamin Everett and I am a 24 year old white, middle-class, cisgender man who lives in [redacted – local city]. The high school that I am currently interning at is the same high school that I went to as a student, and I am working with a mentor teacher that I had for three years during my time as a student. I believe that this is both my greatest strength as well as potentially one of my greatest biases. I love both my high school as well as the mentor teacher I am working with, and I have many fond memories of both. Due to this fact I have a connection with my mentor that many students do not have, I already knew them for 3 years and had already built a relationship with them. I already knew the high school that I was working with, as well as many of the faculty and staff who were a part of it. I was in a place that I was already comfortable with surrounded by people that I already knew. This, in my opinion, is the biggest strength that I have, my connections that I have with the people around me. I am not as concerned about going to teachers to talk to them about my research because I have already worked with them in the past, or can go through someone who already knows them. That being said, this is also my greatest potential source of bias. I do not want to do something that would damage my standing, and the relationships that I have already built up with those around me. While it was, and still is, a great boon that I have these relationships, working to maintain them acts as a source of potential bias. This is something that I had to work hard

on to keep from affecting this research, as I did not want to allow my potential bias to skew the results. (Benjamin Everett, Final paper, 3-23-2024)

3.1.1.3.3 Kaitlin.

I am Kaitlin Moore, a white, female, native-English speaker in my twenties. I am currently an intern English teacher in [redacted – local school district] while working towards my Masters in Secondary English Education at [redacted - university]. I understand that as a white, female English teacher I am approaching the field of English education as a part of the privileged majority and that my own experiences and beliefs are not able to reflect the beliefs of all English teachers. As a student growing up I was always able to find myself represented in the English teachers that I had. All of these experiences and parts of my identity as well as my short but impactful time spent in the classroom as an educator may impact my ability to be an unbiased and impartial researcher.

From my limited experience of the workload put on English teachers in the American public school system I have seen what I believe to be an overall lack of a work-life balance by most educators. My personal beliefs lead me to believe that each person is entitled to some semblance of a separation between work life and personal life in order to ensure that the lives of teachers are not being overrun with the expectations imposed upon them during the school day. My personal research question focused on these expectations, posing the question of: How much do the expectations imposed on English teachers in the classroom as well as other school responsibilities affect their ideal work-life balance? My belief that there should be some separation between work and personal life in order to create the positive work-life balance and positive relationship

with one's career may have had an impact on both the questions I formulated related to my research question as well as how I interpreted the responses to said questions. (Kaitlin Moore, Final paper, 3-14-2024)

3.1.1.3.4 Robert.

My view on work/life balance as a teacher is a very complex one because of my upbringing. I was born in [redacted – local city] and have lived in the [redacted – local city] area my entire life. My mother came to the United States from Costa Rica and my father came from Guatemala. However, my mom took on the role of a single mother when I was about 8 years old. I am a first-generation graduate and will be finishing my Masters in Curriculum and Instruction in May of 2024. As an educator, I believe that it is my duty to bridge the access/knowledge of resources gap between Hispanic families and the school. When my mom had me, she did not know how to speak English, and till this day still struggles speaking English. Nonetheless, this affected me as I began attending Elementary School considering that my mom only knew how to speak Spanish. When I began attending Kindergarten, it was obvious to my teachers that I was behind in nearly every skill considering I had no experience of speaking English and had no support at home to speak English. The only time I had the chance to practice English was during school hours. Thankfully, all of my teachers went above and beyond to support my journey and by the time I reached 5th grade I had familiarize myself with the English enough to make it my first language.

However, that was just the beginning of my journey during my immersion of the Western culture. In reference back to my mom's education, she was not familiar with the high school through college process and the necessary conversations that should happen

when it comes down to that topic. Her highest education that she completed was middle school so high school was unknown territory for her. And being a single mother with two sons only made it harder to be involved with the process. Yet, she knew the importance of it and constantly reminded me to commit myself to continuing studying past high school. After becoming the first person in my family to graduate high school, I started pursing my secondary English education degree and connecting with Hispanic educators at [redacted – local community college].

At [redacted – local community college], I met Dr. T, Senior Program Director for the education program. Dr. T, who is also Latino, was the first Hispanic educator that really guided me and took on the role as a mentor. She reminded me the weight of responsibility that I am carrying being a Latino educator. It was made known to me early that there are not a lot of educators that look like me. With all respect, the profession is mostly consisted of white people. Nonetheless, as I transferred from [redacted – local community college] to the [redacted – local university], this notion was exhibited at an even larger scale with most of the student population is white. As mentioned earlier, it was made clear to me that there aren't many educators that look like me. It was obvious that most students in my grade had already two years of experience at a four-year school and were aware of the school structure. Unfortunately for me, I started my junior year as a transfer student with no experience of the school and essentially no peers. It was a challenging coming into a new scene and learning the culture.

With fear of getting off-track with my career by attempting to make friends, I maintained my head low and committed myself to finishing my masters in only three years. What many didn't notice is how I had to take six classes my first semester, one in

the winter, five in the spring, two in the summer, four in the following fall, and five in the spring in order to make that goal happen. Nonetheless as I took on this tough schedule, I have always kept it at the back of my mind that the Hispanic community depends on me. Through my observations of classes, reading countless articles, and completing a yearlong internship, it has come to my attention that the Hispanic community is suffering. It is clear, as mentioned before, that most teachers aren't Hispanic. In addition, I have realized that the Hispanic community are not taking advantage of the resources available for their kids. Considering that there is a negative view and perspective on special education for the Hispanic community, the families are not understanding the difference between resources available for a fairly common process and a deadly diagnosis. It is believed that just because their child is receiving special education help, it means that there is something wrong with their kid. Which is of course not entirely correct.

Overall, Hispanic families are not adequately accessing the resources available for their child because of language barriers, which I hope to solve through creating informative events in Spanish. In terms of my relationship with the research project, I lacked advice about higher education considering not many around me have gone to college. As I began my path to becoming an educator, it was difficult adapting to life as a student. Coming from a Hispanic family, the motto that commonly existed was work harder than you were asked and always put your work first. However, that type of mentality is the same mentality of the many educators that are burnt out.

As I've become more involved in the field of education through my internship and have received great guidance, it has come to my attention that young teachers seem to be blinded by the "Savior" connotation that comes with the position. Nonetheless,

young teachers seem to be highly enthusiastic in the beginning of their career without creating sticking to a strict work/life balance. Thus, reflecting the reason why most teachers are getting burnt out early in their careers and leaving the profession. (Robert Martinez, Final paper, 3-21-2024)

3.1.1.4 A Brief Note About Recruitment and Rapport.

The process for recruitment was unexpectedly expedited, as seven of the 10 initial participants were former students of mine, having taken a course in literature as undergraduates that I taught in the fall semester of 2022. Only one of those seven, Robert, remained at the conclusion of the study. Of the three participants who had not previously been my students, two approached me after a former student encouraged them to do so. With my former students, not only do we have prior experience working together, but all of these students were in the same section of a course that prioritized collaborative discussion and group rapport. It is for this reason that there is specific, critical data related to the validity of the study that was collected in addition to the normal data set mentioned above. Due to my prior relationships with participants influencing both their participation in the study and the participation of others who did not know me, I asked each participant to reflect on the reasons they wanted to join the action research CoP and to specifically consider how their knowledge of me may or may not have impacted their decisions. All participants who did not remain until the end of the study were asked to reflect on this through personal correspondence when discussing their exit from the project, and Robert was asked specifically about this during his debrief interview. Zoey, Kaitlin, and Benjamin were instead asked if their relationships with anyone else who did know me previously influenced their decisions to join or remain in the project or if not knowing me beforehand influenced their decision.

While I initially did not expect my own journaling to be used as data for this project, I also conducted reflective journaling throughout the research process. I continuously reflected on the ways in which my relationships with participants and my involvement as a member of the CoP might have influenced the actions of the team or the data our discourse produces. This journaling was shared, in addition to my data and analysis, with a critical friend as a method of ensuring reliability within this study. The specific details regarding the inclusion of this critical friend are described in Section 3.5. These journal entries ended up proving to be a critical data source in addressing my second research question (***How does a TE's membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?***), which emerged during the data analysis process. At the conclusion of this study, I revisited my initial positionality statement to include specific reflections about the ways in which my prior experiences (or lack thereof) with participants informed this work. The final chapter of this dissertation describes the implications that knowing students prior to conducting a study of this kind may have for future research and for teacher education programs.

3.1.1.5 The Participants' Program of Study & Cohort.

Participants for this study were all members of the same program cohort at a large, research-focused university in the mid-Atlantic United States. The university offers several educator preparation programs approved by the state department of education. PSTs who complete one of these programs must also successfully pass the state certification assessments to receive full state licensure. Most programs have a required set of courses that provide an introduction to teaching, specific content instruction, pedagogical methods, and an internship at a local public school.

During the time of data collection, the landscape of teacher preparation programs across the state in which this research took place was (and still is) in flux. This is primarily due to a piece of legislation to overhaul public PK-12 education across the state, passed shortly before data collection began. The influence of this complex bill already had a presence at the university in the form of a multifaceted research effort that has been piloting several initiatives related to teacher induction, professional development, and career advancement. Only a small number of students at the university were involved in one of these experimental initiatives, none of whom were my study participants. The transitory nature of this legislation and the university's close involvement, however, may have influenced aspects of my co-researchers' teacher education experience.

As of the time of writing, the non-experimental program in which all my participants were enrolled lasts approximately 18 months and grants both a master's degree and the credentials necessary to apply for a teaching certificate. As previously mentioned, participants for this study were drawn from the Secondary ELA focus within the program. Each PST participant was placed at a middle or high school in one of four local school districts partnered with the university of focus. The PSTs each shadowed one or more fully certified ELA content teachers as their mentor(s) during their practicum experience and remained in the school building for a full work day, five days a week, through almost the entire school year. Students in this cohort have all completed an undergraduate degree, though some students were enrolled in a special program that integrates undergraduate and graduate coursework over the course of five years.

Coursework for students began in the summer semester, but they did not begin their school-site placement until the Fall. Students in the MCERT ELA program complete four

courses during the summer: Adolescent Development, Cognitive and Motivational Literacy Content, ELA Methods 1, and Embracing Diversity: Social and Cultural Foundations of Education. Thirteen potential participants were approached during the summer through a visit to the ELA Methods 1 course. The rationale for this recruitment method was twofold: 1) this course was taught by a faculty member willing to partner with me for this research, and 2) the course was populated by students who met my selection criteria without any additional students who did not meet the selection criteria. Of those 13 potential participants, ten expressed interest in participating in the study and eight signed their consent forms and attended the first meeting of the CoP.

3.1.1.6 Faculty and Associated Coursework.

As mentioned above, this study was facilitated partially through my partnership with two university faculty members who each served a key role in the participants' program. One professor led the weekly *Seminar in Professional Education* course focusing on Secondary ELA, in which all students in the specialization gathered to discuss problems of practice and stay up to date with program requirements and deadlines. This faculty member also served as the PSTs' collective advisor. She is referenced throughout the rest of this writing as Dr. Wendy Patterson (all participant names are pseudonyms). Her rapport with the PST participants often led to them referring to her sometimes by her first name and other times by her honorific and last name, and that will be reflected in the use of the pseudonym as Wendy/Dr. Patterson when appropriate. The other professor is an instructor for the AR course, called *Conducting Research on Teaching*, and is referred to as Dr. Maxwell.

The AR course was an important component of this study, as the CAR component of this work is directly aligned with both the course content and desired outcomes. An examination of

the syllabi[9] over the past ten years reveals that various iterations of this course have required assignments with significant similarities to my study. These similarities include, but are not limited to, asking students to conduct a research-based inquiry involving an issue of interest to them at their practicum school site, analyzing data from that research, and presenting that data to an audience of both their programmatic peers and their school-site partnering teachers. Though students may have previously been permitted, or even encouraged, to conduct their research collaboratively, this is not clearly indicated in the available syllabi.

All members of the ELA cohort are automatically enrolled in a one credit per semester course known informally as "seminar," in which all members of the ELA cohort meet for an hour each week with Dr. Patterson to discuss problems of practice and prepare for upcoming program benchmarks. While there was little coursework involved in this particular course, this functioned as an existing cohort meeting time that included all members of my CoP. This meeting time could have periodically been leveraged as additional CoP meeting time, although that was only utilized once during the study, as well as an opportunity for additional programmatic support that the CoP members could receive from Dr. Patterson.

As participants were recruited, I identified which courses each participant was taking during the fall and spring semesters and investigated potential connections between our work and their courses in order to identify additional overlaps and the possibility of partnering with additional faculty members who would be willing to grant full or partial credit on assignments in their courses for the work my co-researchers are completing with me. Although several courses

[9] Most of these course syllabi are not available for public viewing but were provided to me upon request from faculty who oversee the teacher preparation program at the university of focus.

were identified during this process, only Dr. Maxwell agreed to provide course credit for students participating in my study.

As a final note regarding required coursework as it relates to this study, all students enrolled in the AR course are expected to share their research with both their cohort peers and with their school-site colleagues in the form of a semi-formal presentation. An examination of syllabi revealed that previous iterations of this course also included the PSTs' mentors to view research presentations. The scholarship upon which this study is built indicates that engaging with in-service teachers while conducting teacher inquiry affirms their membership into the broader professional community while still in the practicum (Cook & Buck, 2014; Zaffini, 2018). Adherence to program requirements of the research assignment prohibit in-service teachers from explicit participation in the CoP themselves, but considering the PSTs' mentors and in-service colleagues as the intended audience for their research provided opportunities for growth in the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach in Manasia et al.'s (2020) (D3) Professional Engagement dimension. For that reason, the CoP opted to involve each of their MTs as informants and as intended audience members for their CAR project. Unfortunately, we were unable to invite the MTs to the presentations of research for the AR course. Additionally, as the dissertation itself is not a study that expands beyond the practicum, this research did not follow participants into their time as novice teachers or explore their integration into a possible school-site CoP. These concerns will be discussed in Chapter 6 in the section dedicated to implications for further research.

3.1.1.7 Our Community of Practice.

The group defined as our CoP is the focus of this dissertation. The CoP contains 11 members: 10 PSTs and me. Aligned with Wenger's (1998) definition of a CoP, our group was

formed voluntarily by individuals doing similar work (student teaching) around a specific enterprise (CAR project). The CoP met regularly, approximately one hour every other week during the time in which we were building rapport, deciding on a research topic, and agreeing on methods for data collection, and then approximately one hour every week once data had been collected and during data analysis, always in a hybrid in-person/online format. The meetings were scheduled by the PSTs themselves based on mutually agreed upon availability and frequency preferences. The CoP members also used a shared text messaging group and engaged in informal text communication several times per week. The text messaging group extended its use after the CoP concluded its work, and is still in use as of the time of this writing.

CoP meetings followed the same semi-structured procedures. Within the first 10 to 15 minutes, each member of the CoP gave an informal 'check in' in which they might share details of their past week, a problem of practice, or a personal anecdote. Once all CoP members had a chance to share, the meeting shifted to the topic of focus for that particular meeting. Topics of focus were agreed upon by members of the CoP in advance of the meeting, but topics were directly aligned with benchmarks of the CAR project (e.g., determining a research topic, brainstorming research questions, sharing collected data). At least once per meeting, though not always at the same time, all participants engaged in approximately 5 minutes of 'quick writing' time in which they jotted down thoughts and ideas related to the topic of focus or an agreed-upon prompt. The CoP followed these quick writing exercises with more discussion in which we shared some of the results of our writing and incorporated those results into our broader discussion about the topic of focus. Meetings always concluded with a few minutes dedicated to agreeing upon next steps and asking clarifying questions of one another to ensure aligned thinking.

3.2 CAR Project Design

Many of the specifics of the initial collaborative research project design were intentionally left open for the CoP to determine collectively. As is expected of Participatory Action Research, all participants are considered co-researchers and are given equal opportunity to contribute to the research questions, scope, and methods that will be used in gathering data (Herr & Anderson, 2005). For this study, with an aim to determine how conducting AR in a CoP influenced my co-researchers' sense of readiness to teach, it was particularly salient that they felt ownership over their research. The boundaries within which the CAR project took place and the aspects of the project that were unable or unlikely to be changed regardless of the CoP's decisions are described below, while CoP-driven decisions are described in narrative form throughout section 4.1.1.

3.2.1 Study Setting, Participant Parameters, and Informants

The participant co-researchers were drawn from the pool of participants described previously in section 3.1.1, although not all participants were obligated to also be co-researchers. Everyone who expressed an interest in the CoP was invited to participate in the CoP regardless of their participation in the CAR project. All PSTs enrolled in the program of focus were placed at public middle or high schools within one of the four local school districts with which the university partners. These four school districts represent diverse populations, and the schools in which the PSTs were assigned are extremely different from one another. Specifics related to the PSTs' school demographics and population of focus were collected by the participant co-researchers during their work, and relevant details related to those demographics were present at several points throughout their own speech and writing shared in this dissertation. As the PK-12 students and placement schools were not the specific focus of my own research, nor did I

personally collect any data related to these students or school sites, discussion of that data will only be relayed in the form of the participant co-researchers' words.

As the co-researchers were all enrolled in the Secondary ELA program, they were placed with a Language Arts/Literature teacher (or teachers) at their practicum school. Broadly, it is common for secondary schools engage in content-level collaboration for lesson planning or professional development (Hargreaves, 2019). Depending on the size of the school, this group could contain as few as four and as many as sixteen other ELA teachers in addition to the PST's assigned mentor teacher. Within the CoP's research work, we considered in-service ELA teachers across the PSTs' school sites to be the target "audience" for our presentation of findings. This was pre-determined by me in alignment with the goal to engage in research that in-service teachers would find 'useful' and allow the participant co-researchers to contribute to education literature in a meaningful way. Framing their in-service colleagues as our future audience was discussed and agreed upon by all CoP members during our first meeting and remained the case throughout the duration of the CAR project.

3.2.2 Action Research Framework

There are a variety of frameworks for conducting AR with some overlapping components. This is clearly demonstrated across existing studies related to AR examined for my literature review, as most included articles referenced similar networks of authors as foundational to their own processes. The project my participant co-researchers engaged in was specifically *collaborative* AR following guidelines set out Burns (1999). In the introductory chapter to her text about CAR for teachers, Burns reminds the reader that while teachers may still engage in individual inquiries in their own classroom, "that view of action research is counter to its original goals, which were to bring about change in social situations as the result of

group problem-solving and collaboration" (p. 12). CAR, like other types of AR, involves all (or most) members of the research team to collectively make decisions regarding the direction of the research. For the CAR project centered in this dissertation the methods of data collection, research questions, and any actions resulting from the research were collaboratively devised and executed by the research team as a whole.

I also functioned as a member of the CoP and possessed more experience with research than my participant co-researchers, so I consulted texts regarding PAR (participatory action research) in order to follow best practices related to power imbalances between lead researchers and the rest of the team. A review of foundational texts to guide PAR studies (e.g., Anderson, 2017; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Park, 1993) indicate that researchers should allow their participant co-researchers as much say in the process as possible. Throughout the project, I asserted guidance as sparingly as possible and focused on ideas presented by my co-researchers. I relied on a critical friend who possessed some familiarity with my participant co-researchers to review data throughout the collection process in order to provide me with feedback related to equity of decision-making power across the CoP. A complete description of my critical friend's role throughout the data collection and analysis process is presented in section 3.5.

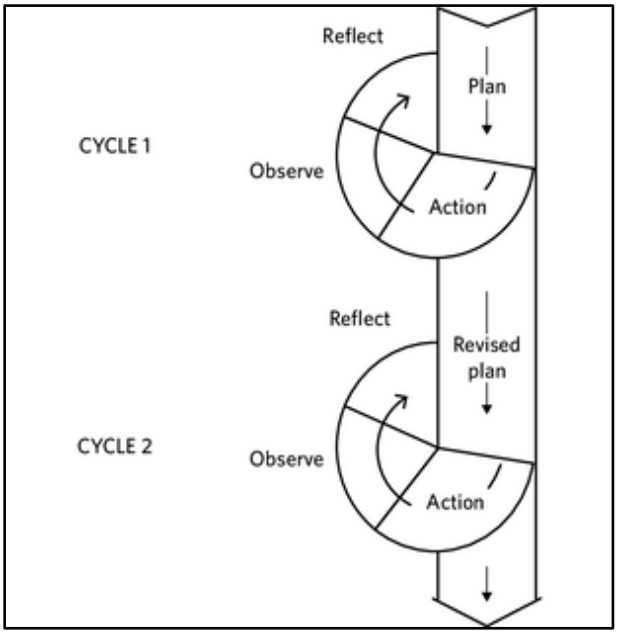
I did occasionally need to provide explicit directions to the rest of the CoP in order to ensure all components of their assignment were being fulfilled. This was particularly necessary because it was Dr. Maxwell and not I who would be grading their work for course credit. In addition to being able to accurately describe my involvement in the CoP and the CAR project for this dissertation, I was also transparent with Dr. Maxwell regarding my level of involvement in the research and provided her with a clear picture of the level of involvement the CoP members had with the CAR project.

3.2.2.1 The Fully Inclusive Practitioner Research (FIPR) Framework.

Emerging from the foundational book regarding CAR for teachers (Burns, 1999), the CAR project centered in this dissertation follows the Fully Inclusive Practitioner Research (FIPR) framework for AR (Burns, 2005, 2009; Burns et al., 2022). The FIPR framework is designed specifically to guide CAR in teaching contexts, thus making it particularly well aligned with the work the CoP is conducting. This framework was collaboratively developed by an international cohort of researchers primarily led by Drs. Anne Burns and Emily Edwards [see Figure 4]. The researchers drew their inspiration from the cyclical AR model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), included below as Figure 3.

Figure 3

Kemmis & McTaggart's Action Research Model



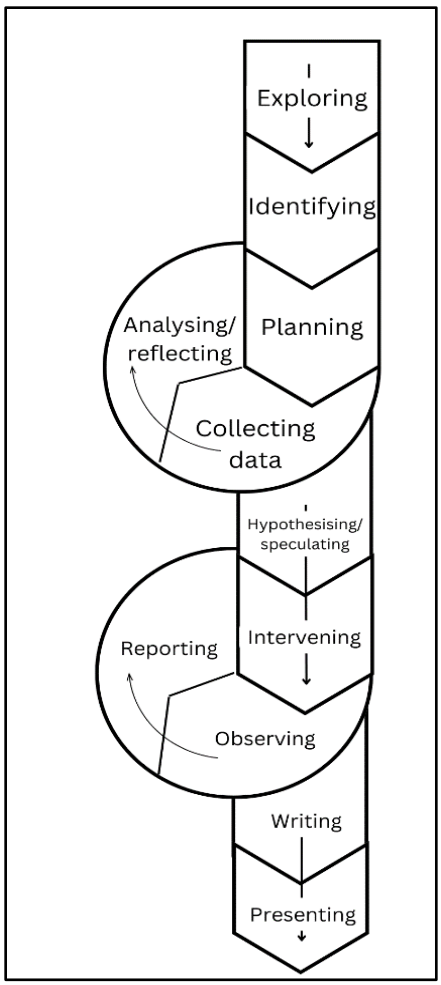
Source: Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988

The original model allows for multiple cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection; the expanded model adds additional non-linear[10] phases of exploring, identifying, collecting data, speculating, observing, and reporting. These additional phases of the framework were derived from participant experiences during a prior action research study (Burns, 1999). She notes that "[AR] in practice is much 'messier' than most models suggest. The process experienced by action researchers are best viewed as necessarily adaptive to the educational situations and circumstances of the participants and to the particular social, cultural, and political exigencies that motivate and surround them" (Burns, 2005, p.59). Further, this model was created with the understanding that CAR is conducted with a team of researchers who will constantly need to reexamine and renegotiate the steps and priorities of the collective. This was the case within our CoP, as I empowered all members of the group to suggest the direction (or redirection) the CAR study takes. The approximate structure of the FIPR framework is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Burns' Action Research Model (FIPR)

[10] Burns (2005) notes that the interconnected phases of AR often do not follow a linear order, and some phases may be repeated many times within the cycles while other phases may only occur once. This publication did not include a figure, so one was created based on their description and their references to Kemmis & McTaggart's (1988) model.



Note. Burns (2005) did not include a graphic, this image was created by the author of this dissertation for illustrative purposes.

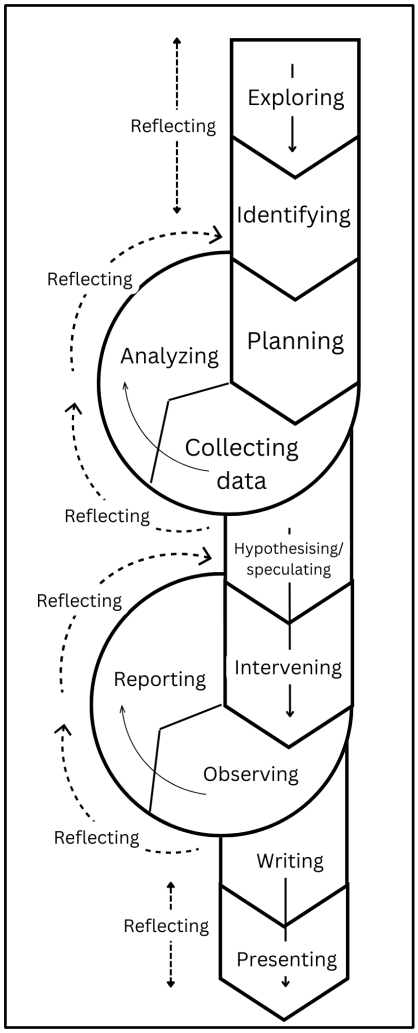
The reflective practices housed within the FIPR framework center the "practitioner exploring and analysing their **own practice**, not (only) observing the practices of others" (FIPR website, n.d., emphasis in the original) and draw from a rich body of academic literature surrounding teacher reflections. FIPR aligns their definition of reflective practice with one constructed by Farrell (2015), in which reflection is "a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect data about their practice, and while engaging in dialogue with others use the data to make informed decisions about their practice both inside and outside the classroom" (Farrell, 2015, p.123). The FIPR model of reflective practice is further

influenced by ALACT [action, looking back on action, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternate methods of action, trial] model (Korthagen et al., 2001), a cycle of reflective practices for educators that examines both the events that occur during an interaction and the social-emotional needs of all parties during that interaction in order to influence future practices.

As a framework for CAR, FIPR is flexible enough to account for the unknown, or yet to be determined, aspects of teacher-led action research taking place in and around K-12 schools. The scholarship behind the model's construction (Anderson, 2017; Burns, 1999, 2005, 2009; Burns et al., 2022; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Park, 1993) supports the need to rearrange and/or repeat steps throughout the process of research. The model is also comprehensive enough to account for the complexities of educational research, most specifically the need for repeated collaborative interaction between teachers, students, university researchers, and other educational professionals such as instructional coaches or administrators. Due to my study's significant emphasis on reflection, particularly reflective journaling as described in section 3.3.2.2, a more accurate depiction of the FIPR structure for the purposes of my research, which I adapted by adding a visualization of the continuous cycle of reflection, can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Author's Adapted Model of FIPR



Source: Author

3.3 Data Collection

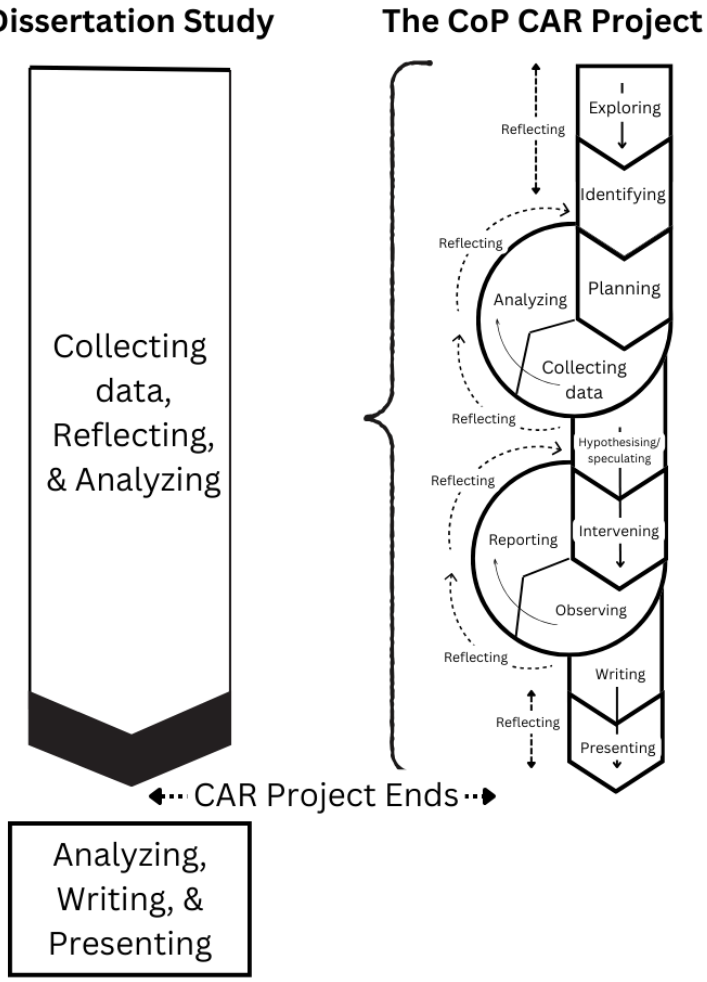
Data collection began in September, 2023 and continued until March, 2024, with a small amount of supplementary follow-up data being collected in April. Participants began collaborating on this project in alignment with the beginning of the academic school year and presented their research in the early spring. As the crux of this research is the ways in which the CoP members talk about readiness to teach, the data informing this research came directly from

the PSTs. I gathered data from a variety of sources in multiple modalities to craft the clearest possible images of the collective sense of readiness to teach within the CoP. I endeavored to collect artifacts that represent authentic talk from PSTs in order to investigate their "attitudes, dispositions, feelings, expectations and so on" (Wiggins & Potter, 2007, p. 76) about teacher readiness. Data of this kind is directly aligned with investigating my first research question.

While I, as the PI, and my participating co-researchers collected and analyzed CAR project data for their assignment, I observed and collected field notes about the entire CAR research process (represented visually in Figure 6). This included field notes from group meetings and asynchronous notes taken during our digital conversations and coding work. I recorded audio, and video whenever possible, for transcription and analysis for every group meeting. Written conversations, such as text messages, virtual meeting chats, and emails, were also considered sources of data.

Figure 6

Dissertation Data vs CAR Project Data Collection



Source: Author

Each participant was interviewed once to debrief at the conclusion of the project, although there were also some moments of one-on-one conversations throughout the process when one participant elected to remain behind at the conclusion of a meeting to speak with me. Their individual experiences are also captured through their writing, as each participant was prompted to write down their thinking about certain things periodically throughout the CAR process. All collected artifacts are represented below in Table 7.

Table 7

Collected Data

Data Source	Analysis	Format	Generator	Quantity
Field notes for all CoP meetings	CCA[a]	Text	PI	10 documents
Recordings of CoP meetings	DP[b]	Audio/Video	CoP	9 hours, 48 minutes recorded
Recording of CoP small group poster making session	DP	Audio/Video	CoP (some members)	2 hours, 13 minutes recorded
One-on-one final debrief interviews	DP	Audio/Video	Participants	2 hours, 19 minutes recorded
CoP research planning documents	CCA	Text	CoP	14 documents
CoP text conversations	DP	Text	CoP	17 documents (2 text message threads, 10 meeting chats, 5 email chains)
Participant-collected data for CAR study	CCA	Text	Participants	5 documents
Presentation materials to report findings from CAR study	DP/CCA	Photos/Text	Participants	3 posters, 4 documents
Journal entries/reflective writing/reflective audio	DP	Text/Audio	CoP	7 documents, 32 minutes recorded
Manasia et al. (2020) pre- and post-survey	Quant	Survey	Participants	7 pre-survey, 4 post-survey

[a] CCA stands for Constant Comparative Analysis.

[b] DP stands for Discursive Psychology.

An important component of both collaborative and participatory action research is the involvement of participating co-researchers in collective decision making. For the purpose of this study, this meant some flexibility regarding the duration and frequency of CoP meetings, the topics of discussion during these meetings, whether these meetings were in person or online, and whether or not certain artifacts were generated during this process. All CoP and one-on-one conversations were audio recorded and included video whenever possible, beginning with the initial formation of the CoP and concluding the final debrief interviews. From September to March, we conducted a total of 10 CoP meetings that were each slightly under one hour. This resulted in approximately 9 hours and 48 minutes of CoP discursive data as the primary data for analysis. Audio and video of the small group poster making session, in which several CoP members gathered to construct posters for the research presentation, was also captured and transcribed. The poster making session was just over two hours long, but a significant portion of that time was silent work time so only a small amount of discourse was added to the overall body of data as a result of the additional session.

3.3.1 Data Collection Before the CAR Project

The data collection process for this research began in late September, 2023 though the PSTs did not begin their main practicum placement until October. We used a small portion of our collective time to speak broadly about our upcoming research, but we did not begin the AR portion of the study until October. The CoP met once in the month of September to tease out a starting point for the CoP members' sense of readiness to teach, which is described below in section 3.3.2.1. We also introduced ourselves and each spoke a bit about our teaching experiences so far to build group rapport. Each participant also shared the broad details about their practicum placement, focusing on the name and location of their practicum site, the grade

level and subject content of the courses their mentor teacher(s)[11] focus on, and some basic demographics of the students in their practicum classrooms. Much of that information is available in Table 5, section 3.1.1.

In October, the CoP met twice. In the first meeting we broadly discussed research procedures and expectations. I described the benchmarks required of the CoP in order to meet the expectations of Dr. Maxwell's AR course assignment and clarified which requirements were rigid and which were open for interpretation. For example, the PSTs were required to collect some data on their own and each write a brief summary of their data collection experience in a paper for Dr. Maxwell. They were, however, permitted to collaboratively examine all collected data as a CoP and collaboratively write about and present an analysis of that data. Because of this, Dr. Maxwell agreed that some portions of the participants' final assignment for her course would be the same and it was understood not to be a case of plagiarism. The department chairperson was also made aware of this in advance of the study and agreed that my participants would be completing an assignment as rigorous as the other students in Dr. Maxwell's course. We discussed some broad logistics our expected writing and presenting procedures at the CoP meeting, as well as agreed on how the CoP would approach handling individual group members not meeting the expectations of the collective. We also agreed as a group that each PST would compose a list of possible research topic ideas generated through conversation with their MTs, and at the second meeting in October we reviewed those lists and chose the primary research topic for the action research project: in-service and PST conceptions of work/life balance.

[11] Several participants had two different mentor teachers, and the PST split their time in both classrooms throughout the day.

3.3.2 Data Collection During CAR Project Work

Our regular group meetings continued until early March, taking a brief hiatus for the winter holidays. Once the PSTs' regular practicum placement began, we shifted from broad group discussions to more targeted, research-oriented conversations. Best practices indicate that, when regarding dynamics in which one experienced researcher is conducting AR with less experienced researchers, the experienced researcher may need to guide conversations early in the process in order to ensure the topics and scope of the PSTs' proposed research is feasible with our timeframe and resources (Burns, 1999, p. 55). I introduced the overall goals of the project early on in the CoP meeting sequence, and then allowed the participant co-researchers the freedom to follow trails of inquiry that interested them. I did not provide any examples of potential research topics, as that could have caused a co-researcher to shift their focus away from their original idea towards my own, but I did share sample research questions on completely unrelated topics in order to demonstrate common research question phrasing and structure.

As indicated above, the entirety of all meetings was audio recorded at least, and video recorded whenever possible. The bulk of additional artifacts were also generated during this timeframe, such as planning documents, PST research artifacts, and several instances of individual co-researchers' reflective journaling. Text messages and emails related to the group work was also collected for coding, as these kinds of communication are gaining recognition in the discourse analysis community as not only valid but as an important contribution to a corpus of discourse (Schnur, 2018).

At the conclusion of the CAR Project, the participant co-researchers were expected to turn in a presentation poster and an academic paper for Dr. Maxwell's course. I provided some guidance and assistance where appropriate, but the PSTs largely constructed these artifacts

themselves. My interventions included providing assistance with APA formatting, proofreading documents for clarity, and securing physical space to work on poster construction. Images of the posters and digital copies of the papers were collected as artifacts. Once all assignments had been turned in to Dr. Maxwell for grading, the CoP had a final meeting to take the Manasia et al. (2020) teacher readiness post-survey while conducting a verbal think-aloud as they reflected on our work together. They also shared their thinking about the survey itself while answering the post-survey. We concluded that meeting with a small celebration. Within two weeks of the final CoP meeting, each of the Core Four CoP members participated in a one-on-one semi-structured final debrief with me. The outline for the interview questions is included as Appendix E. These final debriefs were transcribed and coded as the last piece of data for analysis.

3.3.2.1 Incorporating the Teacher Readiness Framework.

As described in Chapter 2, the framework for readiness to teach developed by Manasia and colleagues (2020) provides an important survey instrument for my inquiry regarding how my co-researchers conceptualized their own readiness to teach throughout our study. Manasia's study utilized a 45-question Likert-scale survey, which is included as Appendix A. Participants in the CoP engaged with Manasia et al.'s survey in two distinct ways throughout the course of our work together. First, each of the CoP members completed the pre-survey as written by Manasia et al. (2020) at the beginning of our work together. The PSTs took the pre-survey on their own time while keeping a journal or think-aloud audio recording as they moved through the survey questions. During the first meeting of the CoP, we discussed the collective results of the pre-survey, but also discussed the participants' thinking while taking the pre-survey that emerged from their journaling or think-alouds. We discussed both the results of the survey and the

contents of the participants' reflections while taking the post-survey during the final meeting of the CoP.

The survey questions are written to be aligned with the four dimensions of readiness to teach, but the versions of the questions written by Manasia and her team were not designed to generate discourse. Further, my reasoning behind using discourse as a data source (and discursive psychology methods for analysis, to be described in section 3.4.1) is that analysis of discourse can reveal more about a participant's authentic thoughts and feelings about something than an interview or survey. For this reason, it was important for me to re-imagine Manasia et al.'s (2020) dimensions of readiness to teach in formats more aligned with discourse.

In addition to taking the pre- and post-survey, aspects of the Manasia et al. (2020) teacher readiness instrument were also folded into regular CoP meetings through conversation. I converted all 45 of Manasia et al.'s survey questions into open-ended conversational prompts to introduce into CoP meetings whenever possible. For example, in the survey, Question 11 reads "In the practice of your future teaching profession, you feel ready to…plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents" (Manasia et al., 2020, Appendix A) to be rated on a scale of 1 to 5. My adapted version of the question is "How are you feeling about using the district's curriculum materials?" (Appendix B). This change allowed my inquiry to remain aligned with Manasia et al.'s model while also contributing to the corpus of discourse for analysis.

The adapted prompts were incorporated into group discussions in two ways throughout the study process: 1) targeted questions, and 2) authentically random prompts. Targeted questions, which were used more often than random prompts, occurred when the natural flow of the participants' conversation was drifting towards addressing one of the 45 questions but I felt the group needed a slight nudge to get there. I memorized all 45 of the prompts, though I also

always had a copy of Appendix B on hand for my own reference, and listened closely to the conversation in order to introduce the questions as naturalistically as possible without disrupting the discourse. I have drawn inspiration for this process from similar teacher education research that utilizes discourse analysis methods, most specifically Manouchehri's (2002) work on discourse between two PSTs to whom she was a TE.

Authentically random prompts were only introduced if the conversation amongst participants had drifted significantly away from relevance to our work and it became clear that intervention was required to get things back 'on track'. To accomplish this, I had all 45 prompts from Appendix B printed on individual index cards, which I then shuffled and drew from the pile to reveal a prompt for group discussion. I believe that prompting the participants in this way generated more authentic conversation with the group, and reduced researcher bias by me choosing the topic of conversation. This reasoning was explained to the CoP for full transparency. As rapport and routine built, I encouraged participants to feel empowered to draw a card and share it with the group themselves if they felt they would like to shift the topic of conversation. I had one participant who particularly enjoyed this process, and would pull a card themselves once per meeting. Utilizing both targeted questions and authentic random prompts, the CoP discussed topics relating to approximately 5 of the 45 questions in each group session at a minimum, with most sessions being closer to 10 questions discussed. This allowed me to track responses to all 45 questions across all group sessions without making my participants feel that they must answer all 45 every session, but also having questions repeat frequently enough to track changes in the discourse over time.

The participants' sense of readiness to teach was examined throughout the CoP's time together, from September 2023 through March 2024. I transcribed each CoP meeting within 48

hours and did initial coding of those transcripts before the next meeting as part of my own research cycle. In preparation for this work, I collected some data from the ELA MCERT cohort from the previous school year in the form of one-on-one interviews and email conversations, as well as three small focus group sessions. This data was coded and analyzed using discursive psychology methods for a different research project. Working with this data provided me with significant insight and practice into what to expect, however both discursive psychology and CCA methods encourage the researcher to approach coding and analysis with the understanding that each action and interaction are different. I therefore began my analysis process without any expectations related to existing codes from the previous dataset, and did not use the same codebook for this research because the codes I generated were distinct.

3.3.2.2 Reflective Journaling.

Throughout the process of this study all CoP members, including myself as the PI, conducted reflective journaling both during and outside of CoP meetings. When conducting journaling on their own, participants were given the optional alternative of recording an audio think-aloud if they choose. Two participants made use of this alternative several times across the CAR project process, and these recordings were transcribed and treated as journal entries during coding.

During CoP meetings journaling took the form of "quick writes", in which a prompt was given, and all participants had a short time (usually about five minutes) to get their thoughts onto paper with their priority being quantity rather than quality of writing. This is a common practice in ELA classrooms (Totten et al., 2009) that is also beneficial to PSTs' reflective practices (Cohen & Fischl, 2020). Quick write prompts were determined throughout the study by the conversational flow of the CoP, centering topics that we collectively felt we needed more time to

think about or discuss, ideas left off over from the previous session, topics we did not agree on and needed time to work through each of our perspectives before coming to a consensus, or reflections on individual experiences that we wanted to synthesize as a group. One prompt asked the CoP members to reflect on their personal background and the experiences that inspired them to pursue teaching. Another had the PSTs consider what they found the most challenging and the most enjoyable aspect of conducting interviews (their chosen method of data collection for the CAR project). One particularly compelling prompt and subsequent discussion that emerged naturally from CoP dialogue was one regarding what becomes of "interesting" data that we feel is worth interrogating as a research team but we are ultimately unable to code or fit into our reporting. A full list of the quick write prompts for all the CoP meetings is included as Appendix I. The inclusion of journaling and quick writes in my study methods were intended to not only inspire a fruitful group conversation afterwards, but also helped inform my interpretations of the PSTs' thoughts and feelings regarding particular topics of importance for the CoP. As the quick writes were always discussed verbally during the CoP meeting immediately after, I treated these as a text component of the meeting dialogue (similar to the Zoom chat function) rather than an independent piece of writing like the optional journaling.

Outside of CoP meetings, students were encouraged to journal (or record think-aloud audio) as they conducted some of their CoP-related work individually or in small groups, such as gathering data for the CAR project, thinking about the data on their own during the analysis stage, or reflecting on their own experiences engaging with AR. There were not specific prompts provided and participation was optional, although I provided prompts or guidance when it was requested. We regularly discussed these reflections during our CoP meeting time as both an opportunity to check in with one another and to gauge the alignment of our collective thinking

about relevant topics to our CAR project, though I did not obligate the participants to share any of their writing if they were uncomfortable doing so. Optional journaling was also introduced as a method to increase the presence of PST voice for less vocal participants, as it is human nature for some to be more shy than others or to prefer to speak less than others but still have just as much to contribute. Unfortunately, the participant who contributed the most optional journal entries to the body of data was a partial participant, and therefore quotes from Samaira appear far less than those of her Core Four peers. I have included some of her journaling with descriptions to provide context in several relevant places across the Findings sections of this dissertation, and discuss the lack of other journaling data in my Limitations section.

Lastly, all participants were required as a component of their teacher education program to craft a written statement about themselves as a teacher. This is more of a program benchmark to be completed than a formal assignment to be graded and, though just as with the action research work, I was not the instructor nor evaluator of this work, I gained permission from the associated faculty to discuss this writing with the CoP during meetings and to collect copies of this writing as additional data. These statements were incorporated into their final papers for Dr. Maxwell, so that is the version of their statements that I drew from as well. While completing this written assignment was not a component of the CoP's goals, my ongoing effort to encourage my participants to "work smarter, not harder" lead to discussion of this writing during CoP time as well.

3.4 Data Analysis

I transcribed all recordings, which were the CoP meetings and the final debriefs with each of the Core Four, and uploaded those transcripts into the data coding software Dedoose. I also transcribed the audio of all think-alouds and from one small group meeting that did not

include all CoP members but was related to CoP work. All journaling was treated as discourse and uploaded to Dedoose as well. I also uploaded my field notes and photographs from CoP meetings into this software. This allowed me to keep my whole dataset together in one software program whether the artifact was coded using discursive psychology or CCA methods.

3.4.1 Rationale for Discursive Psychology Methods

There are multiple schools of thought within discourse analysis that have their own guidelines for research methods, and several are applicable within the context of this study. Paltridge (2021) describes the view of discourse as a social construction of reality as recognizing "the relationship between language and thought and the power of language to construct different perspectives on things," (p. 26) and goes on to explain that modern social constructionist view is that through the use of language, a researcher is able to understand how participants make sense of their own reality and view the world (p.27). The discursive psychology (DP) methods for data analysis, as described in its earliest iteration by Edwards and Potter (1992), focuses on the close inferential relationship between actions and events existing in the 'real world' and the attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and dispositions present in 'the mind'. Based on the literature analyzed in Chapter 2, I argue that the existing body of literature examining PST readiness to teach while conducting AR has not thoroughly examined a sense of readiness to teach specifically from the PSTs' perspectives. Current studies that do focus on PST readiness outcomes related to conducting AR express those outcomes from the perspectives of the authors or TEs. By focusing on DP as the method of data analysis throughout the design of the study, this dissertation addresses several previously unanswered questions from the literature about the ways in which CAR is linked to PSTs' expressions of their personal readiness to teach, including how PST

readiness to teach emerges from authentic PST group dialogue about AR and while conducting AR.

In order to effectively understand how PST discourse reveals their sense of readiness to teach within 'the mind', I examine the discourse that emerged across all artifacts using DP methods as defined by Potter & Wiggins (2007). In the context of this dissertation, the reality of 'the mind' to be explored are the ways in which PSTs were imagining their readiness to teach as expressed through their words and actions during conversations. Utilizing DP as a method of analysis is critical to this study due to the social dynamic of the CoP. By this I mean that some of the participants involved in this research had a prior relationship to me [see Section 3.1.1.4] while others did not. This could have led to instances in which participants responded to direct inquiries about their readiness to teach with 'what they think I want to hear'. Broadly, DP can be understood as both a methodological approach and a theoretical perspective that language is performative, but also that an analysis can reveal participants' true meaning embedded within their language (O'Reilly et al., 2021). As a sub-method of discourse analysis, DP looks exclusively at the discourse in order to investigate the relationship between versions of reality and mind that surface during conversational talk, written conversations such as emails, and self-talk such as journaling. By utilizing DP as one method of analysis, I not only identified instances of explicit mentions of readiness to teach that emerged from the data, but I also drew out discursive patterns that indicated the participants' thinking about their collective readiness to teach in seemingly unrelated, naturalistic discourse from the CoP meetings that I was able to align with Manasia et al.'s (2020) dimensions of readiness to teach.

I also posit that DP methods are most appropriate for the circumstances of this particular study, as I also held a role within the CoP conducting CAR and I was a presence within the

discourse being analyzed. My presence in the CoP and the measures to accurately represent my participation and influence are described in section 3.5. DP has been utilized as a methodology by other scholars specifically to investigate participant's internal perceptions through a corpus of discourse collected over time rather than through what is directly stated in a single interview. In studies with a similar design to this dissertation, (e.g., Manouchehri, 2002) researchers craft their analysis by focusing on the participants' internal realities through linguistic patterns, gesture, and emotional expressions. Many authors within teacher education (e.g., Anspal et al., 2012; Oreshkina & Lester, 2015; Strieker et al., 2017) have utilized DP to examine the ways in which PSTs express themselves through creative writing (Anspal et al., 2012), describe their teaching skills in written assignments (Oreshkina & Lester, 2015), or talk about professional practices with their mentor teacher (Strieker et al., 2017). Few studies (e.g., Anspal et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2022) examine the PST's own thoughts and feelings about themselves as a teacher and draw conclusions about whether or not *they* feel ready to teach. Therefore, this research not only addresses a gap in teacher education literature regarding teacher readiness and AR, but also adds to a sparse body of DP literature surrounding PSTs' expressions of readiness to teach.

One drawback in using DP methodology is that DP focuses exclusively on artifacts of discourse, such as transcribed conversations and reflective journals, but does not incorporate artifacts that do not contain discourse (Potter & Wiggins, 2007), such as photographs of the PST poster presentations (see Table 7 for a list of artifacts). The methodology does, however, allow for findings to be triangulated against findings using other methods for a more holistic view of the phenomenon. The Constant Comparative Analysis method (CCA) is often utilized for this purpose by those conducting discourse analysis (e.g., Mosley Wetzel et al., 2015) and is even suggested by Wiggins as aligned methodology in a recent textbook guide for discourse analysis

(Riley & Wiggins, 2019), as CCA acknowledges that the conditions and consequences of interactions do not exist in a vacuum, and that most situations arise from a combination of micro and macro conditions that can only be made visible through repeated analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Employing CCA as my method for the data that I did not analyze using discourse analysis allowed me to examine discourse from different points in time throughout the practicum and extrapolate comparison data. Wiggins and Potter (2007) describe the process of discursive psychology as "an iterative process that involves repeated listenings to recordings combined with repeated readings of the transcript…and involves sifting through the larger data corpus for instances of a phenomenon" (p. 84). This description of the discursive psychology analysis process is similar to Corbin and Strauss's (2015) description of open coding, the first stage of CCA. This alignment between the CCA and discursive psychology's procedures for analysis allowed me to incorporate the few non-discourse artifacts (my field notes from CoP meetings, CoP research planning documents, participant-collected data for the CAR project, photographs of participant posters presenting on the CAR project results[12], and the Manasia et al. (2020) pre- and post-survey data) into my thematic groupings as they emerged across the dataset.

Discursive psychology methods do not typically use formal coding as part of the data analysis, and the researchers instead examine the corpus of dialogue for emerging patterns. Wiggins and Potter (2007) describe this process by explaining:

[12] There is some tension within the community of DA scholars that expands outside of education regarding what does and does not count as discourse, and additional tensions specifically within the DP methodology for what counts as discourse when using DP. The potentially non-discourse artifacts mentioned here, described in chapter 4, could be argued by discourse scholars as counting or not counting. As this is not the focus of my paper, and as they were aligned when thematically coding using both DP and CCA, I did so. I address this more specifically by artifact in chapter 4.

> "...procedures of DP analysis are not formulaic…there are instead a range of activities to be worked through, in no specific order. These are to focus on how the discourse is constructed, and constructive off different versions of events, how it is situated in interaction, and how it is bound up with actions…This allows analytical insights to be developed gradually, rather than being pre-empted by using a more passive step-by-step process" (p. 84).

This approach is like open coding, the first of three stages of coding described by Corbin & Strauss (2015) to be used in CCA. Open coding is the process of breaking the data into "conceptually similar events/actions/interactions" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and then compared for similarities and differences. This similarity in procedure allowed me to examine both discursive and non-discursive data together. Open codes, such as describing tiredness as a method of bonding with one another, framing the CoP as subversive/sanctioned, and sharing memes, were developed in vivo and use descriptions directly from the data whenever possible. "Um, actually", for example, was the code I used to represent their commonly used phrase when one person was about to gently correct something another CoP member had previously stated as a fact. Another example comes from the CoP members' frequent requests to stay after the regular meeting had concluded in order to speak with me. Although I opted to use Zoey's particular phrasing to create the code, she was not the only CoP member to request my attention in this way. Out of the ten CoP meetings, at least one CoP member asked to stay behind to speak with me at eight of them; at several of the meetings, more than one CoP member asked to stay behind. As I grew to know each CoP member on a more personal level, I also developed a code for each person's strength within the CoP. A full list of codes with examples is below in Table 8.

Table 8

Codebook

Theme	Codes	Examples
Asking and answering questions about teaching	• How do I…? • Um, actually • Big picture question • Touchy topic • I can't remember the name of this practice but I know how to do it • I think I disagree with my mentor • Do you mind if I stick around at the end?	*"What have you guys said to your classes about using AI on papers and stuff?"* *"I think this has an official name, I don't remember it, but it's basically where you are giving them information gradually from easy to hard instead of info dumping on them."*
Building rapport	• Off the record • I'm dead, y'all • Legally Blonde and/or SpongeBob • Nicknames • Serious talk	*"Elle Woods over here gonna show us how it's done."* *"I just need to vent to you guys for a second, I hope that's okay."*
Developing teaching practice	• Today in class I… • It was nice to try out something we'd learned about [last year] • I was copying something my mentor did	*"Today I was doing literature circles with my advanced kids."*
Expressions of readiness to teach	• I've/we've got this • Calling themselves a teacher	*"It helped me think about how I can model that [positive behavior] for my students. I think it was good for them to see their teacher do it , too."*
Future thinking	• If/when we pass/graduate • Job talk • My five year plan	*"I sent in another application to [school] last week but I haven't heard back yet."*

		"I know it will be hard to find time to do after school stuff right away, but I'm hoping by the time I've been teaching for a few years I'll be able to start working with the drama club."
Hard growth and discomfort	• Like a kidney stone, this too shall pass • Sickness and burnout • She might hate me for real, though • This paper has my brain twisted	*"This one might be it, y'all. This assignment might be the one that gets me [out of the program]."*
Personal areas of expertise	• Kaitlin's organization and planning • Zoey's quest for perfection • Robert's creative writing • Samaira's targeted insight • Benjamin's team building • Chris's interrogating • Deanna's practical repackaging	*"I don't want to interrupt the flow but I think we should agree on the next meeting time and put it in our calendars before we get distracted."* *"What's I'm hearing from everyone is that their willing to play to their strengths*
Teacher educator	• Asking me for help with other homework • Can you just talk to her for me? • You're a little further ahead of us • That's why you make the small bucks	*"If you could just talk to her for us, she might be able to explain it to you better."* *"You probably feel this cuz you've already been in a classroom, but I'm still not used to the sound of teenagers silently judging me."*

3.4.2 Data Management Procedures

I used Dedoose data management software as it allowed me to track discursive themes and to connect those themes to any of the non-discursive artifacts. Inductive coding of this kind allowed me to address the research questions as dialogic themes emerge from the corpus of discourse. This process took place throughout data collection, and emerging themes informed group procedures. This was particularly useful, as the CoP members frequently brought up topics adjacent to some, but not all, of the 45 readiness prompts in conversations. Consistent analysis allowed me to track which prompts were being under-discussed and intentionally incorporate them into conversations during subsequent meetings.

I examined the data for any direct descriptions of their teaching practice, linguistic features that indicate their feelings about teaching at that specific point in time, and any indicators of the ways in which they positioned themselves and their fellow PSTs. Repeated linguistic themes and other patterns emerging from the dataset were then analyzed to theorize how the participants were experiencing the phenomenon of becoming a teacher, a process that followed DP (discursive psychology) methods. This process of grouping emerging patterns, which for CCA is described by Corbin and Strauss (2015) as axial coding, generated a clearer understanding of how each participant was positioning themselves (and each other) as teachers over time. It is worth noting that findings that emerged during this process were not always directly related to my initial research question but were not discounted on those grounds.

Both DP and CCA acknowledge that each interaction and each participant are unique and that many different factors influence how a person may act or what they might say in any given situation. It was particularly important to compare the findings to the circumstances surrounding each interaction and to keep that information linked within my analysis and discussion. An

extreme example of this, to be discussed more thoroughly later, is that Benjamin experienced a significant setback in feelings of readiness to teach due to a hospitalization late in in the process.

Once I completed data collection and analyzed the entire dataset as described above, I re-examined the dataset, this time using deductive coding to identify moments of describing "readiness to teach" or lack thereof across the data. These final stages of coding were most similar to Corbin and Strauss's (2015) description of selective coding, as the combined findings related specifically to "readiness to teach" best addressed my research question overall.

3.5 Reliability and Other Considerations

Reliability of the research is a significant concern in this study, especially because this research centered around the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants. In order to ensure that this study was aligned with metrics of quality and reliability for DP, benchmarks outlined by a collective of leading DP scholars (O'Reilly et al., 2021) were followed throughout this study. Most specifically, that meant ensuring that discursive data was generated naturally "and not researcher generated (such as interviews)" (p. 9), and that I acknowledge "the situated and co-constructed nature of either naturally occurring or researcher generated data" (p. 10). O'Reilly and her co-authors further note that transparency regarding data collection and data management processes are key, as well as transparency regarding 'cherry picking' quotations to present in analysis. For this reason, significant description and analysis of 'deviant cases' will be present throughout my findings in Chapter 4. O'Reilly and colleagues advise paying particular attention to not overgeneralize findings as if to represent all members of a certain category (i.e. all PSTs). The authors suggest that reader evaluation of validity is made possible by including as much detail in the transcript and analysis as possible (p. 17). Lastly, the authors advise a clear

audit trail and to utilize additional methods of ensuring validity and reliability present in other forms of qualitative research.

The strategies outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) to address issues of reliability are to triangulate their findings through multiple sources of data, to include a clear statement of investigator positionality, and to provide thorough documentation of all processes in a way that an outside researcher could follow. The recordings of CoP meetings, final debrief interviews and the PSTs' reflective writing, and the results of the Manasia et al. (2020) pre- and post-survey formed a compelling data set that demonstrated some ways in which the CoP members' sense of readiness to teach was influenced both by their membership in the group and by their engagement in the CAR work. My own positionality, which is expressed in the next section, should provide readers with a clear picture of who I am and how my involvement shapes this work. Additionally, as mentioned previously, I conducted my own reflective journaling throughout the process in order to consistently and continuously evaluate my own influence on the CoP and the CAR project. I also asked CoP members to reflect on the ways in which their prior relationship with me as an instructor, or with each other as cohort-mates prior to joining the CoP, may have influenced their participation in or work on the project. Some of their reflections regarding this are included in section 3.5.2.3.

In addition to the three steps to support reliability outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015; triangulate, state investigator positionality, document all processes clearly), I have incorporated two additional measures to ensure validity and reliability of my data and analysis. The first is utilizing member checks, a strategy described by Merriam and Tisdell as sharing your preliminary data analysis with some participants "and ask whether your interpretation 'rings

true'" (p. 246). This allowed participants the opportunity to review and to confirm or to adjust my interpretations of the participants' sense of readiness to teach.

Second, I utilized the guidelines for critical friendship in teacher education described by Stolle et al. (2019) to bring a critical friend into the data analysis process. The critical friend, as described by Stolle and colleagues, should have an insider perspective on the *researcher* and some level of expertise in the research content, but to be an outsider to the actual study being conducted. Additionally, the critical friend should support the researcher in reflections on their own work and offer alternate perspectives and healthy skepticism to encourage new insight for the researcher. The individual I selected to serve as a critical friend for this research fits these qualifications well. She is the former teaching assistant to some of the courses my participants took in previous years as well as a friend and colleague of mine, and thus had a strong insider knowledge of both the participants and of me. She was, however, not working with any of these students during the 2023-2024 school year and not engaged in any other way with our research. Further, as a graduate student who has taken many of the same courses I have, and as a researcher herself, she has strong knowledge about teacher education research in general and a background in DP methods. Her involvement was crucial in the development of the second research question.

As a potential outcome of this research is that it serves as a model for change that other TE can adapt in their own teacher preparation programs, I made efforts to be as clear as possible regarding the concrete steps I took as the TE. So much of this study was directly influenced by the individual participants, and therefore exact replicability of this study in other contexts would be challenging. I attempted to address this by thoroughly describing and contextualizing events within my reporting of the data, and by frequently asking my co-researchers to do the same so

that I could triangulate my perspective of context against other members of the group. Additionally, I orient much of the Discussion and Implications sections in Chapter 6 towards findings that can be generalized to other groups of students rather than fully focus on the individual experiences of any one co-researcher.

3.5.1 A Note About Positionality and Identity

In both my personal research and my interpretation of all academic literature included in this dissertation, I firmly believe that the identities[13] held by each researcher, participant, author, and even the reader influence the interpretation of the research. My study was influenced by my own experiences as an individual, as a teacher, and as a TE. In particular, my own experiences with inequity in educational spaces lead me to feel it is critically important to acknowledge that some practices within teacher education are inequitable and unjust. I took steps to ensure this work was as rigorous and valid as possible. It is important to understand my epistemology to fully understand my approach to the work I am doing, have done, and will do in the future. In the hands of another researcher, my study could be conducted without this epistemological lens and still exist.

Most of my other work outside of this dissertation centers the significant inequities present in our education systems, particularly towards those who are racially, sexually, linguistically, or otherwise minoritized. So, while this specific study does not center differences of race, of gender or sexuality, or of linguistic ability, this study was still deeply influenced by

[13] *Identities* in this context refers to the alignment to various social groups each individual identifies with, or has ascribed to them, such as (but not limited to) sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-political ideals, job title, age, marital status, parental status, and many other types of affiliations any individual may align themselves with all or part of the time.

these factors, just as our world is deeply influenced by these factors. I say this to remind readers that this study is not 'neutral' and should not be interpreted as such. Below is an acknowledgement of my own various identities, positionalities, and the ways in which this research is influenced by them.

3.5.2 A Portrait of My Visible and Invisible Identities

There are multiple aspects of my personal identities that might influence the way I interpret the narrative created by relevant literature, the outcomes of my research, and my understanding and analysis of events that transpire. Prior to enrolling in a doctoral teacher education program, I taught students across the grade spectrum from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade. For a number of those years, I served as department chair for my content team and mentored a PST in my classroom four separate times. Though I care deeply about my students, I realized that I am more oriented towards advocating for, and developing the capacity of, fellow teachers. This advocacy and dedication to fellow teachers leads me to view PSTs with an asset-based lens and disrupt deficit-based views of teachers.

My racial and professional identities also position me in power over my participants. As a person who presents as White and female, the typical demographic of PK-12 teachers in the US, I must constantly be aware of the ways my physical appearance perpetuates harmful stereotypes about what a teacher should 'look like'. Additionally, I have over a decade of experience in education and already received the degree my co-researchers are working towards. As most, but not all, students entering the MCERT program are under 30 and do not have prior teaching experience, I am both older and have more teaching experience than they do. This could lead to PSTs expecting me to 'provide answers' or take a significant leadership role in our collaborative work (Herr & Anderson, 2005), so I remained both be aware of this fact and took actions against

this notion from day one with the research team. My involvement as a member of the CoP, though one that consciously took steps to not be the driving force of the CAR project, inevitably had some influence over the research conducted and the discourse that took place within the CoP. It is for this reason that the utilization of a critical friend, as well as consistent personal reflection, were so important to the success of this study. In order to provide additional context for my identity and the ways in which those aspects may present within this dissertation, the following sections provide a thorough description of my identities and positionality.

3.5.2.1 Professional Positionality.

I consider myself to be both an experienced teacher and a novice TE, two professional roles with a significant impact on the way I approach this work. I was a secondary ELA teacher for seven years and was even the ELA department chairperson at one school for two years. I also have experience writing secondary ELA curriculum at the district level for a large school system in the southern United States. These experiences give me an abundance of insight into the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of a secondary ELA teacher, the position that my participants are working towards. While I believe this aspect of my identity is largely beneficial, I also realize that my own experiences may color my interpretation of what my participants were experiencing in context. Furthermore, there is the possibility that my participants were hesitant to express dissatisfaction with secondary ELA as an overall specialization due to their awareness of my fondness for the content.

In addition to my role as an experienced teacher, my role as a TE could have had a similar impact on this research. During my years of teaching, I served as a MT (mentor teacher) multiple times. My personal experiences as a MT may have had some impact on the way I interpreted data provided by any of the MT informants to the PSTs, or the ways I interpreted

anecdotes shared by the PSTs relating to the ways they worked and interacted with their own MT. This aspect of my professional identity is further influenced by my participation as a research assistant on two different studies involving MT professional development in association with the university, and participants in one of those two studies could have come into contact with one of my participants at their school site. They even could have been assigned to a participant as an MT, and I would be unaware of this due to the use of pseudonyms. Unfortunately, these mentoring studies did not have positive outcomes for all participants and findings indicated some MTs were resistant to conversations about their own teaching practices or the ways in which they interact with their mentee. I endeavored to approach any conversations about MTs with an open mind throughout this research process and to not make assumptions about them related to my prior work.

Lastly, to bridge my professional identity and personal identity, it is worth noting that I had very positive interactions with teachers throughout my own PK-12 experience. Not every educator has had the same level of lasting impact on me, but most of the individuals I credit as my personal heroes are former teachers of mine and these individuals have left a profound influence on not only my career but on who I have become as a person. These positive interactions, which I am well aware many people have not had, deeply influence my positionality and gives me a tendency to "side with teachers" in arguments that put teachers against other figures such as policy makers, parents, and even sometimes students. I am predisposed to assuming that a person who becomes a teacher (or a student who desires to become a teacher) has good intentions in their desire to serve their school's population and community. I am also aware, however, that many teachers are perpetuating injustices and inequitable practices in their classroom, and that teachers are capable of enacting significant harm. Throughout this work I

must remain aware that these injustices could be invisible to me, and that assuming good intentions could compound the harm being done.

The reverse is true with my experience with TEs. Although I have personally met, worked with, and studied the scholarship of TEs whose work and motivation I deeply admire, I have had far more negative in-person experiences with TEs throughout the span of my life. While my assumptions about TEs are not as strong as those I hold about teachers, I do tend to find myself questioning the motivations of other TEs who seem to value program completion at any cost over individualized, humanizing work with PSTs.

3.5.2.2 Personal Positionality.

My work involves building rapport with my participants and also involves deeply personal conversations said participants, and it is my intention to be open with them about many aspects of my personal identity as well as my professional identity. Visually, I present as White and female, though neither of these identities are ones that I feel accurately represent me and I have experience engaging in conversations around incongruity between physical appearances and personal identities. Though raised in a multi-racial family, my outward appearance as a White-presenting person does influence the way I am perceived in society and most interactions I have on a regular basis are with individuals with whom I am unlikely to discuss my heritage. This has led to a lifelong awareness of inequitable treatment based on outward racial presentation, particularly as I have family members who do not present as White. This has also led to me being particularly hesitant to make assumptions about individuals based on their physical presentation, and it was important to me that I asked all participants to engage with me in a discussion about their own identities before making any statements regarding them throughout my work, and shared their personal statements of identity in this dissertation before

my own. This is similarly true for the physical presentation of gender. I personally do not consider myself to be transgender, but I do not feel a strong connection to a female identity either. I have extensive experience participating in advocacy and activism for gender-nonconforming and LGBTQIA+ rights and am particularly vocal in my personal life about using preferred pronouns and names for transgender and non-binary individuals, an issue which is currently quite contentious at public school sites. I am aware that this aspect of my positionality may present challenges or conflicts with individuals who do not hold the same ideals, and did lead to me challenging some of the perspectives my participants held regarding the identities of their own students.

3.5.2.3 Contextual Positionality.

As previously described, many of the original group of participants in this study are former students of mine. This influences my positionality toward them in context for several reasons. First, as their previous instructor I am aware of some of their habits and interests (for example PST X tending to turn in work late, or PST Y being very vocal about a certain social justice issue) that could influence my descriptions of their involvement within this study. Furthermore, the course in which I previously interacted with them was one that was structured around regular small group discussions about our interpretations of young adult literature. On the surface this may seem unrelated, but many of these discussions centered social issues or aspects of personal identity in which I have learned a great deal about my participants and my participants have also learned a great deal about me. For the purposes of this dissertation, I asked each of my participants to consider the ways they thought about my own identities and the way this might have influenced their thoughts and actions. I firmly believe, as external identity is an important component of positionality, that incorporating the words of my participants in this

section is the best way to provide validity for my positionality statement and to honor any experiences my participants may report regarding their relation to my own identities, whether intentional or unintentional.

3.5.2.3.3 The Stained-Glass Window Approach.

To assist my participants in understanding what I was asking of them, I used the metaphor of the stained-glass window. When viewing a stained-glass window directly, one sees a number of colorful panes of glass that are assembled to make a picture. When viewing light being cast through a stained-glass window onto another surface, one usually does not see a specific picture but instead sees pools of light tinted by the variety of colors. We can conceptualize identities in the same way. When viewing a person directly, we can see a number of their identities directly. When considering their actions or interactions, we can see how circumstances have been colored by those various identities. I asked my participants to consider their perceptions of me through the stained-glass window approach, and to consider how aspects of my identity might have affected them. Perhaps Zoey and Kaitlin were influenced by our mutual love of music. Perhaps Rebecca's opinion of me changed when we crossed paths at a recent protest. Perhaps Deanna had feelings when we discovered that I knew her mother. For participants who exited the CoP before the conclusion, they were asked during the exit process through personal correspondence. For the four that concluded the project, they were asked in their final debrief. Below are the remarks shared by each of the participants when asked to reflect on this question.

> "You didn't give me the best grade when I had your class, but you gave me a chance. And you gave me a chance on this, too. I learned a lot talking to my mentor and the other kids in the group." (Chris Acosta, Exit correspondence, 2-19-24)

“For a lot of us, since we’re running on like 25% battery after school, I appreciate how flexible things were. I like that you left a few minutes to just talk about our day, because we were usually fresh off the internship or whatever class we taught or whatever happened that day. It was a supportive environment where I can contribute my ideas and even be honest even if my energy level isn’t super peppy right now, because you get it.” (Zoey Ai, Final debrief, 3-15-24)

“I really wanted to do research and it was so cool to have that chance and I think I thought of you more as someone who would help me do that. I’m really interested in doing more someday.” (Megan Elliot, Exit correspondence, 10-17-24)

“I had ample opportunity to leave the group even after I had met you, but you were very kind and understanding, and you yourself had a very good work ethic, and were very quick to offer any sort of assistance or aid or whatever. I think knowing who you are allowed me to be a little less worried because I didn’t feel like all of it was on my shoulders. But I also trusted the group we had, and that helped, too.” (Benjamin Everett, Final debrief, 4-20-24)

“I joined because I knew you had my back, I knew I could trust you. There’s a lot I don’t get about what’s going on with this program and what I’m supposed to do or when. I know you’ll tell it to me straight and I need that.” (Deanna Isaac, Exit correspondence, 2-12-24)

“Doing this was something that was very challenging for me, and I view you as a person who was able to assist me through those challenges.” (Samaira Kang, Exit correspondence, 3-5-24)

"I didn't really think about you when I decided to join because my friends were joining, but I think of you as someone who is really creative and thinks about teaching creatively and that opens up a lot of opportunities to do things differently." (Rebecca Lawrence, Exit correspondence, 10-19-23)

"You are one of the only professors I ever had that gave me any accommodations to help me out without me having to ask for them like you knew I needed them so they were just there and that went a long way but this program isn't for me anymore but that isn't your fault." (Gia Loukas, Exit correspondence, 10-27-23)

"I feel like because you reached out to me, after I was in your class, I felt like I had the responsibility to since you took that stuff and reaching out to me. After teaching me, I felt like you were asking me to take on this role that a lot of responsibility so I sort of felt like I was able to connect with you as a researcher more because I know we would have all of those rants in our classes. But this is a time we actually get to do those research on that topic, right, and we actually get to get our hands dirty on the research methods and then I think just makes it more fun. Of course, it's not like a random lady that I've never seen in my life." (Robert Martinez, Final debrief, 3-16-24)

"I liked that you had a role in it because you know about research, you seemed experienced it in, and could answer all our questions. Also just because I've known some of these people for years, I know their work ethic and that some people would choose to do less if they could, so having you there kind of prevented that." (Kaitlin Moore, Final debrief, 4-9-24)

Admittedly, presenting these statements is also not without bias, as this was a voluntary study and students who dislike me were unlikely to have joined the group in the first place. I

have, however, taken the PSTs' statements of what they valued and what supports they were looking for into account, particularly in Chapter 5 of this dissertation when I discuss the second research question.

3.5.2.4 Knowledge, Power, and the Novice Teacher.

In my preparations, I drew upon the work of Sandra Fylkesnes (2018). Her systematic configurative literature review of teacher education publications focused not on the results of the specific studies, but on the way they framed and named Whiteness within their work. Many of the sources analyzed in Fylkesnes' review are also cited in this study. Her findings show that many authors make no mention of race at all, and those that do use oblique terms like *diversity* or *multicultural education* and demonstrate that the imbalance of power is deeply ingrained in teacher education research. The findings of Fylkesnes' review show that many researchers in this field do not hold space for an examination of power or identity at all, and those that do tend to mention it obliquely using vague terminology. She notes that

> an investigation of researchers' positionality through their use and meaning making of cultural diversity sheds light on the importance of the discourses of knowledge produced within institutions and beyond by pointing at the possible ideas of cultural diversity that these might "install" in their readers. Based on this review, I believe that there are reasons not only to ask why so many researchers practice such discursive Othering in the extensive ways I have found that they do but also why researchers seem to have the need to objectify this term when they just as well could treat it as an abstract term placed on a higher conceptual and theoretical level (p. 32).

My aim was to establish a CoP of participant co-researchers who were equity-minded and critical, and that we spoke and wrote in a way that was not race evasive in order to further embed social justice work into my co-researchers' teacher education experience.

At its heart, this study aims to be a disruption of systems of power because it positions PSTs as both rigorous researchers capable of presenting their findings to experienced educators, and as agents of change within their practicum school. The hierarchy of the modern PK-12 school system is one of both power and of knowledge, as described by Foucault (1980), in that power is a function of knowledge and that knowledge is an exercise in power. This study centers the PST as the holder of knowledge, and therefore the wielder of power, over even their MT and their subject-area colleagues. Yet our work began during the PSTs' apprenticeship of observation, the hierarchical bottom of the teacher development ladder as described by Ginsberg (2009). Our work further disrupts 'traditional' views of academic research by not only highlighting practitioner-generated knowledge over researcher-generated knowledge, but by lifting up novice practitioner-generated knowledge. It is for these reasons that I, as the PI of this project, was constantly both aware of and reflected on the balance of power and knowledge between myself and my co-researchers.

In addition, an awareness of imbalance amongst the CoP was critical. As a large portion of the data came from CoP conversations, I had to exercise constant awareness that equity of voice in a group setting was not always possible; some participants spoke more than others, and some are represented in the data to be presented in the next chapter more than others. In some ways this is to be expected, as members of the original CoP exited at different times and therefore contributed to the corpus of dialogue different amounts. Within actual meetings, I endeavored to keep mental track of equity of voice and to encourage less vocal CoP members to

share their thoughts through the chat function on our digital meetings. The chat logs were coded as though they were additional dialogue, as they were treated as such during CoP meetings. Further, I encouraged quieter participants to journal about relevant topics to ensure I captured their specific perspectives when I felt it was not well captured in the conversation in order to fairly represent all participants as equitably as possible.

3.6 Data Collection Challenges Due to CAR

A significant challenge in anticipating how participants may or may not experience change in their sense of readiness to teach during their work on the CAR project is directly related to the structural nature of CAR work. Decisions related to research topics, methods, coding, and data analysis are made collaboratively in most CAR dynamics, and our team followed this protocol. Our group sometimes made decisions during the CAR process that I would not have made if I had been the exclusive decision-maker, and some decisions were not the first choice of all group members. This is a risk with any group dynamic, and in this specific circumstance the reduced level of experience with research resulted in some less complex research than I would have preferred. One example of this occurred while the CoP was in the process of selecting our CAR topic of focus. During the group discussion in which we brainstormed possible topics, several group members expressed that they were actively taking 'time' into consideration when they voted. This meant that more than one of my co-researchers voted for CAR project topics with at least partial consideration towards which project would take the least time to complete.

Another example of co-researchers favoring less complex methods than I would have preferred occurred during the data collection phase of the CAR project. My co-researchers selected interviewing as a method of data collection, and opted for fully structured interviews in

which they would pre-write a set of questions collaboratively and only ask those questions. I suggested that, as they intended to conduct these interviews with their mentors with whom they were in frequent conversation with, a slightly more open interview structure that allowed for follow-up questions and a more conversational tone might be more appropriate for the setting and yield more robust results. My co-researchers expressed that they had only learned about fully structured interviews in their AR class and were nervous about the risks of 'going off script.' I went with the group's decision, although I also suspect an important lesson was learned during our data-gathering debriefs when most CoP members were asking why interviewees had given certain answers and the interviewer was unable to explain as they had asked no follow-up questions.

Overall, I believe that a CAR project was ultimately more beneficial to the holistic growth of my co-researchers and more aligned with my personal motivations as a researcher than other potential topics of focus for the CoP. The group dynamic inherent in CAR work made some aspects more challenging than an instructor-directed research project may have been, but a beneficial experience nonetheless.

3.7 Methodology & Data Collection Conclusions

Findings from this dissertation will make an important contribution to teacher education and professional development literature by providing insight into the ways in which existing PST AR projects can be reimagined in order to support PSTs' readiness to teach. More specifically, this research should paint a clearer picture of how PST readiness is impacted by collaborative assignments in the place of individual assignments. Findings from this research should reveal ways that other kinds of teacher education program activities and assignments without a research

component might support a stronger sense of readiness to teach, such as journal entries or small group discussions.

While not all programs require teacher research, particularly in undergraduate-level teacher education programs, this work may provide insight into the value of incorporating such work into the program curriculum or inspire a reimagining of other kinds of research assignments to focus on teacher action research for PSTs. The choice to focus on CAR as the project for the PSTs to complete inherently demonstrates a respect for both developing a lifelong inquiry stance as a teacher and for knowledge generated through that inquiry.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the tensions between those who prioritize rote memorization of pedagogical moves and those who call for a reconstruction of teacher education programs to address the structural racism and inequities of schooling are current and powerfully important within the field. This research represents a response to the question around how TEs can embed meaningful social justice work throughout a program when time and resources are so limited, and it also represents the potential for this kind of work leading to future cohorts of novice teachers who are better equipped to deal with the tensions of modern schooling.

Chapter 4: PST Findings Emerging from Action Research

Zoey and Kaitlin spent an extra two hours of their own time sitting with me in my GA workspace on campus working on their poster. We'd met as a team the day before and went through Robert's portion in person – he'd finished his part early because he needed to work a part time job after school – and talked through Benjamin's portion over the phone. Benjamin was sick in the hospital with a combination of stress-induced stomach ulcers and COVID. So Zoey and Kaitlin had volunteered to put the finishing touches on everything, and I had volunteered to sit with them and offer whatever support I could (which was mostly moral support and easy access to a color printer). Now it's presentation night. I'm the only non-student here besides Dr. Maxwell and her colleague who teaches the action research course for PSTs in science and math education. The students are milling around and chatting, catching up, but not really looking at each other's work. I know my team is proud of what they accomplished with our research. Over and over Zoey and Kaitlin had remarked the night before that, even if theirs wasn't the prettiest presentation, they felt like they had learned something worth sharing. But as we stand awkwardly around our poster, nobody seems to be coming over. Zoey, Kaitlin, and Robert want to go talk to their friends, too. I don't begrudge them. We take a quick picture to text Benjamin in the hospital, then they splinter off in different directions. I scoot to the side so that nobody asks me questions about their research; I want my team to speak on it themselves. About an hour into the event, Wendy arrives. She starts asking them questions, telling them how proud of them she is. They look proud of themselves, too. I'm glad. I take my free cookie and go.

It's the end of the semester and I'm finishing up my only required research methods course for my degree. There's actually only two options for courses that satisfy that requirement in the

College of Education, and I waited until this semester to take the 'hard' one because I wanted to do some actual research for once in my Masters' program. The final assignment is just a research project proposal, no actual research required after all, but I put a lot of effort into my proposal in order to make something I could feasibly do on my own someday. My proposal outlines an elective course for the teacher prep program that uses improvisational theater techniques to address some of the more stress-inducing aspects of being a pre-service teacher. I'd interviewed all my cohort mates about what they were most nervous about – classroom management, responding to student questions, being able to make up lessons on the fly, reacting to difficult situations – and then cross examined that data with interviews from my friends at the improv theater I performed in at night who also had teaching positions during the day. I had a comprehensive research plan ready to go. My professor gave me an A, and at the end of class he pulled me aside and told me that he regretted that the course wasn't well-suited to support actual research and that he hoped that I wouldn't give up. He told me that research is one of the best ways to make a difference in education if you can find the time and the resources to do it.

———

We know that building professional competence and confidence does not happen in a vacuum, influenced by nothing. It takes experiences and interactions. Wenger, whose work regarding CoPs inspired much of this study, also theorized the social nature of learning in general (Wenger, 2008). Wenger's framework for learning can be summarized as requiring experiences, practice, community, and identity. My intention with the CAR project was to provide my participant co-researchers with opportunities for all four. Within this chapter, I describe the findings related to the participants' experiences and practices while conducting CAR

as a community, and the ways in which these actions influenced their sense of readiness to teach in order to address my first research question:

> ***How does PSTs' membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?***

I will first provide an overview of the process of conducting CAR with the PSTs and present findings of readiness related specifically to the artifacts from their CAR project (posters and final papers) that reveal their readiness to teach. Then I examine the quantitative data related to the teacher readiness survey instrument. Next, I dig into the corpus of discursive data from the CoP meetings to examine expressions of readiness emerging throughout the process that can be linked directly to the CoP and the CAR project. Lastly, I provide some synthesis and conclusions across these findings.

4.1 Conducting Collaborative Action Research with PSTs

From the very beginning of recruitment, I made it clear to any potential participants that the purpose of our CoP would be to conduct research. I was pleasantly surprised by how invested in the idea of conducting research many of the PSTs were, and several remarked that they were specifically motivated to join the project because the prospect of doing impactful research was exciting to them. In one of our early conversations, Robert said that he "want[ed] to make a difference to kids like him, to do something bigger than just looking at how many students check out books from the library or whatever" (Personal correspondence, 8-27-23). The motivation present throughout the CoP was beneficial to my research, as I was able to take a back seat through most meetings and observe my participant co-researchers in action. During one meeting in October, we compared our CoP to conductors driving a train. The PSTs were on the train choosing which tracks to go down, while I was scouting ahead a little just to make sure there

were still tracks (CoP meeting, 10-10-23). To fully contextualize my findings of readiness that emerged from the CoP conducting CAR, the following section provides a narrative description of the entire study process.

4.1.1 A Narrative Overview of the CAR Process

The students who were receiving course credit for their CAR project (Zoey, Robert, Benjamin, and Kaitlin) all had to ensure that their research fell within the guidelines of the action research course. The assignment was outlined in the syllabus as allowing students to "critically examine a dimension of our own practices with the intention of evolving and thus improving our teaching" (course syllabus, 2022), and a conversation with Dr. Maxwell confirmed that the students had freedom to explore any relevant topic within those boundaries. This served as the 'jumping off' point for the CoP, even for students not enrolled in Dr. Maxwell's course, as it provided some clear guidelines for us to explore topic options.

Early on, conversations within the CoP centered around ways of managing the stress and expectations of the teaching profession. Some PSTs gravitated more towards specific topics, such as managing technology use in their classrooms or how to address truancy. Other PSTs were more interested in teacher-facing topics, such as managing their own emotions in front of students or how to adjust required curriculum they dislike. Within meetings discussing possible topics for research inquiry, I encouraged students to share and consider as many ideas as they liked, and my only note to guide them was that their research question should not be anything that could be answered by a quick Google search. I also noted to keep in mind that educational research topics were extremely likely to involve people in some way, and that "when you're working with like live people, you have to be really flexible. And it's not the same thing as like doing a science experiment and being like, well, 'my hypothesis was when I mixed these two

chemicals that this will happen' and then it does or it doesn't. So I do think that the flexible approach is probably the smartest way to approach it" (CoP meeting, 10-10-23). The topics suggested by participants are outlined in Table 9.

Table 9

CAR Project Topic Suggestions by Participant

Participant	Suggested topic(s)
Zoey	Burnout in high achieving students; attendance supports for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) students
Robert	In-service teachers' perspectives on teaching post-COVID; how school lunch nutrition affects student performance
Chris	Statistics about student reading/preparedness for class
Deanna	Phone use in classrooms
Kaitlin	ELA teacher grading times vs other content grading times
Benjamin	Connecting with families; in-school iPad problems
Samaira	Cultural dynamics of school support; teacher support networks in schools

Once we had assembled a list of options, the CoP agreed that we would take a few days to consider the list and the discussion we'd had around topics on the list, to identify their top choices, and to add any new ideas to the list prior to a vote. We then combined alike topics and narrowed our research topic choices to four. Right before the next week's CoP meeting, I asked everyone to anonymously use a ranked voting method to determine our focal topic. The eight PSTs participating in the CoP at that time and I all ranked our choices from first to fourth. The voting results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

CAR Topic Ranked Choice Voting Results

Result	Topic	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st Place	Teacher/PST work-life balance	5	2	1	1

2nd Place	Device distractions/screen addiction	3	2	0	4
3rd Place	Attendance issues	0	3	5	1
4th Place	Family engagement/friend group attitudes about school	1	2	3	3

Note. Number of participants voting = 9.

Since the collective was closely divided on the top two choices, we began the meeting with a discussion about whether the whole team was willing to pursue the first-place choice or if we should continue to discuss. The team agreed that investigating work-life balance (WLB) for teachers and for PSTs would result in more interesting and personally relevant data.

Amy, Kaitlin, and Samaira all interviewed their mentor teachers prior to the beginning of their winter break, while Benjamin and Robert interviewed theirs upon returning to the classroom post-break. Deanna and Chris were both planning to interview their mentors, but exited the project before that work was completed. The PSTs each transcribed their own interviews and shared the transcriptions with the whole CoP for collaborative coding. After discussing the basic procedures of coding interview data and sharing some examples, the CoP coded each transcript using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This process was described by the CoP members in their co-authored paper, stating that they "identified emerging patterns (both as individual researchers and compared across the research team for additional validity) and then grouped those patterns into codes to examine the collected body of interview data. The research team met frequently to discuss our collective findings in order to ensure that we understood the contexts of participant responses, and to establish inter-coder agreement about our findings" (CoP authors, final paper, 2024). We collectively identified the following seven codes: 1) "Real life" forcing a work-life balance; 2) Importance of not allowing your profession to be your sole identity; 3a) Asking other teachers for help/resources, or 3b) Not collaborating with other teachers; 4) Time management and preparation; 5) Setting

boundaries; 6) Social-emotional health; 7) Changes in work-life balance post-COVID. We then grouped examples of each code together to discuss our overall findings. As there was a length restriction on the associated written assignment, we opted to exclude some of our findings from the paper but included all our findings in the poster presentations.

Throughout the CAR process, we followed the steps of cyclical action research described in Chapter 3. We set aside time in each CoP meeting to discuss and reflect upon what had been done so far and to address anything that had not been going as expected. One notable example was when one of Benjamin's two mentor teachers took an extended trip abroad before he could be interviewed, and the team discussed whether or not this interview would be valuable to our dataset (we agreed that it was) and ways to rearrange our processes in order to accommodate this delay.

> BENJAMIN: I have two mentors. Yes. So I'm going to interview both of them. There's an okay—
>
> ZOEY: We have some newer teachers there so I would be kind of curious to talk to them.
>
> BENJAMIN: And then there's another teacher at the school. Have you met Mr. X?
>
> ZOEY: Yeah, he's 10th grade, right? Yeah.
>
> BENJAMIN: Well, he's, yeah. 11th. Not 10th. He's the English teacher who is like one of the most like, beloved English teachers. I would be really curious to get kind of like his insights on it. And he's, he's one, he's also probably one of the younger teachers at the school all the way. So we have, we have more young teachers than we did, like when I was a student there. But I still think he or my mentor, rather, is still probably one of the youngest teachers there.
>
> ZOEY: Just to cut in and say it's not bad idea. But if I do, double check whether he's back yet because I think he might be abroad for his like a brother's wedding.
>
> BENJAMIN: Yeah right now he, he was out today. I'm going to-- yeah this like at the very least I will get my mentor arguably my most important interviews done next

week more than likely. But I will If I can do a few other teachers, I will like do that. But like right now, priority is my mentors totally.

MEL: If there's a teacher that like this, this person who you're really interested in getting their insight but like it takes a little longer to get their stuff, whereas like you have to talk to them a different way. Like if you have to just like Facetime and do a screen recording or something there's, there's no rules about, you know, the ways you have these conversations, right?

ZOEY: And if you don't have time, I'm done mine. I think we should get his opinions, too. But you have first dibs.

MEL: Awesome. There's a lot of flexibility and there's nothing that says that you have to stop talking to people just because you've talked to somebody and now you have something to turn in if you're interested in hearing what they have to say. (CoP meeting, 1-18-24)

As this was also the project phase in which several members of the CoP needed to withdraw, we collectively also discussed ways to incorporate data provided by the exiting CoP members without overburdening the remaining CoP members.

The last stage of the CoP's work together involved collaboratively writing a paper and individually creating a poster to share their results. Both the paper and the posters were aligned with the format and expectations of an academic research conference. In addition to discussing the different ways in which we could describe our findings for the intended audience, which in this case was their fellow PSTs, university supervisors, and professors, producing these artifacts allowed the CoP members to reflect deeply on the research process as a whole and to examine their own identities, positionalities, and the way that engaging in action research influenced their thinking as a future teacher. The participants' positionality statements were included in section 3.1.1.3 of Chapter 3, and aspects of their personal reflections are embedded throughout the rest of the Findings and Discussion chapters. Though it is not deeply related to my own findings, the findings and analysis written for the CAR project are included as Appendix C.

4.1.2 Findings of Readiness from CAR Artifacts

Evidence of readiness to teach is present across the various artifacts the participant co-researchers created during the CAR process. Specifically, I share data from 18 data sources (10 CoP meeting transcripts, one small group poster session transcript, three posters, four final papers) to examine the choices of research topic, their poster presentation, and their final papers. These data focus on the Core Four participant co-researchers, however other partial participants are represented in some cases with additional descriptions to provide context for their inclusion.

4.1.2.1 Readiness Through Research Topics.

The initial choices of research topics, which students began brainstorming as early as late August when they were contacted about joining the project, initially demonstrated a lot of curiosity from the student perspective. Robert, for example, came into the project with an interest in examining how school lunches affected student performance. His interest in this remained through initial meetings of the CoP, but even by early September had begun to shift his focus to an additional suggestion of examining the ways COVID influenced teacher work patterns. By the time we voted on actual topics, he had withdrawn lunches from consideration completely. The shift in his thinking is aligned with the beginning of his student teaching experiences. Although he had engaged in a number of pedagogy classes and was beginning to think like a teacher, he had not yet put his skills to practice and was largely framing himself as a student. When asked by a CoP member why he no longer wished to pursue the lunch topic, Robert replied “I just don’t think it has so much to do with me now, you know, it doesn't do as much to help my real life. It’d still be interesting to know someday but I’m not even sure how we’d be able to find that stuff out” (CoP meeting, 11-7-23). His use of the phrase “to do with me now” linguistically reveals the possibility of thinking that there was a previous time when he previously felt his lunch topic

had more to do with him, a fact that Robert corroborated during member checks, and his use of "help my real life" draws attention to the fact that he is prioritizing something that he finds beneficial to his current and future life circumstances. Considering that topic was regarding teacher workflow, this shift in topic choice demonstrates an alignment with a shift from student toward teacher as a personal expression of his own sense of readiness to teach.

Another example of the personal expressions of PST readiness to teach emerging from the research topics came from overlap in Benjamin, Samaira, and Zoey's suggestions. Benjamin had initially expressed anxiety regarding speaking to parents over the phone.

> BENJAMIN: [My University supervisor] says she expects me to call three parents a week and that just seems so daunting.
>
> DEANNA: Three a week?
>
> GIA: Dude.
>
> AMY: I guess, like, it doesn't always have to be for a bad thing though, right?
>
> MEL: No, you can call for good things, too.
>
> BENJAMIN: I guess. Just, like, when I was a kid getting called by the school meant you were in trouble.
> (CoP meeting, 9-26-23)

He later brought this up as a possible topic of study. Zoey brought up concerns during a different conversation expressed by her MT that ESOL students were not being monitored for absences with the same rigor that other students were. Samaira, meanwhile, brought a third aligned issue to the table when she noted that she had observed teachers in her placement school seemed hesitant to contact families of immigrant students. Being an immigrant herself, she found this upsetting and brought it to the CoP during our open discussion time. "It isn't my place to tell them what to do," she remarked in the group chat, "I know getting a translator is hard at our

school but it makes me sad to see those students get put on the bottom of the list [of parents the teacher will contact]" (CoP meeting, 10-25-23). When it came time to suggest topics to vote on, Benjamin, Samaira, and Zoey collaborated to craft the possible topic of 'understanding cross-cultural differences and how that influences going to or staying in school'. This was condensed for voting and ultimately not selected as our final topic. Despite it not being picked, the interactions between these three PSTs demonstrated significant awareness of students' need for family and community support, awareness of the need for teachers to be members of those communities, and engagement of collaborative skills to help address issues facing students. All of these are important points within Manasia's Professional Engagement (D3) dimension of teacher readiness, represented most clearly in sub-dimensions for communicating effectively with families (D3_7) and getting involved in various school-related activities in order to contribute to the school and community (D3_12).

4.1.2.2 Readiness Through Poster Presentations

The poster presentation was one of the more contentious artifacts created during the CAR process. The syllabus for Dr. Maxwell's course had originally directed students to "develop and deliver a presentation to educators in your school placement outlining and describing the work you engaged in" (Syllabus, 2022). The CoP had been planning on delivering our findings as a mini professional development session at their school sites and was looking forward to this opportunity, when we were informed somewhat suddenly that the syllabus would be changed and all students, including members of my CoP, were to complete a different project instead. A deeper discussion about this change is described in the Limitations sections of this dissertation.

The new project, which was required to be individually completed by each CoP member rather than as group work, was described to us in an email from Dr. Maxwell as:

Develop and deliver a poster presentation to your colleagues and professors. This session will be both sections of Action Research together. This project is a literal poster, like an old-fashioned visual, like you might have done in grade school (or maybe you even did literal posters for your college thesis presentation, like me?!). You can be as creative or uncreative (although those tend to be boring) as you want. The poster should contain the following five items:

1. A reflection on your work this year (including your coursework, internship, and professional development). You can write and highlight a piece of writing, or you can make a visual component that represents your reflection for this part. Think about the most influential experience or assignment this year that has influenced your growth as a teacher candidate (it does not have to be from the course!).
2. Your research question(s) from the annotated bibliography. What question did you choose? Was there a particular article that you found especially compelling?
3. Your research take-aways/what you learned. What sorts of insights did you gain from the completion of this abbreviated research project? How does this experience and/or what you learned shape how you will show up as a teacher?
4. A timeline of your professional goals for the next five years. (Personal correspondence, 1-31-24)

Dr. Maxwell later clarified that our CoP members were permitted to report on the CAR project for points 2 and 3. For this reason, the CoP composed content for sections 2 and 3 collaboratively, and findings will be reported on in the next section for the Final Paper instead of

this section. As the due date for this assignment was the first week of March, the students had the month of February to pivot and complete this task. While we had initially discussed the possibility of continuing our original work and sharing the professional development with their school site colleagues anyway, the CoP ultimately agreed that this would be too much work for them to comfortably complete and that it was best for their mental health to focus on just the poster, final paper, their student teaching, their other course requirements, their standardized teaching licensure testing, their other part time jobs, their family obligations, and their own wellbeing.

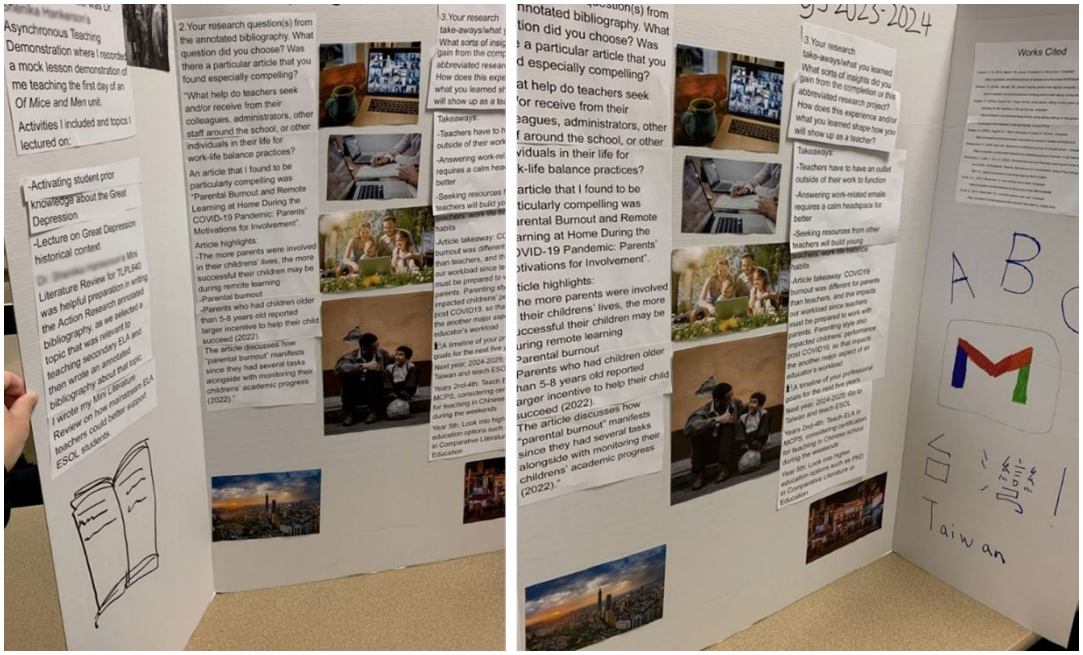
The posters themselves, while not exactly what the participants wished to be working on, provided interesting insight into their readiness to teach that may not have otherwise been collected. When coding the data, I examined both digital copies of some of the typed text, provided by the participants and coded with DP, and the images taken of the finished posters (see Figures 7 – 10) and coded using CCA. This was the most significant example of how DP and CCA are aligned methods, and why so many scholars of DP use them together, as it allowed me to apply the same codes to a variety of components appearing on the posters. In particular, the findings from these posters best represented the PSTs' current (that is to say, current at the time of making the poster) conception of their identities.

It is worth noting that only Kaitlin, Zoey, and Robert completed posters. Benjamin was hospitalized soon after our first meeting to work on the poster with stress ulcers, reported in this paper with his permission, and Samaira exited the project at this point as the professional development presentation was the portion she was looking most forward to and was not receiving course credit otherwise.

Zoey, Kaitlin, and Robert each represented different aspects of themselves on their personal poster, and through different means. Zoey directly expressed a distaste for her own artistic abilities and throughout the poster-making session there were moments of negative self-talk (i.e., “this looks like crap”, “I can’t draw”, or “[Dr. Maxwell] is gonna hate this”) and both Kaitlin and I provided her with reassurance throughout the session (Poster session, 3-6-2024). Zoey opted not to include any personal photographs in her poster, using only stock images downloaded from the internet. She did hand-draw a very large email logo beneath “A-B-C” and next to the Chinese characters (and English label for) Taiwan (see Figures 7 and 8). The purpose of this imagery is unclear. Zoey’s emerging professional identities at this point in time were very in-flux. Was she to be a US-based ELA teacher? Would she move to Taiwan to teach English as a foreign language? Would she remain in academia and pursue a PhD? Though she was gaining significant experience in her readiness to teach, this poster offers a view into how, for Zoey, her personal expressions of readiness to teach *what* and *in what ways* were still somewhat murky.

Figure 7 & 8:

Zoey’s Poster A & Zoey's Poster B

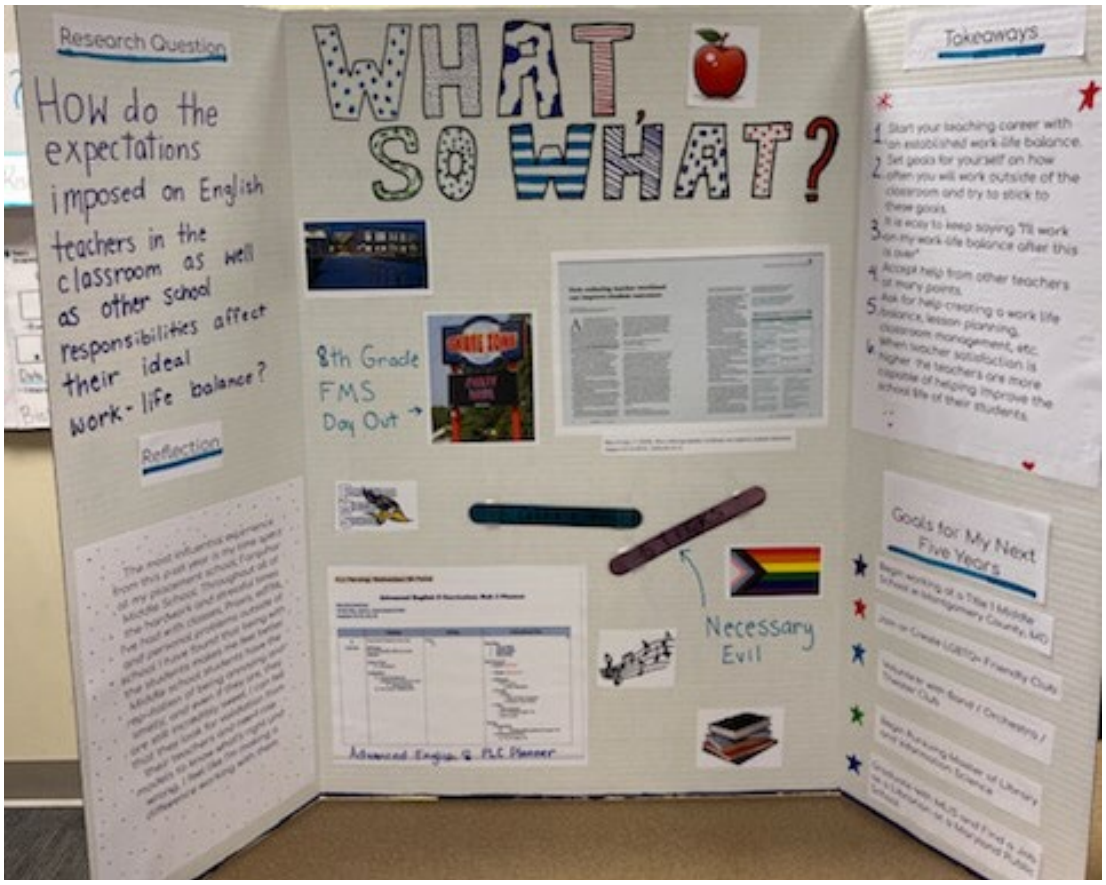


Kaitlin's poster (see Figure 9) was minimalistic with decorations and printed photographs, including seven images total: one of her school building and one of her school logo, one of a clip art apple, one of music notes, one of books, one of a Pride flag, and one that was the location of a recent school field trip. She described, during the extra work session with Kaitlin, Zoey, and me, that she had chosen these images because they were visual representations of the written components of her poster that she had already completed and that they filled the space well but did not mean much to her. It would not take a deep semiotic analysis to argue that the inclusion of the clip art apple, the pride flag, and the stack of books are at least a basic representation of an emerging teacher identity (the apple), an LGBTQ-friendly identity (the pride flag), and an affinity toward ELA (the books). The music notes could be argued in two ways, as she described herself as a current [as of the time of poster creation] musician in the university orchestra but it could also symbolize her desire to encourage music in her future students, which she described in her writing on the poster (described below). An intriguing component of Kaitlin's poster is the two popsicle sticks, or "selection sticks", that were a tool her MT used in their shared classroom. Kaitlin took great effort to attach those two sticks to her poster, and the transcript of our poster-making session revealed that it took just over 17 minutes and three different adhesives to find the proper method to secure them. Once they were on the poster, she hand labeled them as a "necessary evil". She did not elaborate on her distaste for the strategy or if her MT used them in a particular way, I could not find her mentioning or referencing it across any of the artifacts or transcripts, and I regretfully did not think to prompt a conversation about it before the conclusion of our work together. To the best of my knowledge, this particular method involves writing students' names on the popsicle sticks and drawing them blindly out of a cup to select volunteers at random. I found this inclusion to be an interesting but limited window into

Kaitlin's emerging readiness to teach. Kaitlin was consistently the perfectionist of the group and always preferred to use the most efficient and effective methods in every situation. The ways I saw her specific readiness to teach emerge and evolve throughout the CoP's time together were in moments when she acknowledged that teaching can sometimes be messy and imperfect.

Figure 8:

Kaitlin's Poster



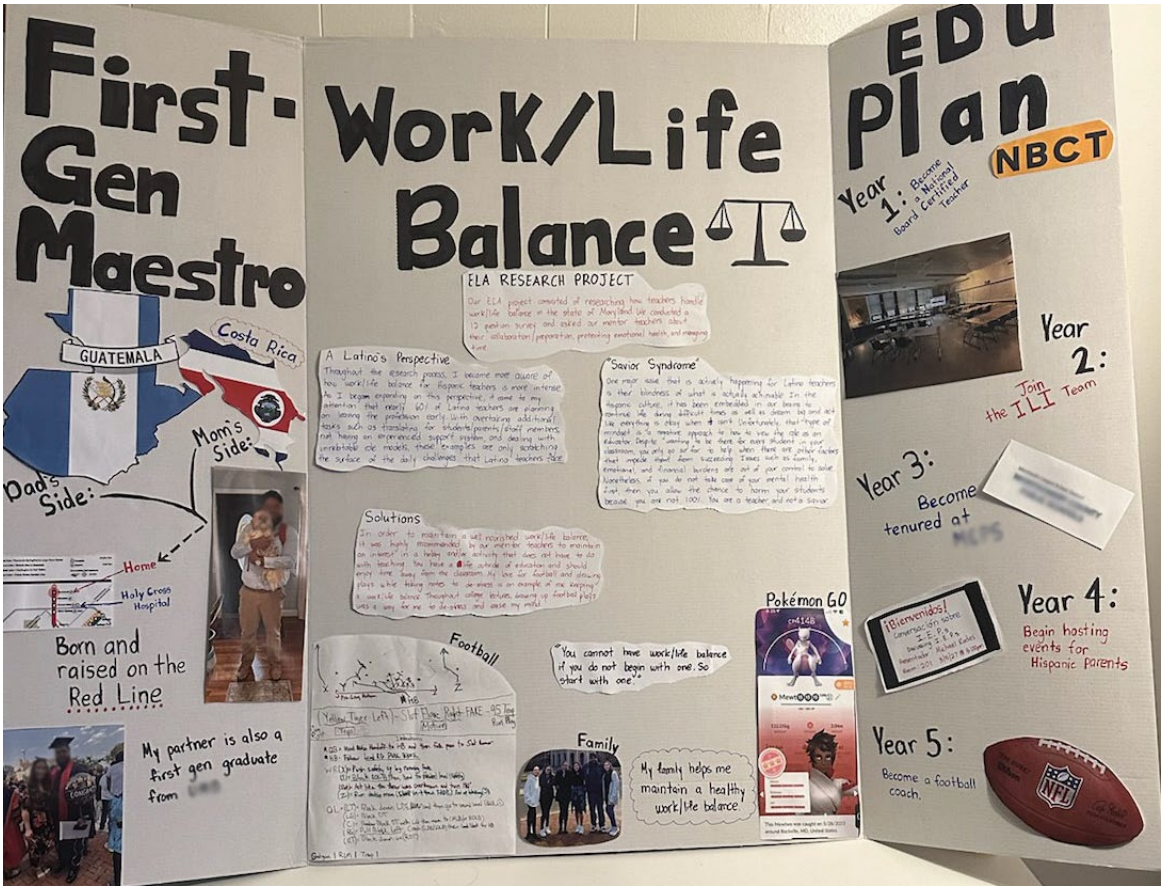
Robert's poster was extremely personalized. He had photographs of himself with his loved ones, his pets, his avatar in Pokemon GO! (a popular game for mobile phones that he described playing for stress relief), both his parents' home countries represented with both their geographical shape and national flag, a map of the public transportation system local to where he was born, football imagery, and a photograph he had taken of his classroom space. He further

decorated the poster with personally descriptive language like “First-Gen Maestro” [with *first-gen* being a term used to identify someone being of the first generation in their family to attend college, and *maestro* being Spanish (Robert’s home language) for teacher] and “born and raised on the Red Line” to reference both the literal color-coding of the public transportation system near his home and the term *redlining*, used to describe the racially-charged redistricting practices that led to an increase in segregated neighborhoods in the United States (Aaronson et al., 2021).

Robert was extremely proud of his various identities, and the great care he took with the ways in which he chose to convey those identities was a trademark of his. This was evident in his identity statement provided in section 3.1.1.3.4, in his imagery, and in his word choice. Robert was very literature-minded, a self-identified future Henry David Thoreau, and frequently used wordplay and creative representations of concepts to display that identity. This can be seen in the *red line* example above, and on two other examples on his poster: one where he describes a plan for working with students as though it were a football plan, complete with football play diagram (bottom-center panel, Figure 10), and another where he describes hosting Spanish-speaking families through a drawing of a bulletin board upon which he has greetings welcoming those families into his classroom (right panel, Figure 10). Robert’s pride and confidence in his personal and professional identities are noticeable here. In my analysis, I was also intrigued by the fact that, though he had access to a printer (which can be seen by his printed imagery), he chose to hand-write all his text elements. One possible interpretation is that this is a representation of his confidence in his identity as a writer or as a teacher of writing, or pride in his ability to write so well.

Figure 9:

Robert's Poster



For the written components of the poster assignment, the reports of our research project were nearly identical and for the purposes of this dissertation are described in section 4.1.2.3. There were two other written sections which required different responses from students, labeled "section 1" and "section 4" on their assignment. Each of the three students chose to report on something different for section 1, an interesting highlight they learned from the year. Kaitlin reported on work she did for a literature course in the English department at the university, Zoey reflected on her increasing interest in teaching English abroad as a second generation Chinese-American, and Robert wrote a heartfelt piece about the hidden burdens Latino male teachers take on in predominantly white, female staffed schools. Each of these individual pieces are excellent

representations of who each of these individuals are as human beings. The most significant evidence for readiness to teach, however, is present in what they each composed for section 4.

For section 4, each student was directed to consider the next five years of their career and to compose a timeline of their goals. This provided Zoey, Robert, and Kaitlin an excellent opportunity to consider their readiness in both the professional engagement and self-management dimensions of teacher readiness. In our CoP conversations preparing their posters, we were able to center conversations naturalistically around effective self-assessment of their training needs, commitment to professional development, involvement in school activities, time management, and self-motivation. Robert's finished timeline imagined himself becoming an assistant football coach and later head coach, seeking National Board Certification, and taking on additional responsibilities within the English department at his school. Kaitlin imagined herself becoming involved with both the music and theater program, perhaps assisting her school in incorporating musical theater performances. Zoey described her future-self working abroad in China or Taiwan for a year before returning to the US and teaching high school English during the day and ESOL classes at night, then later returning to academia for a doctoral degree. Each of these posters presents a visual representation of the participants' growing sense of readiness to teach.

4.1.2.3 Readiness Through the Final Paper

The final paper, written collaboratively by Zoey, Robert, Kaitlin, and Benjamin, and presented almost in its entirety[14] as Appendix C, is the last artifact constructed by the members of the CoP. They began their work centered around the following research questions:

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[14] Each student was asked to hand in their own copy of the paper to Dr. Maxwell that included their own positionality statement. The positionality statements are included in this dissertation in section 3.1.1.3, and the rest of the paper is in the Appendix.

- **What are the ways in which in-service teachers conceptualize their own work-life balance and what steps do they take to maintain this balance?**
- **What can pre-service teachers and early career teachers learn from the experiences of other teachers as they develop their own sense of a work-life balance?**

These questions were formulated collaboratively in early November after each composing their own version of a research question and then narrowing down our options. My participant co-researchers were also encouraged to consider their own personal research questions related to the overall main RQs that would help guide the creation of our interview question list. These mini-research questions were:

- What incongruities exist between in-service teachers' conception of an ideal work-life balance and their actual current practices?
- What help do teachers seek from their colleagues, administrators, other staff around the school, or other individuals in their life for work-life balance practices?
- How much time do you spend grading paper? How do you balance grading while also making sure you can enjoy your personal life?
- How does the COVID-19 pandemic impact the work-life balance of teachers and pre-service teachers (PSTs), and what lessons can be learned for future challenges? What policies and practices can educational institutions implement to enhance the work-life balance of teachers and PSTs?
- How much do the expectations imposed on English teachers in the classroom as well as other school responsibilities affect their ideal work-life balance?
- How were you managing your work/life balance before COVID? How did it change after COVID?

The participant co-researchers formulated their personal mini-RQs during their Winter Break in December. These questions each reveal a deep curiosity into the intricacies of teaching for each author. At this point in their practicum processes, the PSTs would be mentally preparing themselves to transition from an observational stage, in which their MT is the primary classroom teacher and they are a supportive observer, to an action stage, in which they are the primary classroom teacher and their MT is a supportive observer. Questions regarding the nuances of the teaching profession when preparing for this takeover of duties are logical. In terms of readiness to teach, the prevalence of nuanced skill or task-based questions and the absence of content-based questions also reveals that the PSTs collectively seem to feel confident in their content knowledge at this stage of the process. These mini-RQs were shared with the CoP anonymously and I therefore do not know for sure which PST contributed which question, although from context clues one can form an educated guess on most of them.

My participant co-researchers interviewed teachers at their school sites and coded the interview data throughout the late fall of 2023 and into the winter. We finished the coding process in early February of 2024. We identified the following codes across the data: a) teacher is not collaborating with other teachers, or not collaborating often; b) “real life” obligations forcing a work life balance; c) understanding that teaching is not your whole life; d) showing the importance of asking other teachers for resources; e) preparing yourself for the next day, or preparing classroom resources in advance; f) setting appropriate boundaries with colleagues and students; g) protecting social-emotional health; h) experiencing significant changes to workflow;

and i) experiencing little or no meaningful changes to workflow[15]. The ways in which the participant co-researchers chose to code this data indicates that they were particularly cognizant of elements in the self-management dimension of teacher readiness during this process, most specifically prompt 40 of 45 which asks the students their preparedness to manage their own activities and obligations inside and outside of school. In Manasia et al.'s (2020) writing, they note that aspects of readiness in (D4) Self-Management are often some of the weakest according to their surveyed PSTs. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that the participant co-researcher's focus on this aspect is a sign of a desire to consciously focus on strengthening their competencies in this dimension of teacher readiness. This reasoning was confirmed by my critical friend's examination of both the uncoded data and the participant co-researcher's codes.

The transcribing and coding portion of the process also revealed some drawbacks to progress with readiness to teach. Robert tried to interview multiple teachers at his school site, at one point conducting seven interviews in one day, but then became frustrated with difficulties he encountered while attempting to transcribe the interviews. His frustrations were an instance of negative emotioncy, experiencing a negative event with enough frequency that he began demonstrating signs of regression in his confidence in some dimensions of readiness to teach. In one of the online team meetings where coding was a priority, he opted not to log on with video or voice and instead engage only with the chat function. There, he expressed that he was "sorry to let the team down" (CoP meeting, 1-18-24). Other CoP members assured him that this was not

[15] Not all these codes were discussed fully in their final paper, as the CoP members actually found it challenging to remain only slightly over the page maximum. This is an ongoing truism for English teachers, I'm afraid, and readers of this dissertation might find themselves looking at the current page count right about now and reflecting on my personal background as an English teacher.

their perception of the situation. Kaitlin in particular affirmed that she had observed his interviewing efforts, as she was assigned to the same school-site. Although multiple CoP members offered to assist Robert with his transcription efforts, ultimately he turned the assistance down and the concern remained unresolved at the conclusion of the meeting. It would be preferable to share that this anecdote has a happy ending, but unfortunately Robert did not successfully transcribe or share all his conducted interviews for coding. This did not seem to have a significant impact on his self-scoring of readiness to teach in the post-survey, but for a clearer picture of that data we must transition our focus to quantitative findings of readiness.

4.2 Quantitative Findings of PST Readiness to Teach

The survey instrument to measure the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach, created by Manasia et al. (2020), utilized 45 questions across 4 dimensions of readiness. PSTs used a 5-point Likert scale for each prompt, which guided participants to rank statements based on how much they felt that it applied to them. Their survey set their scale from 1 to 5, so it was not possible for a participant to score fewer than 45 total points, or 20% readiness. The survey was distributed to all members of the CoP prior to the first meeting, and they were prompted to complete the survey prior to our meeting in order to discuss their thoughts. Of the initial 10 CoP participants, seven completed the pre-survey. The results from the Core Four are presented below in Table 11, and the three partial participants' responses are available in Appendix H.

Table 11

Pre-Survey Results

Prompt	Robert	Benjamin	Kaitlin	Zoey
<u>D1: Professional Knowledge</u>				
I know which instructional strategies to use in my lessons in order to achieve cognitive goals and to boost critical thinking, problem solving, complex situations analysis and decision-making	5	2	4	3

I know the scientific content of the discipline taught	4	3	5	3
I know the curricular documents that the teacher must use in their teaching activity	5	3	4	3
I am able to organize the scientific content in teaching sequences	3	2	3	3
I am able to formulate the learning objectives of a lesson	5	3	4	2
I am able to imagine learning activities that will contribute to achieving the learning goals and will foster transformative competences (e.g., student agency, decision-making)	5	4	4	3
I know the students' learning styles and know how to adapt the teaching strategy accordingly	4	3	3	3
I know how to effectively use technology (ICT) in the teaching activity	5	2	3	3
I know the students' age particularities and their influence on the learning process	4	3	2	3
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE TOTAL (out of 45)	40	25	32	26
D2: Professional Practice				
Set learning goals to foster ESD pillars	4	1	2	2
Plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents	5	3	4	4
Design the teaching activities taking into account the age particularities of the students and how they can influence the learning	4	3	3	3
Apply different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills (e.g., decision-making, teamwork, conflict solving)	5	3	4	3
Integrate a wide range of resources into the teaching activity, including ICT, in order to engage students in their own learning process and to help them know themselves and others	3	3	3	3
Use different communication techniques to encourage students to get involved in activities and work together effectively	2	3	4	3
Involve all the students in class activities (including those with special educational needs)	4	3	3	2
Manage classroom activities and set clear rules	3	3	4	2
Manage students' behavioral changes in order to help them to self-regulate emotions and behaviors	5	2	3	2
Contribute to students' safety within the school, respecting the law requirements	5	3	4	3
Use technology (ICT) in the teaching activities in a safe, responsible way, respecting ethical norms and legislation	5	2	4	2
Apply different strategies for evaluating (formative and cumulative) the students' results through which to verify the	4	3	3	2

acquisition of all the competences provided by the school syllabus				
Build different assessment tools, with clear criteria and help compare the learning outcomes of students	2	3	4	3
Provide adequate and timely (at the right time) feedback to the students in order to boost their ability of learning to know and to learn	5	4	4	3
Interpret the students' learning outcomes	4	3	4	3
Communicate the results of the assessment to the students so as to encourage them to learn	4	4	3	3
Assist students in self-assessment so as to make them aware of their level.	4	3	3	3
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE TOTAL (out of 85)	68	49	59	46
D3: Professional Engagement				
Identify your own training needs	5	4	4	3
Establish a professional development plan to cover the identified learning needs	3	3	3	3
Develop/perfect your own learning strategies	2	3	3	2
Select appropriate information sources and resources in order to develop professionally	3	4	4	3
Continuously improve yourself in order to improve the students' learning process	4	5	5	4
Ask for feedback from your colleagues to improve your teaching skills	5	4	5	4
Communicate effectively with the parents (regarding students' school situation, keeping the confidentiality of results, solving certain problems, etc.)	2	2	4	3
Respect the ethics and conduct principles of the teaching profession	5	4	5	4
Respect the national legislation for the teaching profession, as well as the regulations imposed by the school organization	5	3	5	4
Reflect upon the teaching practices (analyzing and evaluating one's own performance, student outcomes, etc.) to improve teaching strategies	4	4	4	4
Respect the values of the school organization	5	4	4	4
Get involved in various related activities, in order to contribute to the development of the school	2	3	4	3
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT TOTAL (out of 60)	45	43	50	41
D4: Self-Management				
Create a well-being atmosphere at school/in the activities	4	4	5	3

Effectively manage one's own activities (planning, organization, responsibilities, etc.)	3	3	3	4
Effectively manage one's own emotions in the activities	4	3	4	3
Effectively manage the time allocated to the activities	5	3	4	3
Self-motivate and self-discipline	3	3	4	4
Show flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes (new situations/working contexts, legislative changes)	2	3	4	4
Make decisions related to the teaching career	5	3	4	3
SELF-MANAGEMENT TOTAL (out of 35)	26	22	28	24
OVERALL (out of 225)	179	139	169	137

As six participants had exited the CoP prior to the project conclusion, only the Core Four participants completed the post-survey. It was an identical copy of the pre-survey. The only difference in process is that the CoP collectively decided they preferred to take the survey synchronously, rather than asynchronously prior to the meeting, in order to discuss their thoughts immediately after completing the survey. The results of the post-survey are presented below in Table 12.

Table 12

Post-Survey Results

Prompt	Robert	Benjamin	Kaitlin	Zoey
<u>D1: Professional Knowledge</u>				
I know which instructional strategies to use in my lessons in order to achieve cognitive goals and to boost critical thinking, problem solving, complex situations analysis and decision-making	5	3	4	5
I know the scientific content of the discipline taught	4	4	5	5
I know the curricular documents that the teacher must use in their teaching activity	4	4	4	5
I am able to organize the scientific content in teaching sequences	4	4	5	5
I am able to formulate the learning objectives of a lesson	5	4	5	5

I am able to imagine learning activities that will contribute to achieving the learning goals and will foster transformative competences (e.g., student agency, decision-making)	4	4	5	5
I know the students' learning styles and know how to adapt the teaching strategy accordingly	5	3	5	5
I know how to effectively use technology (ICT) in the teaching activity	4	2	5	5
I know the students' age particularities and their influence on the learning process	2	3	5	5
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE TOTAL (out of 45)	37	31	43	45
D2: Professional Practice				
Set learning goals to foster ESD pillars	2	2	3	5
Plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents	4	4	4	5
Design the teaching activities taking into account the age particularities of the students and how they can influence the learning	5	3	4	5
Apply different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills (e.g., decision-making, teamwork, conflict solving)	4	4	5	5
Integrate a wide range of resources into the teaching activity, including ICT, in order to engage students in their own learning process and to help them know themselves and others	4	3	4	5
Use different communication techniques to encourage students to get involved in activities and work together effectively	4	3	4	5
Involve all the students in class activities (including those with special educational needs)	4	3	4	5
Manage classroom activities and set clear rules	2	4	4	5
Manage students' behavioral changes in order to help them to self-regulate emotions and behaviors	4	3	4	5
Contribute to students' safety within the school, respecting the law requirements	5	4	4	5
Use technology (ICT) in the teaching activities in a safe, responsible way, respecting ethical norms and legislation	4	3	5	5
Apply different strategies for evaluating (formative and cumulative) the students' results through which to verify the acquisition of all the competences provided by the school syllabus	4	4	5	5

Build different assessment tools, with clear criteria and help compare the learning outcomes of students	5	3	3	5
Provide adequate and timely (at the right time) feedback to the students in order to boost their ability of learning to know and to learn	2	2	4	5
Interpret the students' learning outcomes	4	4	4	5
Communicate the results of the assessment to the students so as to encourage them to learn	4	3	5	5
Assist students in self-assessment so as to make them aware of their level.	3	3	4	5
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE TOTAL (out of 85)	64	55	70	85

D3: Professional Engagement

Identify your own training needs	4	5	5	5
Establish a professional development plan to cover the identified learning needs	5	3	4	5
Develop/perfect your own learning strategies	4	3	4	5
Select appropriate information sources and resources in order to develop professionally	4	4	4	5
Continuously improve yourself in order to improve the students' learning process	5	4	5	5
Ask for feedback from your colleagues to improve your teaching skills	5	4	4	5
Communicate effectively with the parents (regarding students' school situation, keeping the confidentiality of results, solving certain problems, etc.)	2	3	4	3
Respect the ethics and conduct principles of the teaching profession	5	4	5	5
Respect the national legislation for the teaching profession, as well as the regulations imposed by the school organization	4	4	5	5
Reflect upon the teaching practices (analyzing and evaluating one's own performance, student outcomes, etc.) To improve teaching strategies	4	4	4	5
Respect the values of the school organization	5	4	5	5
Get involved in various related activities, in order to contribute to the development of the school	1	3	5	5
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT TOTAL (out of 60)	48	45	54	58

D4: Self-Management				
Create a well-being atmosphere at school/in the activities	5	4	5	5
Effectively manage one's own activities (planning, organization, responsibilities, etc.)	2	3	4	5
Effectively manage one's own emotions in the activities	4	4	4	5
Effectively manage the time allocated to the activities	5	3	5	5
Self-motivate and self-discipline	5	3	5	5
Show flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes (new situations/working contexts, legislative changes)	5	3	5	5
Make decisions related to the teaching career	4	3	4	5
SELF-MANAGEMENT TOTAL (out of 35)	30	23	32	35
OVERALL (out of 225)	179	154	199	223

As the Core Four are the only participants to take both the pre- and post-survey, they are the only four points of data for survey comparison. To better conceptualize their overall sense of readiness, their scores have been converted to percentages and compared below in Table 13. A combination of Tables 11 and 12 that shows pre- and post-survey data side by side is available as Appendix G.

Table 13

Percent Readiness Comparison

	D1		D2		D3		D4		Total		DIF.
	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	
Robert	88.9%	82.2%	80%	75.3%	75%	80%	74.3%	85.7%	79.6%	79.6%	0%
Benjamin	55.6%	68.9%	57.6%	64.7%	71.7%	75%	62.9%	65.7%	61.8%	68.4%	6.7%
Kaitlin	71.1%	95.6%	69.4%	82.4%	83.3%	90%	80%	91.4%	75.1%	88.4%	13.3%

Zoey	57.8%	100%	54.1%	100%	68.3%	96.7%	68.6%	100%	60.9%	99.1%	38.2%

The average reported sense of readiness to teach on the post-survey 83.9%, an increase of 14.6% when compared to the initial results of 69.3% for the focal four participants. When incorporating data from all initial participants (included in Appendix H), who had an average readiness of 69.8% on the pre-survey, readiness increased by 14.1%.

The differences in overall scores across the four core participants are notable, with noticeable variance between them. Robert ranked his readiness differently across the domains, yet his overall score remained the same on both the pre- and post-survey. When asked about this, he remarked that "Having going through meetings, at first I was thinking of myself as more of a content specialist but then this made me think about what I didn't know, but also addressed some of the other things, so you definitely helped with those skills for teaching. I don't know. I feel like we never really touched base on pedagogy too much, we touch more on lifestyle, right? But at the end of the day though, it does affect your teaching. It flipped my thinking around, funny that it was the same number" (Robert Martinez, Final debrief, 3-16-24).

Zoey, on the other hand, had a 38.2% increase in her overall readiness score. She initially marked herself relatively low, and marked nearly all categories with 100% readiness in her post-survey. This data is aligned with qualitative data related to growth in Zoey's personal sense of readiness to teach which is explored throughout the sections below. Kaitlin and Benjamin also ranked their readiness higher in each domain in their post-surveys, though with a slightly less dramatic increase overall. While viewing the data from the survey alone shows growth for 3 of the 4 focal participants, we cannot address the first research question and adequately understand the CoP's influence on that growth without additional qualitative data.

4.3 Qualitative Findings of PST Readiness to Teach

Conversations amongst the CoP members, comprised of approximately 10 hours of recorded dialogue in bi-weekly meetings (with the CoP choosing to meet more often during the four weeks of data analysis in late January to early February) with supplemental texts and emails, serve as the main body of data from which we can better understand how the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach evolved during their time with the CoP. Across the 10 meetings, I kept a record of which of the 45 statements from the readiness survey were being addressed through conversation. Due to the personalities of these particular CoP members, it was rarely necessary to force topics of conversation related to readiness. The tracking information for the questions are summarized below, with a C marked for readiness prompts that emerged organically in conversation and a P when I opted to bring up a specific prompt. The abbreviations in the leftmost column on Table 14 represent the 45 sub-dimensions of readiness to teach as defined by the Manasia et al. (2020) instrument. A reproduction of the instrument is available in Appendix A, and my reformatted questions based on their survey prompts are presented in Appendix B. However, as conversations around these sub-dimensions could arise in a variety of ways during CoP meetings, I have opted to label them using Manasia et al.'s original labeling scheme seen in Appendix A for ease of reference.

Table 14

Readiness Question Tracking

Sub-dimension	Date of meeting									Total times discussed
	9/26/23	10/10/23	10/25/23	11/7/23	11/20/23	12/7/23	1/18/24	2/6/24	3/5/24	3/12/24	
D1_1	C									C	2
D1_2	C									C	2
D1_3	C	C								C	3
D1_4			P								1
D1_5	C										1
D1_6	C										1

D1_7	C										C	2
D1_8	C										C	2
D1_9	C											1
D2_1			P								C	2
D2_2	P										C	2
D2_3				P							C	2
D2_4		C										1
D2_5				P							C	2
D2_6			C		C	C				C	C	5
D2_7		C									C	2
D2_8		C	C	C			C	C			C	6
D2_9	C	P									C	3
D2_10					P							1
D2_11					P						C	2
D2_12						P					C	2
D2_13						P					C	2
D2_14			C	C	C			C	C	C	C	6
D2_15								C	C	C	C	3
D2_16								C	C	C	C	3
D2_17								C	C	C	C	3
D3_1								C	C			2
D3_2								C	C			2
D3_3			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	8
D3_4									C			1
D3_5									P			1
D3_6		C	C	C	C		C	C	C			7
D3_7	C	C		C	C		C			C		6
D3_8								C	C	C		3
D3_9							C	C	C			3
D3_10		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C		9
D3_11								C	C			2
D3_12		C						C	C			3
D4_1	P		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C		9
D4_2		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C		9
D4_3		C		C	C		C		C	C		6
D4_4	C				C	C		C				4
D4_5		C			C	C	C		C	C		6
D4_6			P					C				2
D4_7		C				C						2
	Total sub-dimensions discussed during CoP meeting											
	13	13	11	11	13	10	10	18	20	28		

Some aspects of this tracking chart are easy to interpret at a quick glance. The first two sessions, for example, were close after the PSTs had taken the pre-survey and were bringing up topics related to the readiness prompts within their conversations quite easily. By the third meeting I had analyzed these findings, and was prepared to introduce some of the topics we had not yet addressed across the third and fourth meetings. The fifth, sixth, and seventh meetings were focused on interpreting, analyzing, and coding our own CAR data. While I still ensured that ample conversation regarding the readiness domains took place, I did not prioritize addressing more than my hoped-for goal of ten topics before working on more pressing concerns. The eighth and ninth meetings involved work on the PSTs' poster and paper, and readiness topics appearing in those artifacts were discussed quite frequently throughout the sessions. The concluding session was immediately following the post-survey, and nearly every topic was discussed.

Additionally, the tracking chart reveals that some topics were only discussed once. Briefly, those topics were: understanding a teaching sequence, formulating lesson objectives, creating learning activities that contribute to achieving learning goals, knowing how student age influences learning, applying teaching strategies for life skills, contributing to student safety within schools, selecting appropriate sources of information for professional development, and engaging in continuous self-improvement in order to improve student learning.

The last two (selecting appropriate sources of information for professional development and engaging in continuous self-improvement) were skills we *engaged in* quite frequently during the CoP's time together, but rarely explicitly discussed. For some other topics, such as lesson objectives and learning goals, the CoP members felt they were competent enough with these

skills and that conversations outside of the CoP were contributing enough to their development of these skills that it was not necessary to discuss them within the CoP. This is a critical point to make note of, as not all members of the CoP ranked these skills as 4s or 5s in their initial assessments. The following occurred when discussing lesson objectives:

> CHRIS: I wouldn't say I'm perfect, but like, I get it.
>
> DEANNA: Yeah, I'm good.
>
> ZOEY: I think, like, between Wendy and student teaching and stuff, we got that one covered.
>
> BENJAMIN: Mhmm.
> (CoP meeting, 9-26-23)

This discussion reveals that the PSTs began making mental distinctions as early as the first CoP meeting between sources of teacher education contributing to specific skills. This is a theme that emerged throughout the CAR process and is examined more closely in section 4.3.1.

The continuous conversations related to their experiences during the practicum provided frequent opportunities for the PSTs to express their personal sense of readiness to teach directly, and often resulted in the organic 'checking off' of different readiness topics. For example, Benjamin remarked at the beginning of a January meeting that he "Ha[d] not even fully started the semester yet, and I'm already feeling this struggle. I'm taking over the class, though, and I think I'm ready for it" (CoP meeting, 1-18-24). On another occasion, Zoey remarked that "I don't need to be freaking out, I have what I need to do" (CoP meeting, 2-22-24). Statements like this were typical in the CoP, and across the 10 meetings there were 17 moments in which PSTs directly declared their own sense of readiness to teach through direct uses of the word "ready" or agreed upon synonymous phrases such as "I have what I need", "I'm good to go", "it's all taken care of", "I'm all set", etc., that I identified and had confirmed by my critical friend. Just as the

survey provides a quantitative look into the PSTs' direct senses of readiness, these statements served as distinct qualitative markers of their developing readiness.

In addition to these more overt statements of readiness and the knowledge that themes of readiness were frequently discussed, four themes emerged during the process of coding data. These themes are: 1) readiness through developing abilities; 2) readiness through developing expertise; 3) readiness through positive future thinking; and 4) readiness through questioning. Each of these themes provide more subtle insight into the PSTs' developing readiness to teach that are more specifically connected to the work of the CoP.

4.3.1 Readiness Through Developing Abilities

As mentioned above, a strong indicator of PSTs developing their sense of readiness to teach in general is through their acquisition and practice of teaching skills and abilities. It can be challenging as a TE, or other external observer, to truly assess the where, when, and how an individual developed that ability. The PSTs, however, were able to fully express the ways in which their involvement in the CoP and their engagement in CAR work contributed to the development of those abilities through their talk during CoP meetings.

Meeting frequently as a CoP and discussing how our days had gone as the beginning of our routine greatly contributed to our rapport as a group, and it also led to a significant number of instances in which the PSTs mentioned particular teaching skills or abilities that were on the top of their mind. The most common conversational interaction would generally have PST A mention something coming up they were nervous about doing. PST B might give them a piece of advice, encouragement, or commiseration. At the next meeting, PST A would then update the CoP with how things went and what they had learned from the process. Below are two such examples that span multiple meetings:

GIA: Tomorrow I'm doing vocab practice in small group and I haven't decided what to do.

ZOEY: What kind of small group?

GIA: Mostly ESOL [English speakers of other languages] kids.

ZOEY: I have ESOL students in my third period class. My mentor teacher pulls icons from a website, I forget what it's called. It like shows, like, the kind of icons you see on signs and stuff because they think clipart is too babyish. I'll find the site and text it to you.

GIA: Awesome, thanks.
(CoP meeting, 10-10-23)

ZOEY: Did that website help at all?

GIA: Yeah, actually, it did!
(CoP meeting, 10-25-23)

BENJAMIN: How do you guys go about getting your students to put their phones away?

DEANNA: Good luck.

BENJAMIN: Right? I have two mentors and in one class they do it, no question, but in the other one it feels like I have to pull teeth.

SAMAIRA: In my school they do lots of rewards instead of punishments and it seems to work well. Would your mentor allow you to reward them somehow?

AMY: It's almost break, maybe let them do something fun?

MEL: Like a movie day? You could still pick something that has to do with the themes of what you're reading.

BENJAMIN: I'll ask.
(CoP meeting, 11-7-23)

BENJAMIN: Guess whose fourth period class is gonna watch *Chicken Run* tomorrow?

[CoP members gasp in surprise]

BENJAMIN: Not mine!

[CoP members laugh]
(CoP meeting, 11-20-23)

In both instances, the PSTs demonstrated using other PSTs as a resource towards developing skills. In Gia's case, a successful endeavor in acquiring a new way to teach vocabulary. For Benjamin, a less successful effort toward getting his students to part with their cell phones. There are other interesting points revealed by examining the discourse here. In both exchanges, the relationship between speakers can easily be interpreted as friendly and helpful. In Benjamin's example, Deanna gave a sarcastic "good luck", though her tone conveyed empathy for his situation rather than making fun of him. Examples of this kind were the norm across the body of data for the CoP.

Despite Benjamin's trouble with his cell phone effort, broadly across the corpus of discourse from both transcribed CoP conversations and group text message threads there were fewer instances of talk regarding what the PSTs could not do when tracked from the beginning to the end of the research process. While conversation generally centered around honing specific teaching skills that are part of the (D1) Professional Practice dimension of teacher readiness, like vocabulary teaching (D1_6) or managing the responsible use of classroom technology (D1_8) in the examples above, later discursive markers of improved abilities took the form of increased instances of expressions related to being able to execute several teaching skills successfully. Benjamin and Zoey's quotes in the previous section broadly claiming that they were nervous but ready to teach are good examples of this pattern emerging in the winter months. By spring, when the students had been fully teaching their classes every day for several weeks, their confidence in

their teaching abilities had evolved even more significantly. “I have no questions, no complaints. That is a good feeling,” Samaria noted on her last day with the CoP (CoP meeting, 3-5-24). Robert started the final meeting, zooming in while getting a haircut at the barbershop no less, with a jovial “No need to complain today, we got this down now!” (CoP meeting, 3-12-24). The apparent collective mastery over (D1) Professional Practice for all CoP members before the conclusion of their teacher preparation program is a significant indicator of readiness to teach.

In examining the full body of discourse for outliers related to PSTs’ developing sense of readiness as it related to their teaching skills abilities, it was difficult to find examples of outliers or unusual cases. In fact, the only instance of someone speaking negatively regarding the skills or abilities of others came from a one-on-one conversation with Kaitlin, who noted that she was aware of a lack of readiness in some PSTs who had not joined the CoP. Even then, the remarks were not particularly disparaging, and were mostly relayed in the form of an anecdote about a challenging group project for a course years prior.

4.3.2 Readiness Through Developing Expertise

One of the other clear ways in which participant co-researchers demonstrated their increased sense of readiness to teach, this time particularly through CAR work, was by demonstrating gradually increasing confidence in their own ‘expertise’ gained through research. By being the driving force behind the CAR study, the participant co-researchers became the generators and holders of particular knowledge. Evidence of this developing expertise first emerged as the participant co-researchers were conducting and analyzing the initial batch of MT interviews. In the example below, we can see an early instance of this. Zoey was sharing her screen and scrolling through her transcribed interview. Chris had crafted some of the initial

interview questions and Zoey had conducted one of the first interviews, and during CoP time the two were reflecting on the results and discussing the possibility of rephrasing some questions.

> ZOEY: So this question, 'What do you do with your down-time?' I think needs to be reworked a little.
>
> CHRIS: How so?
>
> ZOEY: Well, my mentor said that she reads the newspaper.
>
> CHRIS: To chill?
>
> [Benjamin laughs]
>
> ZOEY: I dunno, maybe. She does have like a journalism background, but I think maybe, like, we want to ask this a different way next time 'cuz like the older generation might interpret 'down-time' as something different to what you were asking.
> CHRIS: I get you. So we change it to…?
>
> ZOEY: Maybe something like 'What practices do you engage in for self-care?' would get to our point and sound professional.
> (CoP meeting, 11-20-23)

In this example, we can see Zoey's emerging expertise as a researcher. She is analyzing and reflecting upon collected data, part of the action research cycle, without direct prompting to do so from me or from another TE. She positions herself as an expert in her MT's background over the other CoP members, as she is the only one in direct contact with her MT. She then further positions herself as a 'knower' by thinking through the way her interview subject may have interpreted the original question, then by crafting an alternate question using language more targeted to her intended audience. In this example, her use of phrases like 'different to what you were asking' reveals an awareness of both the data the original question intended to gather and an awareness that the original question had not been successful. Her use of 'get to our point' and 'sound professional' show a level of confidence that her re-worked question will likely be more

successful. Notable is that she is not putting down or devaluing Chris's contributions here, just suggesting an improvement. This is a pattern that continued as the participant co-researchers expanded the audience for their research.

In early January 2024, all PSTs returned to the university for some supplementary program-wide meetings to discuss spring benchmarks and complete some ongoing coursework before returning to their internship placements. During this time, members of the CoP were asked to share their initial research with members of their cohort. This request was voluntary and intended to provide a peer example of research for other PSTs, as students conducting the individual action research projects had not yet begun data collection. As this was not a meeting of the CoP, I was not present and do not have a recording of the interactions. I do, however, have a few journal entries from CoP members related to these sharing activities. Though not one of the Core Four, Samaira was a frequent journaler, who submitted some writing regarding the experience. She wrote:

> I let [PST X] read through my interviews. She said she was so impressed! She may not have been so if she had known how long I listened to my recording over and over again, trying to get the words exactly right. [PST X] said her research plan will be to count the students who are late in her first period class every day for a week and ask if they take the school bus, walk, or are dropped off by a parent at school. I am not sure this research is quite so useful as ours. (Samaira Kang, Journal entry, 1-13-24)

Here, we see Samaira's pride in her transcription efforts, as well as pride in the potential value of the data she and the CoP have gathered. At this stage in the research process, the CoP was still planning on delivering a professional development to school-site teachers sharing tips and resources related to establishing and maintaining a healthy work-life balance as an in-service

teacher. Samaira positioned this knowledge as being 'useful', or at least slightly more useful than her PST colleague's plan to share modes of transportation for late students. This overall opinion that the research their fellow PSTs were conducting may not be as rigorous as the CoP's continued all the way to the end of the CAR project. In both Samaira's journal example and Chris and Zoey's exchange about fine-tuning interview questions, there are markers of sub-dimensions of readiness to teach such as identifying your own learning needs (D3_1), establishing a plan to address your identified learning needs (D3_2), and developing/perfecting your own learning strategies (D3_3). While still novices, Zoey and Samaira are both moving themselves out of the student 'learner' position and into the teacher 'knower' position. This is a strong indicator of their personal emerging sense of readiness to teach because the PSTs are expressing taking on a teacher identity.

There was also evidence of emerging expertise in dialogue surrounding the poster creation process. While working on their posters, Kaitlin and Zoey discussed the aesthetics and content of their cohort-mates' posters compared to their own.

ZOEY: Did you guys see [PST Y]'s poster yesterday? I mean, like, it's so pretty.

KAITLIN: Yeah, I did.

ZOEY: (looking at her own poster) Should I add more color [to this drawing]?

KAITLIN: If you want to add color, you should add color, but don't do it just because of [PST Y]'s poster.

MEL: It's not an art contest.

KAITLIN: There's nothing in the rubric that says it has to be pretty.

[Zoey looks at her poster uncertainly.]

KAITLIN: Not to be rude or anything but [PST Y] only made hers look so nice because

she didn't have anything to say. Dr. Maxwell knows you did the work, and what you have already looks great.

(Small group poster-making session, 3-6-24)

In this exchange, we see Kaitlin demonstrating confidence in both her and Zoey's work being of stronger substance, and therefore of a higher level of expertise, than a particular colleague. Kaitlin not only affirms the value of the work she has done, but affirms the value of the work Zoey and the rest of the CoP have done. This growth in confidence in their shared expertise gained through research is directly aligned with growth in the sub-dimension of teacher readiness that focuses on collaborating with others towards the improvement of classroom and school conditions (D3_12). This area is not only one of the indicators of readiness to teach, and also an indicator of fruitful CAR work (as they have C-collaborated, A-taken action by sharing their knowledge with colleagues, and R-researched), but it is also an indicator of work towards the ESD (education for sustainable development) standards themselves – the foundational UNESCO initiative upon which the readiness instrument is built. The ESD standards encourage teachers to prioritize "real life skills" like collaborative problem solving, communication, and sharing knowledge with others when working with their students. Through their leveraging of these skills to collaboratively research and effectively educate their peers on a "real life issue" (establishing a healthy work-life balance for novice teachers), I argue that the PSTs are illustrating their readiness to teach by demonstrating their ability to model these skills for their students (D2_1).

A final type of growth through expertise emerging from the data was related to the participant co-researchers being able to share new knowledge with their mentors. While plans to deliver the professional development were ultimately abandoned, we still see evidence of this kind of expertise in other ways. Benjamin, for example, was hospitalized for a short period of

time and thus away from his school. Upon returning, he noticed a difference in the ways the classes of his two different MTs greeted him.

> BENJAMIN: I have an anecdote that really applies. So, I've been out for a while because of the, because I've been sick. And I got back last Friday. So, my first two periods, I'm with one mentor. The rest of the day I'm with another one. With my first mentor, none of these students were like, “Hey, Mr. Everett, you're back, are you okay?” Or anything like that. And this teacher runs it with, like, an iron fist. Don't smile until third quarter kind of thing. Like, none of the students asked me, like, you know, if I was okay, how I was doing, what happened, any of that kind of thing. But then with my other teacher, who is much more subtle, I guess, about his classroom management style, I had kids in classes that I didn't even know being like, “Oh, Mr. Everett, we were so worried. Are you okay? What happened?” I had legitimately one senior, just, like, actually scream when she saw me again. And I think that's interesting. And because like, he does take it from, like, the idea of, like, you know, these students are in [school], but it's also complicated because he's also a little bit old school where it's like, I can't see each student as individual, but I can understand that they have individual needs. And so, like, I told both of them, separately, after school about that. It was really interesting to tell my one mentor in kind of a way that, like, was telling him his classroom management style was creating a tough environment. And even with my second mentor where the kids were like, free to express themselves, you know, like, me coming back made them light up in a way that showed me doing my humanizing thing is going in the right direction.
> (CoP meeting, 3-12-24)

Here, Benjamin noticed that both his MTs’ classroom management styles left something to be desired in his opinion. While he had expressed previously in the semester that he noticed differences between his MTs’ classroom management styles and felt he was more aligned with one than the other, here he showed additional growth through understanding that he preferred his own third method of classroom management to either of theirs, and demonstrated specific mastery of the readiness sub-domain of classroom management with a focus on helping students regulate their own behaviors and emotions (D2_9). He framed students’ positive reactions to his return as affirmation that his use of humanizing pedagogies is worthwhile. Further, he showed

strong confidence in his own choice to utilize those pedagogies rather than only mirror the practices of his mentors when in their classrooms (D1_1: choosing instructional strategies and D1_7: knowing your students' learning styles). Lastly, Benjamin's move to share his observations regarding their students' emotional engagement in each classroom space and to express the ways he would prefer to honor students' emotional wellbeing as a co-teacher in those spaces with each of his mentors demonstrated a strong confidence in his choices. Doing so positioned him as an equal, capable of making his own pedagogical choices and providing his mentors with feedback toward improving their own practices. This is another strong indicator of growth in readiness to teach, as D3_6 is an indicator of seeking out feedback from colleagues. While there is not a specific metric in the instrument in providing feedback *to* colleagues, I am making an assumption that a reciprocal relationship of both giving and receiving feedback with fellow teachers would be a desired outcome. Further, both his MTs' willingness to listen and to receive feedback from their PST intern indicates a level of respect Benjamin had earned from them, demonstrating their positioning of him as someone worth listening to and learning from. This shows a readiness to teach that not only meets the metric of the instrument, but potentially exceeds it.

4.3.3 Readiness Through Positive Future Thinking

As the semester progressed, one pattern that emerged broadly across the body of dialogue over time was the increase of positive, future-oriented phrasing and a decrease of negative, fallback-oriented thinking. One such marker of this was the phrase "if we pass" evolving into the phrase "when we pass"/"we will pass", or slight variations with the same intent. This phrase was frequently used and not tied to a specific instance of passing, but was expressed more often at the multitude of benchmarks the PSTs achieved during our time together: passing the next exam,

passing the next course, passing the next portfolio review, passing the next standardized assessment, passing the program as a whole. Participants were recorded using phrases akin to "if we pass" a total of 14 times within the first two months (from the end of September to the beginning of November) of CoP work, which were aligned with the first two months of student teaching, across their journal entries, text messages, and CoP meeting conversations. Phrases of this kind were only used 3 times throughout the third month (November), and had faded out of use from the fourth month through the end of the project (December through March). Similarly, uses of the "when we pass"/"we will pass" variant were only counted twice in the first month, five times in the second month, and then an average of seven times per month every month through the rest of the project. By the conclusion of the project, the phrase was used four times within the last meeting had almost become a mantra for the participant co-researchers to affirm that they would indeed complete their teacher preparation program and pass their courses and standardized exams. One of the particularly amusing variants that became frequently repeated was "we will pass like a kidney stone, but we will pass", humorously alluding to both the challenging nature of their circumstances and their certainty that they would nonetheless succeed.

An aligned version of this kind of phrase was "if I am a teacher" becoming "when I am a teacher", which was used less frequently across the body of discourse than the 'passing' variant but shows more direct alignment to readiness to teach. In fact, the participants had largely dropped their use of 'if' or 'when' variants and began generally referring to themselves as 'teachers' by March. By this time, the students had participated in several weeks of being the primary classroom teacher and had essentially dropped the verbal marker of 'becoming' a teacher. This indicates that the PSTs were, at least internally, framing themselves as having

already become a teacher. This is perhaps the most obvious indication of their own sense of readiness to teach independent of the instrument. Broadly speaking, the verbal shift from 'being a teacher someday soon' to 'being a teacher currently' is a strong indicator of their expressions of their sense of readiness to teach.

There were several significant outliers to this pattern. When discussions related to job applications or interviews arose, which were particularly frequent in text messaging threads following the conclusion of the CAR project in March but before the end of the school year, the PSTs reverted to 'if' style statements relating to their ability to acquire a job placement. As most new teachers are not hired until the summer, these lingering worries remained present in the dialogue throughout the tail end of the study in April and persisted in our ongoing casual conversations that extended into May and beyond. This extends outside the boundaries of this dissertation research, but is worth noting for the sake of indicating variants in the discourse.

Another irregularity in pattern was the emergence of 'confident failure' statements, for example "I'm gonna fail this class for sure, y'all" (Zoey Ai, CoP meeting, 3-5-24). Statements of this kind were rare, but not absent from the body of discourse. This notably does follow the pattern of late-CoP use of 'will' rather than 'if' language to describe circumstances, but here describes failure rather than success. This could possibly be attributed to increased pressures the PST participants were facing as their graduation deadlines approached, and that scenarios in which the PSTs might have been able to repair a failure were growing more limited. Zoey was also an academically-minded rule-follower, which she noted in her personal statement in 3.1.1.3.1, and the particulars of the assignment causing her to believe she would fail that class were related to a strict interpretation of the rules. The other CoP members and I made efforts to assure Zoey things would work out, and she was convinced to speak with the professor. Though

it is not critical to the data, I will include here that Zoey did not in fact fail the class she was referring to with this statement. Her struggles here do show a weakness in the sub-dimension of readiness to teach related to adapting to changes in situations (D4_6). In Zoey's specific situation, she experienced a significant struggle to adapt to a change in an assignment. She initially viewed the requirements as inflexible, but the rest of the CoP members were able to talk her through the situation and convince her otherwise. The ability of the CoP to talk her through the situation does speak to the value of the group environment overall.

4.3.4 Readiness Through Questioning

The final emergent dialogic pattern that revealed participants' readiness to teach was visible in the way patterns of asking questions of one another changed over time. Questions evolved from "How do I do this [basic teaching skill]" into "How can I handle this [fine teaching skill]". Zoey was a particularly strong example of this pattern, as she frequently asked questions to the whole group during sharing time.

Early in the school year, for example, she asked:

> ZOEY: So, like, I have a question about like, classroom management stuff, yeah? Is there, like, a right or wrong way to do it or is it really just like a go-with-the-flow thing you have to figure out for yourself?
> (CoP meeting, 10-10-23)

This is an example of a more basic, broad question that is asking for direction on an aspect of teaching with many components and considerations. In contrast, in a later session she asked:

> ZOEY: I'm wary of ChatGPT. I think it's like the new thing that people are like, "Oh, this is going to be big, it's going to put us out of business." Things are just going to use catch up. Like, you know, I mean, like my mom used to think it's too much of a shortcut to use Purdue OWL [online writing lab], but it has perfectly good templates for cover letters, and I don't I frankly don't trust the algorithm. What are your guys's stances on AI with papers?
> (CoP meeting, 3-12-24)

These examples are two from a consistent pattern in Zoey's questioning over time. She demonstrated not only her increased fine-tuning of teacher knowledge, but also reflected the increased fine-tuning of knowledge across the CoP as she acknowledged her colleagues as potential answerers of those questions and thus holders of that fine-tuned knowledge. Other examples of Zoey's fine-tuned questions included asking the group how they would provide supports to a multilingual student who struggled to communicate to the cafeteria staff that they have a food allergy, how they would go about scheduling a critically important meeting with a special education teacher whose day is often completely booked while still remaining respectful of her time, and how they would approach a conversation with a student who was likely spreading rumors after overhearing a private disciplinary conversation between her MT and another student in the hallway during class time. This increased awareness of specific societal and social issues that Zoey brought to the CoP for discussion was a sign not only of the CoP's evolving confidence in their skills and knowledge, but an evolving awareness of ethical education concerns. Being able to converse about these high-level issues was a strong indicator of readiness to teach and is aligned with multiple sub-dimensions across the readiness instrument, including contributing to students' safety at school (D2_10) and creating a well-being atmosphere (D4_1), selecting appropriate information and resources in order to develop professionally (D3_4) and continuously improving yourself (D3_5) as well as asking for feedback from colleagues (D3_6), and showing flexibility/adaptability with changing working situations and contexts (D4_6). Zoey's questions indicate readiness because the increased specificity and complexity of her questions over time are directly linked to the two dimensions (D3: Professional Engagement and D4: Self-Management) that Manasia et al. (2020) stated to be the most difficult for PSTs to be able to find opportunities to develop competencies during their

teacher preparation programs without intervention. Her earlier questions, such as the example about classroom management given above, is more aligned with the D2: Professional Practice dimension of readiness, most specifically managing students' behavioral changes (D2_9), which is a dimension that is usually easier for PSTs to engage with during their practicum. Further, what TEs know about the nature of learning through asking questions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2015) indicates that Zoey's ability to formulate these complex questions in the first place is a demonstration that she was exploring, grappling with, and growing increasingly more comfortable with these complex issues that are deeply connected to expectations of teachers in their careers, and therefore demonstrating an increasing readiness to teach.

4.3.5 PST Reflections

At the conclusion of the study, each PST participant was asked to compose a final written reflection on the CAR process. Specifically, they were prompted to consider "the action research process and how that influenced your thinking as both a future teacher and a future researcher. How could this specific research assist you in your future career? How could your ability to conduct research assist you?" (Syllabus, Fall 2022). Their reflections provided an understanding of how each of the Core Four participants conceptualized their own readiness to teach and the influence the CoP and conducting research had on said readiness. Zoey, Benjamin, and Kaitlin[16]'s written reflections are presented in full below, and then analyzed in section 4.3.5.4. This analysis is supplemented with quotes from the participants' final debriefs.

[16] Robert elected not to complete this portion of the work.

4.3.5.1 Zoey's Reflection.

Overall, what I learned about the action research process is the importance of needing to thoroughly understand the population demographic of the schools we are working with- not just through our own observations of how the students behave, but through the insight and advice that different veteran teachers have to offer. As an MCERT student who has only been in my school's building since August 2023, I have not had a chance to observe the students' behavior before the pandemic. My mentor's advice on how she adjusted work-life balance as she advanced in her career has shaped my perception of how I will build the foundation for my own work-life balance practices going forward. She mentioned how she decreased the amount of graded work she assigned to the students if their understanding of the material was just as strong. Her question to herself of "Is what I'm doing having a payoff?" is an important one to keep in mind. This has prompted me to think about the amount of work I will assign to my students and budgeting the amount of time I will have to spend grading the work. Key pieces of advice she had for new teachers such as having an outlet outside of the classroom, since educators must emphasize individual self-care and their life outside of the classroom in order to sustain their energy while at work. Getting to synthesize the collective information of the mentor teachers' interviews in the discussion allowed me to see how other teachers corroborated this advice on having outlets.

My most important takeaways from researching with a group were the following: the importance of collaborating between other researchers as well as flexibility towards developing a long term goal. We made decisions collectively starting from the topic we were working on and throughout the process; we also decided to individually interview

> our mentors and to divide the work for the Action Research Paper outline. I found our discussions on what method of data collection to suit our topic to be meaningful, as I have never conducted in field research to this extent before. When we could not meet in person, we shifted our meetings online by communicating our preferences With my goals of potentially returning to higher education in the future in mind, I will maintain the same level of professionalism this group displayed in both independent and collaborative research setting. (Zoey Ai, Final paper, 3-22-24)

In her reflection, Zoey highlights the value of collaboration and mentions finding the research process to be a meaningful experience, all of which indicate positive growth because this demonstrates skills in (D3_10) self-reflection with the goal of self-improvement. Her first paragraph describes some of the ways in which her MT provided a model for her own emerging teacher identity. She further indicated that she enjoyed the process of synthesizing data across all the mentors, and that she had potentially learned some valuable pedagogical practices from other educators she was unable to meet in person through this experience. This is a strong indicator of the professional development-related sub-dimensions of readiness to teach, particularly by continuing to improve one's practice (D3_5) and in actively seeking out new ways to engage in that learning. She also specifically mentions professionalism, which seems particularly well-aligned with sub-dimension D3_8: respecting the ethics of the teaching profession.

There are also some indications of regression in this statement. Zoey refers to herself as "an MCERT student" in the second sentence, rather than as a PST, student teacher, or intern, and her word choice reveals that she has intentionally chosen to frame herself exclusively as a learner and not as a teacher within the context of this statement. This would normally be concerning, particularly in late March when the PSTs are serving as the primary teachers in their internship

classrooms, but could be explained by the fact that this writing was not composed specifically for this dissertation and was instead written for the AR class in which Zoey was specifically enrolled in (and thus framed as) a student.

4.3.5.2 Benjamin's Reflection.

> I think my biggest takeaway from doing this research is that this was far more challenging than I had been expecting. While I have done research in the past, this is the first time doing an interview style of research where I had to speak with someone and then allow that to guide my research. Before this I had done purely research based papers, where I found primary and secondary sources and then allowed that to guide my thinking and writing. It was fascinating getting to see multiple different perspectives through this, both through getting to talk with my mentor teacher and through getting to hear about my research partners interviews. Having that multiple perspectives really changed my way of thinking about work-life balance.
>
> To that end, I also think that this was a really important topic to research, particularly because I am such a new teacher. I had no real idea before this just how important WLB [work-life balance] really is to maintaining oneself. Burnout rates are so high among new teachers, and it is already something that I feel like I am struggling with. But doing this research, as I previously stated, had given me new insights into how to best keep that at bay. (Benjamin Everett, Final paper, 3-23-24)

Here, Benjamin noted that he was particularly concerned about teacher attrition and burnout, and that he was already starting to feel himself struggling in that regard. This is aligned with what we already know about Benjamin's personal circumstances with stress-related illness during the spring semester. Within the dimensions of readiness to teach, D4: Self-Management is

most directly aligned with work-life balance as it covers effectively managing one's own activities and teaching responsibilities (D4_2), emotions in these activities (D4_3), time allocated to these activities (D4_4), and one's self-motivation and self-discipline (D4_5). Benjamin's reflection shows that he was thinking critically about how important it is that he gain mastery over skills in this dimension. While he might not have fully developed sense of readiness to teach in this dimension at this point in time, he showed direct intent to improve those skills and to become ready. Another interesting note about Benjamin's reflection, that served as a direct counterpoint to Zoey's use of "student" language, is that defined himself in this reflection as "a new teacher". This framing is much more aligned with the rest of the discursive findings from CoP meetings around this same time period (March).

4.3.5.3 Kaitlin's Reflection.

> I really appreciated the opportunity that completing this action research project has given me. I am not normally inclined to seek out academic research and complete studies in order to find out something that I am curious about. However, this project has helped me become not only interested in, but invested in my own future work-life balance. I know and acknowledge that it is nearly impossible to have the dream WLB[work-life balance] in any job, especially as a teacher. That the moment after I submit my final paper I will be staying up late grading essays and other assignments for my students, seemingly already unable to take the advice that I only just wrote down on this very document. However, I know that it has also taught me to strive for an acceptable and realistic WLB. Maybe in the future I will be more inclined to advocate for myself when required meetings and class coverage take up a majority of my given planning periods, or I will grade an assignment on completion so that it takes 1 hour in total to grade instead of 10.

> This research project has taught me to be more involved in my own life as a teacher and advocate for myself and my students, even if it means becoming a researcher and collecting the data necessary to prove that there needs to be change made. (Kaitlin Moore, Final paper, 3-14-24)

Kaitlin shared that she did not consider herself someone who would normally seek out opportunities to conduct research, which indicated a disposition that is a counterpoint to some of the other CoP members. During the review of existing literature surrounding research with PSTs conducted for Chapter 2, multiple authors noted that PSTs who are 'forced' into conducting research when they do not have an interest or believe they have a disposition to do so often reported difficulties with the research process (see section 2.2.2.7). I also noted that Kaitlin did not reference the CoP or the collaborative process in her reflection. While the particulars of this assignment directed her to reflect on her personal experiences, this served as a point of comparison to the other two PSTs (Zoey and Benjamin) who were very focused on the ways in which collaborating with others influenced their work, and is worth comparing against Kaitlin's other remarks about collaboration for further analysis.

4.3.5.4 Analysis of the PSTs' Reflections.

The reflection statements written by Zoey, Kaitlin, and Benjamin each contribute to the notion that participating in the CAR project with the CoP did have an effect on their sense of readiness to teach. Each of them highlighted a different, but equally important, aspect of their collective growth. Zoey focused on the ways in which sharing the work with multiple partners eased the burden of participation, one of the known pillars of ESD (education for sustainable development), which emphasizes collaborative problem solving (UNESCO, 2017). Benjamin's reflection was similar, though his writing focused more on appreciating the value of multiple

perspectives in conversations and in problem-solving. Through their appreciation for the collaboration and cooperation of the CoP, Benjamin and Zoey showed growth in readiness dimensions that Manasia et al.'s (2020) discussion note as being particularly difficult to attain during teacher certification programs; D3: Professional Engagement and D4: Self-Management. Both PSTs further demonstrated that they developed stronger skills in inquiry, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving through the process of conducting the research portion of the CAR project, all of which are skills that the ESD initiatives name as being critically important for new teachers (UNESCO, 2017). Additionally, their reflections show that they gained perspective on self-care (D4_3), time management (D4_4), and an awareness of appropriate workload to promote student well-being (D4_1) as a direct result of the CAR topic of study, which are all sub-dimensions of D4: Self-Management. Skills across this dimension reflect a readiness to teach through independence and self-regulation, as in-service teachers are often the sole educator in their classroom space and need to be prepared to operate without the support of other adults. Zoey and Benjamin show signs of readiness in these areas of independence, but also demonstrate a strong collaborative alignment indicating that they are prepared and willing to work with colleagues in their future jobs and to ask for help when needed, which is critically important for novice teachers to be able to do (e.g., Hertzog, 2002).

Kaitlin's reflection, though different from Zoey and Benjamin's, also reflects important growth. Kaitlin's reflection is representative of a PST who was reluctant to conduct research in the first place and who continues to see inquiry as one of the less valuable teaching skills, but acknowledges that she has strengthened it nonetheless. She pointed out that she was grateful for the ability to conduct classroom-based inquiry in the future. She specifically noted that classroom inquiry might be needed in order to create classroom or school-wide policy changes,

revealing her motivation to remain an advocate for students and for equitable school practices. This is most aligned with the sub-dimension of readiness to teach D3_12, getting involved with the school and the community in order to make improvements. She also noted that her particular personality is unlikely to adopt many of the work-life balance practices she gained knowledge of during the action research process, yet her descriptions of those practices against her expected classroom practices demonstrate that she has a clear understanding of teaching expectations, showing strong readiness in the dimension of teacher professionalism. For example, she noted that even as a PST she planned to follow up the writing of her reflection with "*staying up late grading essays and other assignments for my students*" which demonstrates strong skills in D2_14, providing timely feedback for students. She does also show potential for future growth by noting that, perhaps someday, she might work to reduce her after-hours grading, which would help her grow in D4_4, effectively managing time allocated to teaching responsibilities.

4.4 Conclusions of Readiness Findings

The body of data from 49 collected data sources (10 CoP transcripts, 17 supplemental CoP text conversations, 4 pre- and 4 post-survey results, 3 CAR poster presentations, 4 CAR research papers, and 7 optional journaling entries) seems to indicate that some level of growth was achieved across some dimensions of teacher readiness due in part to conducting CAR and/or participating in the CoP. Broadly speaking, the collective readiness experience for the PST CoP members throughout our time together could be described as:

- solidifying their confidence in what they already knew and collaboratively affirming each other's' expertise in (D1) Professional Knowledge,
- sharing teaching strategies and developing their own personal pedagogical stance in (D2) Professional Practice,

- collaboratively experiencing some of the ways in which teachers can work with each other to and with members of their community to learn and to benefit the school in (D3) Professional Engagement, and
- becoming aware of the importance of practices that help teachers work independently while protecting their socio-emotional wellbeing in (D4) Self-Management.

Sub-dimensions of other practices also arose both during the CoP meetings and outside of CoP meetings while the PSTs were conducting research. Particularly, the sub-dimensions of (D3_5) continuously improving yourself, (D3_6) asking for feedback from colleagues, and (D3_8) respecting ethics and principles of the teaching profession, (D4_1) creating a well-being atmosphere, and (D4_6) showing flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes arose across multiple members of the CoP in more than one way, indicating that the CAR project and/or participating in the CoP had a more direct effect on the PSTs' growth in those sub-dimensions of readiness to teach.

After the data had been fully analyzed, the Core Four were asked to review portions of that data that applied to them for member checks and asked to confirm their stances on several assertions I made throughout the analysis. In particular, the PSTs were asked about how they felt their involvement with the CoP and doing CAR had each contributed to their overall sense of readiness to teach.

4.4.1 Benjamin

Benjamin confirmed that he felt participation in the CoP in particular had a strong influence on his sense of readiness to teach, but we also agreed that he had the most help and support from other CoP members in completing the program since he was hospitalized towards the end of the semester and relied on CoP members and CoP resources to keep him informed

during his absence and assist in his makeup work. During our debrief interview, when I asked him if he had any advice for future PSTs who might participate in a similar project, he jokingly responded, “I mean, I think the only thing I really have is, you know, don't get a bleeding ulcer halfway through the program. and then get Covid immediately after” (Benjamin Everett, Final debrief, 4-20-24). He later followed that up with a slightly more serious explanation:

> I think it allowed me to be a little bit less worried, because I didn't feel like all of it was on my shoulders, so I felt like I could be like, ‘Okay, I can't do anything today …but the workload is being spread out, so I don't have to worry quite as much’ about like everyone, I, I mean, it was again, I think comes back to this idea that like, I already trusted the group and like we had Zoey in the group who is very, like, on the ball and Kaitlin, who is on the ball, and Rob, who is on the ball, like, they're all on the ball. So even if, like, you know, I got sick and stuff, so I didn't feel like I wasn't necessarily panicking about like, you know, ‘oh, I'm not going to be able to get this done’. My fear was more just like, ‘oh, I'm going to be letting the group down’. But at least my part in it is small enough that, like, it's not that the entire thing won't fall apart because I got sick. (Benjamin Everett, Final debrief, 4-20-24)

Benjamin’s story draws out an important point about the CoP’s role in developing a sense of readiness to teach that is very specifically aligned with ESD (education for sustainable development) initiatives. Within ESD the ability to collaborate is not just a positive life skill, it is a core competency that is necessary for teachers and students. When tackling the ‘real life’ problems that the ESD initiatives aims to prepare teachers and their students to address (e.g. climate change, poverty, equity in human rights), it is somewhat unrealistic to assume that everyone’s contribution will be perfectly equal and that nothing will go wrong. Benjamin’s

illness was unfortunate and unforeseen, and while each CoP member planned to accomplish equal work, we instead agreed as a collective to problem-solve and redistribute work in a way that equitably addressed the changing circumstances. While situations like this are difficult (and potentially unethical) to manufacture, the hope is that PSTs with this kind of collaborative problem-solving experience will go on to encourage their future students to engage in this kind of collaborative problem-solving as they complete future assignments and then grow to become adults capable of collaborating on the issues that could help sustain our world.

In addition to his membership in the CoP providing practical support by dividing work in an equitable way that actually allowed him to graduate on time, Benjamin also experienced growth in his readiness to teach through the dialogic benefits of engaging in CAR with the CoP. Benjamin expressed confidence in his own teaching abilities throughout the CAR process, but frequently mentioned that his learning curve was rooted in both a lack of academic vocabulary to be able to describe what he was doing and in practical experiences to rehearse what he already knew he was capable of. For Benjamin, the CoP and CAR work most directly benefited his personal growth by generating opportunities for him to talk. “I think it helped me sort of like talk with people more, not just even in our group, but just like in general” (Benjamin Everett, Final debrief, 4-20-24). In addition to the practical support that the CoP provided him, Benjamin noted that the CoP members were a source of emotional support that he might not have sought out otherwise. He expressed that, in other spaces that the teacher preparation program provided for PSTs to be in community with one another, he often felt unwelcome or uncomfortable with speaking. Most specifically, he described that he often struggled to give direct answers to questions in class, preferring to talk through problems. This is aligned with what I observed in CoP meetings, as transcribing Benjamin’s contributions often resulted in paragraphs rather than

single sentences. Further, he noted that having the dedicated space for conversations but without rigidly pre-determined topics of conversation allowed him to grow his own confidence in teaching skills, and that those conversations likely would not have happened at all without an organic space for them to take place in – meaning that he did not think it would be possible to specifically set aside structured time within a teacher preparation program to "talk shop" among students and achieve the same results. During CoP meetings, Benjamin was constantly talking through his own knowledge about teaching, trying to answer questions being posed by other CoP members and trying to connect the dots with his own experiences and learning in the most practical application on inquiry-based learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2015). I asked him in particular to reflect on a moment from our first CoP meeting in which he mentioned that he was self-conscious about ranking himself highly in some sub-dimensions on the pre-survey because he knew a lot of teaching strategies but struggled to remember their official names. In readdressing this moment, he asserted that the organic nature of both the questions that came up and his answers throughout the CoP's time together allowed him to become less self-conscious about this, and though he still struggles with some strategy names he places much higher value on his ability to execute those strategies and adapt to students' needs. I argue that all this could be reconceptualized as Benjamin's ongoing expressions of his own sense of readiness to teach throughout the CoP's time together. This shift in confidence and willingness to talk about teaching practice with other PSTs (and with me as a TE) is a significant emotional change from where he started in September. Further, his assertion that he was confident in his teaching practice despite not remembering specific strategy names could be viewed as a self-expression of his personal readiness to teach as he both positions himself as a teacher and describes the ways in which he is currently teaching his students. This is aligned with measurable growth on the

Manasia et al. (2020) instrument in the dimensions of (D1) Professional Knowledge and (D2) Professional Practice.

4.4.2 Zoey

Zoey also confirmed that our work contributed to her growth, feeling that the CAR work was particularly influential to her. We also agreed that, of the CoP members, she was the most likely to come early and stay late throughout the CAR process, often asking extra questions to confirm that she was "doing it right." She expressed personal feelings of anxiety and perfectionism throughout the processes, but that the small size of the CoP offered consistent personalized check-ins throughout the year that her larger program was not able to offer, and that this ultimately led to reduced feelings of anxiety around the program. She said:

> I'll think about something that went wrong, and when we started I might freak out but, like, now I just gotta reformat this and maybe ask a question like that and then, like, move on with my life because I—I think since this internship made us take on so many things, I'm just like 'did I just drop the ball here?' and if you did, let's, like, talk about it, like, 'no I don't think you actually dropped the ball. I think you just, like, trick your brain into thinking you dropped the ball and you feel better.' Being in this group helps us troubleshoot and feel better. (Zoey Ai, Final debrief, 3-15-24)

Zoey further noted that she felt like the CAR project had specific benefits towards her readiness, as it allowed her to engage in experiences she might not have been motivated to (or intentionally set aside the time to) engage in on her own during the program time. Most specifically, she noted during her debrief interview that she enjoyed conducting research with a team because "having more brains means having more options" and that collaborating allowed the team to conduct a research project that was for more comprehensive, and thus more

interesting, than the ones she observed her classmates doing solo research produce. She further noted that the CAR study motivated her to engage in inquiry-based dialogue with her MT and other in-service teachers at her school, conversations she might not have otherwise engaged in. She recognized that "this process got me used to the idea of picking my colleagues' brains" and that, especially as an early-career teacher, she would want to be comfortable asking colleagues for help or to know how to conduct basic teacher inquiry to solve classroom-based problems she identified. "I think in that sense, research is helpful in its own way, even if it's not, APA cited paper that I'm going to turn into my professor" (Zoey Ai, Final debrief, 3-15-24). Zoey's most significant areas of growth in her developing sense of readiness to teach were most apparent in her personal journey with perfectionism, and developing more confidence with the improvisational nature of teaching. As one of my teacher role models, the fictional Ms. Frizzle (from *The Magic School Bus* series) would say, she worked on her skills in "taking chances, making mistakes, and getting messy." Zoey's growing confidence in her own content knowledge and practice would have likely emerged naturally without the CoP or CAR work, but findings related to Zoey indicate that the collaborative process likely solidified those dimensions of readiness for her more quickly than had she been alone due to her proclivity towards asking for feedback. In what is perhaps the most indicative of her personality, Zoey concluded our debrief by asking me to give her some feedback as a study participant. I told her that it was a pleasure to have her as a member of the team.

4.4.3 Robert

Robert was unsure of whether or not the CoP or CAR work influenced his readiness, as he'd hoped to do more intense research and writing, and he also ultimately struggled with the program and was the only PST that did not receive a full passing grade across some of his work

in the program and he ultimately needed to defer graduation until he could participate in a one-credit directed study that would assist him in completing his program requirements in the Fall semester of 2024. I remained in contact with Robert throughout this process and provided support where I could, though this was fully outside the scope of this study and I did this to support him as a human, not as a participant. While these circumstances are not specifically a part of our study, it is undeniable that these events colored the tone of our final debrief, as he was aware of the situation by the time his debrief was conducted. He did not mention anything about his circumstances during the debrief or in any of the CoP meetings (I do not believe he was aware during any CoP meetings), but when asked about what he would improve he remarked that he would have preferred more direct support or involvement from other TEs. "I felt like the way we did it was better than what our classmates had to go through alone, I thought working collaborative[ly] with a group not only helped us practice researching together collaboratively, but we also learned how to communicate with each other and learn[ed] how to keep up with our tasks responsibly," then added, "I could wish we had more support from our action research teacher on it. And maybe more involvement from her and maybe a little more feedback maybe because she could have even chimed in on one of our meetings as well" (Robert Martinez, Final debrief, 3-16-24). Robert's growth was deeply rooted in collaboration with others. He was one of the first to join the study and came on with a number of potential ideas for research topics. In an (unfortunately unrecorded, as it was during the recruitment process and prior to signing consent forms) conversation, Robert asked if he might be permitted to conduct his own research study if other members of the CoP chose a CAR topic that he did not find interesting. In examining Robert's survey results, which reported the same readiness score despite differing individual answers across categories, Robert rated himself lower in readiness for certain tasks related to

basic teaching skills but higher in collaborative skills, with some of the most significant differences reflected in Table 15.

Table 15

Summary of Significant Changes in Robert's Readiness Scores

Sub-dimensions with a score decrease from pre- to post-survey		Sub-dimensions with a score increase from pre- to post-survey	
D1_9	Understanding the relationship between student age and the learning process	D2_6	Using effective communication techniques
D2_1	Setting ESD learning goals	D2_13	Building different assessment tools for learning outcomes
D2_14	Providing adequate and timely feedback to students	D3_2	Establishing a professional development plan
		D4_5	Self-motivating and self-discipline

This is aligned with the discursive data, which shows him remarking in his debrief that he learned to 'practice researching collaboratively' and that he recognized this as being a better experience than the ones had by his classmates who worked alone. This shows readiness growth in the [collaborative domain] from his initial stance of wanting to potentially work alone. While I do not have the data to support analysis regarding his current circumstances, one possible explanation for the reduced survey scores in domains of preparedness to (D2_14) and (D2_1) could be his perceived lack of support from additional TEs that he expressed in his debrief.

4.4.4 Kaitlin

Kaitlin is an intriguing outlier, in that she stated directly in her debrief interview that she did not think that the CoP or CAR study had a significant or noticeable effect on her readiness to

teach, saying “I kind of feel like if this whole research project wasn't a thing, I don't think I would feel too differently just because I think a big impact on, like, feeling prepared for the next year is just the internship itself” (Kaitlin Moore, Final debrief, 4-9-24). She did, however, demonstrate growth in her survey results, showing particular growth in sub-dimension (D1_9), understanding the relationship between student age and the learning process. The survey also reflected growth in (D1_4) organizing content sequences, (D1_7) understanding learning styles, (D1_8) effectively using learning technology, (D2_12) applying different strategies for evaluation, and (D2_16) communicating results of assessments in a way that encourages learning. This growth is situated in (D1) Professional Knowledge and (D2) Professional Practice, dimensions of readiness to teach that Manasia et al. (2020) identify as domains that are generally grown through experiences in pedagogy courses and the student teaching internship, though an argument could be made that Kaitlin gained skill in (D2_12) evaluation strategies through her heavy focus on grading workloads for ELA teachers during the CAR project.

There are also markers that show that she grew in her own way embedded in her discourse, though perhaps less overt than her colleagues. I would argue that Kaitlin did recognize the value of the CoP/CAR project with additional remarks made at other points in her debrief, such as when she said that:

> Teaching is collaborative. So, it would make sense that we would do our group, like, our research project collaboratively. I also feel like it took some of the stress off because I could ask people questions. Other people were working on stuff and I, like, I don't know, there were people to talk to.

Or when she noted that:

> I've used our research as examples for my students when they were doing persuasive research projects. I was like, 'Yeah, like, here's a good way that you can research things and how you might be impacting your knowledge, your life later on.' I also think that, like, going through the research project, like, helped me understand my role in the classroom and maybe my role with my students a bit more. (Kaitlin Moore, Final debrief, 4-9-24)

The first example shows her acknowledgment that the collaborative aspects of our research were beneficial to her teaching practice, which connects to the readiness sub-dimension (D3_6) regarding collaboration. Her second remark shows that our CAR project work was also useful as a classroom example for her current students, and further indicates her acknowledgement of research as a useful life skill. The most aligned sub-dimensions for readiness to teach are (D2_4) applying different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills and (D3_5) continuously improving yourself to benefit student learning. I further argue that the fact that Kaitlin was able to use aspects of our CAR project as a model for her class demonstrates growth beyond readiness to teach. Her use of the skills learned during the CAR project with the CoP as a model for her classroom where she was positioned as the teacher is possibly the closest this study is able to get in examining whether the participants used the skills learned during their experiences with the CoP as novice teachers. Here, Kaitlin is not just *ready to teach*, but *actively teaching*.

Kaitlin stated during her debrief that though she enjoyed our work together, she did not think it contributed nearly as much to her sense of readiness to teach as the internship did. She echoed a sentiment she had expressed in her reflection, repeating that the specific topic of work-life balance research could possibly lead her to having a more balanced life as a teacher. She added that work-life balance is something she would not have otherwise been prepared for, but

that also as a self-identified workaholic she was likely to find herself having poor work-life balance anyhow. It is worth noting that she shared this remark with a joking tone, though she did indeed demonstrate throughout her time with the CoP that she was more aligned with hard work than with self-care, through comments like “I'm probably going to overwork myself. But because that's who I am” (Final debrief, 4-9-24) or “it's a great idea that some people refuse to take work home grading wise, or only take home a certain amount, but I know I can’t rest until it’s done” (CoP meeting, 1-18-24). It is possible that some of her statements describing the CAR project as being less impactful than she had thought can be attributed to frustrations related to the assignments themselves. In her debrief, she remarked:

> For those presentations that we do at the end, you were actually, like, doing a presentation on your research because it felt very like, I don't know, it almost felt like unfinished, maybe like do a paper and it doesn't have to be like a gigantic big paper, but a presentation just because, like, I feel like our research should be useful for everyone in the program and we should be able to tell them about it, the way that the projects are currently done, it seems like an afterthought and I would like it to be more impactful.

A possible explanation for Kaitlin’s remarks that downplay her perceived growth in readiness to teach due to the CoP/CAR project are aligned with her perception that other PSTs in her program and other TEs aligned with the program did not place enough value on the findings of the CAR project.

4.4.5 The Core Four

Overall, the Core Four members of the CoP and my critical friend agreed with my assessment that the CoP did have a positive impact on the collective sense of readiness to teach, in particular for areas related to (D3) Professional Engagement, particularly (D3_5) engaging in

continuous self-improvement, (D3_6) asking for feedback, (D3_10) reflecting on practices, and (D3_12) getting involved with the community. We took time to examine the transcripts for edge cases that might presented counterpoints to any conclusions drawn from the analysis of the discourse and to ensure that they were addressed in reporting the data, which are particularly important steps in DP (discursive psychology) methods (Wiggins & Potter, 2007). We re-assessed situations that may have reduced the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach, most of which were reported within the sections above such as Zoey's description of herself as a "student" in her reflection writing or the overall decrease in language markers indicating confidence in February and March specifically when discussion possible future teaching jobs. One of the interesting edge cases I observed in the data that is not yet reported elsewhere was the singular instance of discussing sub-dimension of readiness regarding school safety (D2_10) within the CoP. In re-examining the transcripts with my critical friend, we agreed that it was appropriate to mark one particularly dramatic day in which one PST co-researcher was released from their school site early due to a (thankfully false) bomb threat and another witness a fight, and during CoP meeting time we discussed their comfort with de-escalating tense situations in their classrooms. On most other days, conversations in a similar vein were more oriented towards classroom management (D2_8/9) and were thus labeled as such in the final analysis of the data. The PSTs often discussed wanting their students to feel safe in their classroom, so it was important to re-analyze the ways in which that data was coded in regards to Manasia et al.'s (2020) sub-dimensions in which growth in readiness to teach was reported.

Without data from a control group or multiple groups experiencing the teacher preparation program without the CoP, without CAR, or other variants of our circumstances, it is not possible to make declarations about whether conducting CAR with a CoP is "better than"

alternatives for PSTs. We can, however, conclude that these findings do indicate growth in their sense of readiness to teach, that the growth was generally positive, and that there is a strong possibility that some growth was related to the PSTs' participation in the CoP. As Kaitlin said herself in the final CoP meeting:

> I'm glad we did this, you know? Like, I know I would have been okay on my own, doing the research and stuff. But talking through the different parts of teaching and what we were experiencing and stuff, I dunno. It's like *now I know what I'm capable of, I just didn't realize it before.* (CoP meeting, 3-12-24)

Chapter 5: Findings – A Teacher Educator's Role in Readiness

It's a few weeks after our last CoP meeting, and I'm in the lounge of a local restaurant down the street from the university. I've offered to take the participants out for pizza to celebrate. Graduation is soon, and over the last few days our CoP group chat, which was once primarily used to schedule meeting times, is buzzing with excited announcements of edTPA scores, Praxis scores, potential job offers, jokes, memes, and general positivity. I'm sure they have other group chats, and I'm grateful that the CoP members are choosing to share their good news in the group chat that I'm also part of. They've worked so hard all year and I'm thrilled to see them so excited. Today is the last day of the semester, so they'll be coming from their last day in their practicum classrooms. Zoey arrives first, still with her school ID around her neck, excitedly telling me about an opportunity to teach abroad that she's looking into. Kaitlin is next, asking if it's okay with me that she gets fries instead of pizza because "potatoes are the perfect food". More and more of the CoP members start to arrive. We get a table, we order our food, we laugh, we take pictures. They're looking forward to graduating soon, and so am I.

The very last required course for the cohort of Secondary ELA teachers is about adapting Shakespeare for modern high schoolers. Dr. Moss is supposed to teach it, she designed it, but she's still in London on sabbatical. Dr. Schafer volunteered to teach it even though she's not a Shakespeare expert, and brought in an actress from a local theater company for an hour each week to give us some extra perspective. Tonight was the final exam, where we split into groups and performed a short, modern re-telling of a Shakespeare scene drawn out of a hat. My friends and I drew the witches from Macbeth and did a silly scene like they were on a reality TV show. Dr. Moss came for the performance, along with our family and friends. Afterwards I approached

her and told her I was interested in pursuing my Ph.D. "Good luck with that," she had said, and then turned away. Dr. Schafer took the class out for burgers. Now it's raining and I'm in the parking garage with my best grad school friend telling Dr. Schafer that I want to get my Ph.D. some day. She tells me that I'm more ready than any student she's ever had.

During the data analysis process, a question emerged regarding how my participation in the CoP may or may not have influenced the PST participants' senses of readiness to teach. This question evolved into the second research question for this dissertation:

> ***How does a TE's membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?***

As a member of the CoP myself, data representing my contributions to the group were also collected and analyzed throughout the research process. The journaling and reflecting I conducted, originally intended to serve as documentation towards study validity for my critical friend, also provided insight into this question.

Structuring this study to center a CoP was intentional, as one of the central tenets of sustainable teaching is the ability to engage in collaborative inquiry with a community (UNESCO, 2017). This study structure did not require that I, as the PI, participate in the CoP as a member. I chose to include myself in the community in order to provide a small amount of structure and guidance to the group. Additionally, during the very early planning stages of this research, departmental leadership strongly suggested that my direct involvement would lead to a higher likelihood of securing course credit. There was never an intention to assert myself as a group leader or instructor; the project design was fully PST-driven since its inception. Yet I must acknowledge that the collected data shows that my participant co-researchers did not fully

conceptualize me as a peer. In this chapter, I present the findings from the data related to my role within the CoP and what influence that role may have had on the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach.

5.1 Colleague, Mentor, Teacher, or Friend?

My specific relationship with my participants was not initially defined at the beginning of the data collection process, by my own doing or by institutional labels. I specifically elected to work with PSTs who were not my current students, advisees, or mentees. Although, as previously mentioned, more than half of the original CoP had previously taken a course I instructed, more than a full year had passed since the conclusion of that course. I had never supervised or observed any of them during their student teaching. Therefore, there was no clear institutional label that applied to our relationship.

Further, these students were all enrolled as graduate students within the College of Education. At the university of focus, there is minimal division between graduate students in the Master's program and graduate students in a doctoral program. None of us had taken a course together as students, though it would have been possible. In early conversations with the CoP, I often positioned myself as a fellow student who happened to have a little more classroom teaching and research experience. In our initial CoP meeting, I remarked "I'm not here to be in charge, so you can think of me however you want" (CoP meeting, 9-26-23). In terms of examining my second research question, however, it is far less important how I perceived myself and far more important how my PST participants perceived me.

5.1.1 The Accidental Mentor

During the course of the study, which lasted from September 2023 to May 2024, the CoP members and I formed genuine bonds, supported one another through challenges, and chatted

about things outside the confines of the CoP research project. Although the original research questions for the overarching study centered the ways in which conducting collaborative research influenced the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach, a new question emerged during the data analysis process about the ways in which engaging with a guiding figure within the CoP might influence the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach. As this guiding figure of study, I began to examine the ways I might be serving in a mentorship role to the PSTs.

Due to the absence of a consistent and agreed-upon definition for exactly what mentoring *is* and *is* not (Garvey, 2023), not only within the field of teacher education but in academic literature surrounding mentoring relationships across professional domains (Benishek et al., 2004; Crosby, 1999; Dominguez & Kochan, 2020), there are some challenges associated with declaring this a mentoring relationship. Many scholars refer to the model of mentoring described by Kram (1983) as 'traditional' mentoring. In this model, the mentor is a person with experience in a particular field, the protégé is a person entering the field, and the mentor is responsible for transmission of workplace knowledge to the protégé. Broadly, mentoring can be defined as:

> a skilled activity that essentially focuses on the holistic development of the mentee…The mentor may use their experience and engage in a learning relationship with the mentee. A mentor tends to be actively engaged in the relationship (p.13, Garvey, 2023).

By this definition, the relationship that developed between me and the PSTs qualifies as mentorship. The CoP focused on research, a skilled activity with the intention to develop the PSTs' professional knowledge. The group was actively engaged in both learning and in collaborating with each other.

Within the realm of teacher education, however, there are more nuanced expectations when it comes to a mentoring relationship with PSTs during their practicum. To determine

whether our dynamic met the expected qualities of a mentor within teacher education, I referred to a recent literature review (Ellis et al., 2020). Their work identifies seven domains of mentoring PSTs, with each domain listing multiple indicators for qualification. A list of these domains and the percentage of identifiers met or not met within this study is below as Table 16. A more comprehensive table including an explanation about why the case of focus did or did not address these identifiers can be found in Appendix F. Additional exploration of some selected identifiers with examples from the study are explored in the sections below.

Table 16

Domains of Mentorship Met

Domain	Current study	
	Percent	Number of indicators
Collaborating with the university	80%	4 out of 5 met
Developing a disposition & professional knowledge in mentoring	67%	6 out of 9 met
Establishing an effective relationship with PSTs	100%	9 out of 9 met
Modelling effective teaching & making connections between theory & practice	78%	7 out of 9 met
Providing direction & support	100%	4 out of 4 met
Using a progressive mindset & supporting PSTs to nurture a teacher-identity	100%	3 out of 3 met

With over 75% of all indicators met in any given domain besides Domain 2, in which the not-met indicators related to direct instruction of the classroom internship, this more rigidly defined label of a MT can be applied to this case.

As described in section 2.2.3, the most accurate label for the 'type' of MT I was is an *accidental mentor teacher* (AMT). This was justified because traditional MTs are classroom-based, which I was not, and are almost always co-teaching with the PSTs in their internship placements, which I was not. Further, while our CoP existed with full permission from the

department and program leaders at university, I was not appointed or placed in any formal role related to the CoP, the program, the associated courses, or anything else having to do with the PST participants. I state with confidence that, while I may have referred to myself in internal documents as a TE, I never referred to myself as a TE or MT in any of the CoP meetings, text chats, or email correspondences with PSTs. The above alignment with my situation when compared to metrics of a quality MT, the genuinely unintentional nature of my framing by CoP members as a mentor, and the alignment with literature regarding accidental mentorship (e.g., Mills et al., 2007) indicates that AMT is an appropriate label for my role within the CoP for the purposes of addressing my second research question.

5.2 Relational Interactions in the CoP

Amongst the findings for the larger study, five themes related specifically to the nature of my interpersonal relationships with PSTs that emerged in the CoP. They are: (a) "Expert" guidance; (b) Sources for information; (c) Trust and advocacy; (d) Casual and candid talk; and (e) Personal reflections towards mentorship. Findings for each theme are described below.

5.2.1 "Expert" Guidance

A major theme appearing consistently across transcripts is that PST members of the CoP deferred to, or even relied upon, me for guidance. This is particularly well-aligned with Domain 6 of Ellis et al.'s (2020) domains, providing direction and support. Statements indicating this dynamic emerged particularly around the discussion of assignments that the PSTs were expected to complete for their teacher education program. Evidence of this is particularly focused around times when the CoP was discussing our CAR project, which is reasonable as it was the main focus of the CoP's time together. The PSTs also asked for my guidance on assignments for courses other than the AR course or requested suggestions for pedagogical practices. Requests

for my input in areas related to my professional knowledge but outside my professional responsibilities as a CoP member indicated a level of trust that the PSTs had regarding the quality or value of my professional knowledge. Further, as there were known individuals who *did* serve in roles who were also accessible to those PST holding that professional knowledge, the PSTs' choice to ask me instead indicates that they perceived my professional knowledge to be as good as (or at least close to) the quality of the professional knowledge of those designated to provide it. A specific example for this is a question related to a course assignment. The PST has access to ask the professor, or the course's teaching assistant, or their program advisor with whom they meet weekly, or other students in the course for assistance. All of those individuals would have more direct access to information with which they could potentially provide a more informed answer. The PST's choice to ask me specifically then indicates that either the PST is placing higher value on my input than other possible individuals they could ask, the PST feels a stronger amount of trust/rapport with me or that asking the question will cause less embarrassment, that I am more accessible to the PST for an immediate answer, that the PST is seeking multiple forms of input and I am one of several, or any combination of those scenarios. Towards the end of the project, which was close to the PSTs' graduation, each of the Core Four CoP members and several of the partial participants also asked me for assistance with job applications and to provide letters of recommendation, which is a further indication of trust and rapport. In both of the school counties most local to our university, for which most of their job applications were submitted, only two recommendations are requested per applicant (and a maximum of five recommendations are allowed through the online application portal), indicating that I ranked somewhat highly among TEs they felt could vouch for their readiness to teach.

Linguistically, repeated use of the word "expert" when referring to my knowledge of the task at hand, or a softer variant akin to "you have more experience than we do", indicates that the PSTs positioned me as a 'knower' of information. In his concluding interview, Robert noted that "it was helpful to have you in the group since you know more about research than we do" (Robert Martinez, Final debrief, 3-16-24). This positioning is aligned with most traditional models of mentoring, in that the protégé is generally positioned as the 'learner' of professional knowledge and practices that are to be transmitted by the mentor. While this dynamic can be expected when related specifically to the task the CoP was working on, such as when I was guiding the team through the early stages of coding the data (a process that was not taught in the AR course), other findings indicated this mindset persisted outside of the specific CoP research tasks. In addition to examples mentioned above, there were 17 recorded instances across CoP meeting transcribes and associated emails/texts/chats in which phrases such as "Mel would know," "you have more experience with [X]," and "you've been in the classroom before" were coded as indicators that the PSTs viewed me as someone capable of providing professional guidance and support more broadly, but independent from a request for assistance with a specific task or concept. Broadly, findings from this theme represented Ellis et al.'s third domain of effective mentorship, establishing an effective relationship with PSTs, as well as the fifth domain, providing direction and support.

5.2.2 Sources for Information

Expanding on the previous theme of 'expert' knowledge, the PSTs were observed to specifically regard me as a source of information that could be trusted over other potential sources for the same information. One example of this occurred when Kaitlin forwarded an email from a program coordinator indicating an issue with their grades, coupled with a note expressing

her distress with the email and that she was “honestly concerned that I’m going to be starting from scratch on my whole project. If there’s anything you could clarify that would be great” (Personal correspondence, 1-30-24). Another example is Zoey asking for assistance with a paper for a course unrelated to the CoP work due to concerns about access to resources needed to complete the work. “I tried to contact the person in charge of, like, ESL at our school but she says she's part of meetings up until the next Friday, which is already two days after the deadline is due. And I don't know, y'all, I might take a zero on this assignment” (CoP Meeting, 3-12-2024). Zoey went on to ask if I had any connections to other individuals who could answer questions related to this other work. Both of these interactions support the notion that the PSTs developed feelings of trust toward me, as in the previous example, and but in these examples I found that rather than frame our relationship as one in which I was perceived as a potential ‘expert’ due to experience as a classroom teacher, university instructor, or researcher, in these situations I was being relied upon as a person who held specific, relevant ‘insider’ information or who was able to assist them in gathering specific, relevant ‘insider’ information in order to provide support for a task or concern. In Kaitlin’s example, she was requesting assistance in a situation where she felt the professor’s changes to the assignment in question were unreasonable and confusing and was not getting clarification by asking for assistance directly. She hoped that my positioning as a fellow instructor within the university who had a prior relationship with the faculty member would provide me with information that she was not privy to as a student. In Zoey’s example, she was hoping that I had connections to in-service teachers working with multilingual students who could help Zoey complete a required task and/or that I could provide support in reaching out to the colleague at her school site that was proving difficult to schedule with in order to provide extra ‘proof’ to said colleague that the task was important to Zoey’s

teacher prep program and quite time sensitive. Through these interactions, the PSTs framed me as an insider who they trusted within spaces where they were not positioning themselves as full insiders, if not positioning themselves as outright outsiders. These interactions are very closely aligned with Ellis et al.'s fifth domain, providing direction and support.

5.2.3 Trust and Advocacy

As mentioned above, the PSTs indicated a developing sense of trust in me. They trusted that I was sharing accurate knowledge, and that I was capable of finding answers to questions on their behalf. This expanded into trust that I would advocate for the PSTs in spaces with faculty members. In one instance, Kaitlin and Zoey asked if I would advocate that work they had completed outside the university would satisfy a program requirement. In another instance, Benjamin asked me to speak with faculty members on his behalf while he was hospitalized. These examples are aligned both with Domain 1 from Ellis et al., collaboration with the university, and Domain 3, developing an effective relationship.

It is worth noting, however, that the PST perceptions of my ability to advocate for them may not have been realistically aligned with the actual influence I felt I had in those situations. Some of the limitations related to the lack of a formal definition for my role within the university program structure are discussed in the next chapter, but I will remark here that there are a number of ways in which a graduate student can be made to feel as though they are not an insider when in spaces occupied primarily by full professors. This does not indicate that I misrepresented myself to the PSTs, which I was cautious to check for in my own analysis of the data and in my work with my critical friend. It does not seem unreasonable that a Master's student, particularly one who is not a graduate assistant and does not view faculty members as

coworkers, would position a PhD candidate who is a working graduate assistant with faculty members as coworkers to be more of an insider in faculty spaces.

5.2.4 Casual and Candid Talk

The linguistic markers of casual talk, such as the absence of honorifics, the use of slang or curse words, and the sharing of memes and emojis in written conversations, became increasingly present in the data set as the CoP progressed. Over time, one can observe the linguistic markers of professional talk transitioning to markers of casual or informal talk, such as Robert beginning by referring to the me as "professor" (CoP meetings, 9-26-23, 10-10-23), to Ms. Hardy (CoP meeting, 1-18-24), to Mel (Robert Martinez, final debrief, 3-16-24). Both Benjamin and Zoey frequently made the joking remark "we will pass like a kidney stone" in multiple meetings in March and April, indicating both a willingness to joke around with the whole group with me present, and also to incorporate humor related to bodily functions into conversation that would generally seem out of place if our relationship was to be defined as exclusively academic or work-based. In our group chat, Kaitlin posted a meme image of Elle Woods from the film *Legally Blonde* when Benjamin announced his Praxis scores. All of these examples demonstrate the PSTs' growing comfortability with all of the CoP members, including me and are highly indicative of Ellis et al.'s third domain regarding establishing a relationship with the PSTs.

A particular marker of candid talk was the CoP members' use of the phrase "off the record" or similar variants. Of the 10 CoP meetings, this came up in six of them. It also emerged in two of the concluding interviews. In one meeting, for example. Robert remarked that "off the record, I don't know if you guys know what has happened to our middle school, like with the past principal, but basically it's like…" (CoP meeting, 1-28-2024) and proceeded to share some

informal gossip about his school site. In another instance, Zoey used some CoP downtime to lament a difficult assignment. “I just had time to look at that darn essay this morning, and I'm just like, I was just thinking. We will report back after the 20th to see how alive and well I am after things. We will be alive and well. But like, off the record, let's see how present I am” (CoP meeting, 3-12-24). In both of these examples, the CoP members’ linguistic markers revealed that they were willing to voluntarily share information, both about themselves and about others, that expanded beyond the boundaries of ‘work talk’. This, in turn, indicates the development of a more familiar relationship between CoP members. Their specific use of the “off the record” phrasing further indicates that the speakers trusted the other CoP members not to repeat those comments to others outside of the CoP.

In one of our discussions of the data, my critical friend pointed out something I had not considered here. She noted that “while, yes, using a phrase like ‘off the record’ indicates trust, it also indicates a disclaimer” (Personal correspondence, 5-30-2024). We reflected on this point for a bit, considering the consent language in the forms all CoP members signed to participate in the study and the fact that they were aware that all meetings were being recorded and transcribed. “They might know about it,” she noted, “but they might not have it in the front of their mind when they make these statements. This might be a lot more complicated than we initially thought” (Personal correspondence, 5-30-2024). My interpretation of their use of “off the record” when experiencing these moments ‘live’ was always in situations aligned with a tone where you’d expect to hear watercooler gossip or a mildly embarrassing anecdote from a friend, and never in a tone in which I thought they were actually requesting the recording to be paused or to have their statement removed after the fact. Most of the time, these were statements like “this is off the record, but the readings for Dr. [X]’s class last night were hella boring” ([one of the CoP

members], 3-5-2024) and I interpreted this statement, both 'live' and after the fact during analysis, as something like "*I know this is being recorded/is for your dissertation but I'd like to complain about this assignment to the group as part of our regular check-in process so we can commiserate and I am trusting you not to tell Dr. [X] that I said this about them."* I've included the statement here to prove a point, but I intentionally did not include any quotes in which the PSTs complained about the program, teachers or students at their school site, or faculty members at the university in this dissertation (though I did code the data). The teacher preparation program presents many challenges for PSTs and they have plenty of reasons to be frustrated, so in many ways the CoP became a safe space to vent together and then move on and get some work done.

It is worth noting that the bulk of "off the record" remarks were made in the later meetings of the CoP. Earlier meetings, which began in September 2023, had very few instances of candid talk. This further supports the notion that the familiarity and ease with fellow CoP members grew over time. Because I was included in each of the CoP meetings, and was a participant in each of the candid conversations used as examples (and many that were not used as examples), it can be extrapolated that the PST participants developed a trusting mutual relationship with me. This is best aligned with Ellis et al.'s (2020) third domain of being an effective mentor teacher, establishing a relationship with the PSTs, and in this case most specifically with subdomain 3.1, which focuses on making time for genuine personal conversation and connection that does not directly relate to school or work. Building a rapport with myself and each member of the CoP, and each CoP member with one another, was an important factor in my planning process. The regular, agenda-free time that I introduced at the beginning of the first CoP meeting that all members agreed to carry on as the opening of each

subsequent CoP meeting allowed space and time for that rapport to develop organically through genuine conversation.

5.2.5 Personal Reflections Toward Mentorship

The final theme emerging from the data was not from transcripts of group conversations, but from my reflective journaling. I practiced reflective journaling (Evelein & Korthagen, 2014) throughout, and many of these reflections contain some evidence of the developing mentorship. One reflection, which was written after I attended a poster session in which the PSTs presented some of their work, positioned the PSTs as similar to previous proteges.

> I was so proud watching each of them present. I found myself thinking back to [a prior PST protégé] and how he never really got to finish his program because of the pandemic. They're all finishing their internships and they're going to graduate soon, and it makes me think about all the milestones they've hit this year and how many they'll hit next year, and I'm just so proud to be a part of all of that. (Reflective journal, 3-7-2024)

In another entry, I remarked that the relationship amongst CoP members shared similarities with the relationship her own master's cohort had with a faculty member. "That was something [faculty member] would do for us when I was in school. Whenever [advisor] wasn't available or [a different faculty member] would tell us not to complain, she'd make space for us to just talk and it was really nice to be heard by someone who cared. And she cared because she wanted to, not because she had to" (Reflective journal, 2-17-2024). In this writing, there is observable alignment between the perceptions of the CoP members and the previous student teachers who had interned in my previous classroom. One of the components of mentorship is that the mentor conceptualizes themselves as such and makes intentional moves to strengthen and develop the mentoring relationship. In addition to the guidance, advice, and advocacy described above,

which demonstrate actions aligned with mentorship, the evidence visible in my reflective journaling demonstrates the alignment of thoughts as well.

5.3 Mentorship and PST Readiness

So, if I am to consider myself an accidental mentor to the members of the CoP, what can we extrapolate about the influence this may have had on their collective sense of readiness to teach? The most apparent answer is in modeling best, or at least good, practices in their current and future careers. This is aligned both with literature regarding the roles of effects of accidental mentors (e.g., Levy et al., 2004; Mills et al., 2007) and with Brown and Duguid's conception of how less experienced members of a CoP might learn from more experienced members of a CoP (Brown & Duguid, 1991). I did not intentionally place myself in a role of leadership for the group, and a full review of CoP transcripts and messages by my critical friend confirmed no record of claims to teach, lead, or otherwise direct the members of the CoP toward any one particular activity or goal beyond actually doing the CAR assignment. After the initial meeting, it was often Zoey or Kaitlin who took initiative in scheduling future meetings, although Zoom meetings were held using my account for logistical purposes. This helped them develop their own sense of readiness to teach in sub-domains (D4_2/4) related to managing and scheduling activities. Yet many of the interactions presented above, as well as in the previous chapter, do indicate that the participant co-researchers valued my presence in the CoP. Turning back to the PST remarks in 3.5.2.3.3 regarding their perceptions of me related to why they joined the CoP, the PSTs used words like "trustworthy", "reliable", and "knowledgeable." This could indicate a preconceived notion of leadership status or advanced ability before our work together even began.

Following the assumption that the PSTs were viewing my behavior in the CoP as a model, I believe I enacted several instances of clear behaviors that were aligned with Manasia et al.'s (2020) descriptors of readiness to teach. It is possible that, through perceiving me as their AMT, the PSTs observed one or more of the following sub-dimensions of readiness to teach being modeled by me during the CoP's time together:

- D2_1: *Setting goals to foster Education for Sustainable Development* – I was transparent about the CoP/CAR work being developed from this initiative and modeled collaborative problem solving;
- D2_6: *Using different communication techniques to encourage collaboration/effective group work* – I modeled using a combination of in-person and Zoom meetings, speaking or using the chat during meetings, writing afterwards if students felt they had more to share, and encouraged multiple perspectives and equity of voice across conversations;
- D3_4: *Selecting appropriate information sources to develop professionally* – I frequently shared resources that I found helpful during my teaching career, I modeled how to find reliable information while answering CoP questions, and demonstrated literature review techniques during our CAR work;
- D3_6: *Asking for feedback from colleagues to improve oneself* – I frequently asked for feedback from the PSTs in order to improve my actions or CoP procedures for their benefit, and the final debrief for each member of the Core Four was largely to gather feedback for the entire study;
- D4_2/4: *Effectively manage activities/time allocated to those activities* – I took on the role of logistical planning for meetings and time management within the CoP, though I left room to share that role with other CoP members (and often did), and modeled the

ways in which I attempted to create a schedule that met all CoP members' needs and expectations;

- D4_6: *Showing flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes* – The number of CoP members, CoP members' schedules, MCERT program assignments and deadlines, and the nature of teaching in general made our work together a constantly changing landscape, and I modeled the ways I addressed those changes with as much transparency as possible throughout the CAR process.

Within the body of data, there were no identifiable instances of PSTs specifically describing an action they took that demonstrated a growing sense of readiness to teach that they verbally attributed to my influence. The possible exception is with sub-dimension D4_6. While there are no data demonstrating PSTs connecting or demonstrating growth in D4_6 (showing flexibility and adaptability) due to my involvement in the CoP, all 4 members of the Core Four mentioned that the flexibility I demonstrated while managing our work together was appreciated. In addition, 3 of the partial participants mentioned the flexible nature of the CoP as being positive during correspondence related to their departures from the study.

Aligned with examples shown throughout the previous chapter, most instances of identifiable actions related to growing readiness to teach were not verbally attributed to any one catalyst or inspiration at all. With no concrete data in the body of evidence to show that my membership in the CoP directly lead to increased readiness, the conclusions that we can draw are limited.

Chapter 6: Discussion & Implications

It's the summer, and all but one of my participants have graduated. The last one, Robert, only has to take one more course in the fall and retake the Praxis, and then he'll be done as well. The whole CoP sends him regular messages of support. I've written letters of recommendation for Zoey and Benjamin, and both of them now have jobs lined up. Zoey will be heading to Taiwan soon, and Benjamin is extremely excited about his new school. I've watched them grow over the past year not just once, but over and over and over again as I've transcribed and coded and re-read each of our conversations. It is an unusual feeling, to be so proud of people you were barely meeting one year ago and now know well enough to quote from memory. And yet, not that unusual. Every student teacher I ever mentored was the same. We'd start in August as strangers and by the end of the year I'd be cheering at their graduation like I'd known them since kindergarten. But going through difficult situations has a way of drawing folks closer together, and Masters-level teacher preparation programs are some of the more difficult situations I've had the pleasure of experiencing over and over in my life so far.

It's the winter, early COVID-19 pandemic. Last year I asked Dr. Moss again about the doctoral program, to which she responded, "I'd be your only option for an advisor, and I don't think either of us want that." I started looking elsewhere. In the year since that conversation, I've been rejected from four different doctoral programs. It hurts, but I'm not surprised. I feel like I'm not exactly sure where I'm supposed to be or what I'm supposed to be doing. Last week, I Googled universities with doctoral programs in teacher education and read about one in particular that looked promising. I reached out to the professor listed as a contact and had a Zoom call with her. That was three days ago, and now I've never been more sure in my life exactly where I want

to go and what I want to do with my life. I'm on the phone with Dr. Schafer, asking her to write me a letter of recommendation. I ask her if she thinks I'll get in. "I told you when you graduated," she says, "you're the most ready of anyone I've ever known. I think the universe just needed a little extra time to catch up to you."

There are a lot of components to this dissertation that need wrapping up. In this chapter, I will first discuss findings from the previous two chapters. Next, I consider some of the implications this work has for practical application within my own and other teacher preparation programs. While it is difficult to generalize across teacher preparation programs broadly, I will endeavor to make recommendations for how this work could be adapted in other contexts. Additionally, as I served as a CoP member and coordinated some of the organizational components of the group, I provide some reflection on the overall process and 'lessons learned' for potential facilitators in future iterations of this work. Then, I describe some of the various circumstances that created limitations for this study and conclude with some suggestions for future research that might expand upon this work.

6.1 Discussion

Below are discussions of some topics that emerged across chapters throughout this dissertation. This study now joins a body of literature about PSTs conducting AR in the field that supports Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (2009) notion that developing an inquiry stance for teachers is a valuable, lifelong skill. I will address topics from findings in context of literature and frameworks using RQs as guides.

6.1.1 Emerging Readiness to Teach from PSTs in a CoP conducting CAR

My work with the PSTs was guided throughout the process of this study by my first research question:

> ***How does PSTs' membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to their sense of readiness to teach?***

This question was formulated as I explored multiple topics of study within teacher education with aligned foci that had not yet fully intersected within a single study. Multiple studies had explored components of my study but had been missing at least one key component. For example, there are studies in which PSTs conducted AR, but not in a CoP (e.g., Bendtsen et al, 2021; Esau, 2013; Kola, 2021). There are studies on PST readiness to teach, but not while conducting AR/CAR (e.g., Haigh et al., 2013, Manasia et al, 2020, Mohamed et al. 2017). There are studies that use PST discourse to interpret their readiness to teach, but not in a CoP or while conducting AR/CAR (e.g., Anspal et al., 2012; Oreshkina & Lester, 2015; Strieker et al., 2017). There are even studies that look at PSTs conducting AR, sometimes even CAR, but only ones in which readiness was evaluated by the TE rather than the PST evaluating themselves (e.g., Arefian, 2022; Pellerin & Paukner Nogués, 2015). This study does not so much address a gap in the literature, but it does situate itself in an area of the literature where lines of inquiry have been parallel for some time yet have never quite intersected in this specific way. It does, however, help us to better understand the ways TE and designers of teacher preparation programs can leverage certain kinds of assignments and certain kinds of collaborative groupings of PSTs in order to provide increased opportunities to develop a sense of readiness to teach without overburdening (and potentially easing the burden on) PSTs with additional work.

By working together in a group (as both the structure of a CoP and the nature of *collaborative* AR indicate), the PSTs in this study were able to grow their senses of readiness to teach, both collaboratively as a whole group and as individuals within the group. It is unlikely that the CoP or CAR was the *sole* contributor of their developing readiness, as the roles and responsibilities of a PST completing a teacher preparation program are both extensive and likely to contribute to readiness as well (e.g., experiences in their teaching internship, knowledge gained from coursework, collaborative discussions with other PSTs through seminar meetings, general maturation over the course of the year). Still, evidence across the findings demonstrates that the both the CoP and the CAR project had an impact on the PSTs' senses of readiness to teach. Our regular meetings provided time and space to reflect on their weekly experiences, both inside their internship classroom and in their university classes, to synthesize those learnings with the experiences of others in similar contexts, and to explore the ways in which hands-on AR drew out connections to those experiences. Manasia et al. (2020) reported that, of their identified four dimensions of readiness to teach, the PSTs in their study reported a stronger sense of readiness to teach in (D1) Professional Knowledge and (D2) Professional Practice and a much weaker sense of readiness in (D3) Professional Engagement and (D4) Self-Management. The dimension of Professional Knowledge is bolstered by university courses and Professional Practice can be supported by engaging in the practicum experience. The findings from this study indicate that conducting CAR with the CoP generated a number of opportunities for the PSTs to grow skills in both the Professional Engagement and Self-Management dimensions, where Manasia et al. had weaker outcomes. Dedicating time within each CoP meeting to discuss different aspects of readiness to teach, and making the PSTs aware of those aspects through exposure to the Manasia et al. instrument, provided them with a clearer picture of their own

strengths and weaknesses in readiness to teach. The regular, casual conversation at the beginning of each CoP meeting also allowed rapport to build amongst the CoP members and fostered collective growth in readiness by generating opportunities to support one another's weaknesses through our strengths. My involvement as a TE, and my engagement in these regular conversations, provided me with the time and space not only to support the PSTs myself, but to also frequently encouraged the PSTs to seek additional support from specific other TEs in their support networks. In particular, I often suggested that CoP members engage in conversations with their mentors about aspects of teaching beyond specific teaching strategies, and these interactions also likely led to significant growth in the PSTs' readiness to teach in the sub-dimensions related to collaborating with colleagues and in giving and receiving professional feedback.

The PSTs generally demonstrated growth in their self-expressions of readiness to teach, demonstrated by an increase in survey results, in direct "I am ready" statements from the PSTs, and through additional indicators of readiness emerging from an analysis of their discourse. My evaluation of both the participants' readiness to teach as measured through the PSTs' discourse and measured by the Manasia et al. instrument used as a pre- and post- survey indicate growth in readiness to teach as a result of engaging in this CoP/CAR project model. Studies that examine the nature of teacher retention and attrition (e.g., Kraft & Lyon, 2022; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008), point to a number of reasons teachers might struggle early on in their careers. It is my hope that the participants in this study move into their careers as novice teachers with higher feelings of confidence in their teaching ability, feel less isolated from fellow educators in their school community, and are less likely to exit the profession. At a minimum, the PSTs engaging in this model of a CoP conducting CAR did report an overall positive experience and all four

recommended that the model be repeated for future cohorts of PSTs with minimal suggested changes.

6.1.1.1 Exploring Work-Life Balance.

The topic selected for the CAR project was an exploration of how experienced teachers manage establishing and maintaining a work-life balance, and what lessons PSTs or novice teachers could draw from the advice and lived experiences of those later-career teachers. There is evidence present that conducting AR related to the topic of work-life balance specifically had an impact on the PSTs' readiness, most evident in their reflective writing presented in section 4.3.5. Broadly, the Core Four each expressed various ways in which the lessons learned from their (and each other's) MTs impacted their own perceptions of teacher work-life balance and motivated them to both take actions in their current internship classrooms and make plans for their future careers related to establishing a better work-life balance for themselves. This shows both active growth in the dimension of readiness to teach focused on self-management (D4) and indicated the mindsets for future growth. As Manasia et al. (2020) described D4 as being one of the two dimensions of readiness to teach in which PST growth without any intervention were the most challenging, these findings represent a desirable outcome.

The sticking point, however, is that work-life balance was not the topic of focus for the CAR project by design. Our initial brainstorming of topics had 12 options, which were condensed into 4. While work-life balance won the blind vote, it was only by a slim margin. Of the 9 CoP members participating in the vote, 1 ranked work-life balance as their 3rd choice and 1 ranked it as their 4th. It is clear that this was not a unanimous decision even though we collectively agreed that all members of the CoP were okay with pursuing the topic after the vote.

There are four reasons why I chose not to dictate the topic of study for the CAR project.

1. Scholars of AR, CAR, and PAR that I drew from in framing the CAR portion of this work (e.g., Burns, 1999; Burns et al., 2022; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) recommend allowing the participant co-researchers to have a say in the topic and direction of the study. They are, after all, members of the research team and their input is both valuable broadly and, in many cases, deeply aligned with the social principles of AR methodology (e.g., giving a voice to members of underrepresented populations, members of the population-of-focus direct their populations' interests as co-researchers).
2. The specific assignment for the context of this study that the Core Four received course credit for completing was a self-selected AR project. PSTs not involved in the CoP were permitted to choose their own topic of study for the assignment, therefore it would be inequitable to remove that choice from CoP members.
3. As I was intentionally taking actions to openly give leadership responsibilities to the PST participants in early meetings as a way of demonstrating my intent to act as a CoP *member* rather than *leader*, removing myself from the research topic selection was one of the easily apparent ways for me to do so.
4. I did not have a clear picture during this study design whether or not the topic of focus might impact the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach in any specific ways. Manasia et al.'s (2020) sub-dimensions of readiness to teach are broad and cover a wide variety of practical topics and it was difficult to anticipate a particular topic of study for CAR work that might lead to specific growth on any one sub-dimension.

Though work-life balance ended up being a topic that worked out advantageously towards the students' growth in readiness, it would be false to claim some internal design pushed the PSTs

towards selecting it. When it was suggested by a CoP member I did remark that it was an interesting idea, but frankly I had not even considered the idea of investigating work-life balance until a PST suggested it. So, in terms of the overall growth in the sense of readiness to teach for these PSTs, it would be prudent to set aside the data that is explicitly related to growth regarding their increased understandings of a healthy work-life balance.

6.1.1.2 Connecting with MTs.

Another of the ways in which the PST participants experienced growth in readiness to teach directly linked to our CAR work was through interactions with their MTs. PSTs and their MTs interact with each other almost every work day during the PSTs' internship, but studies show that meaningful conversations do not always happen between PSTs and their MTs (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010), and that MTs can conceptualize their mentoring responsibilities very differently (Bektaş & Ayvaz Can, 2019; Hall et al., 2008), especially without explicit training (Ambrosetti, 2014). For example, some MTs engage in regular conversations with their protégé about teaching theory and problems of practice while others may limit their communication to giving directives in what to teach with no additional commentary about pedagogical rationale or performance feedback. Interactions in this study guided the PSTs to initiate direct, intentional conversations with their MTs in two ways.

First, this study was designed to frame the PSTs' MTs as informants and potential audience members for the CAR project. PSTs were directed to chat with their MTs and other in-service teachers at their school (not conduct formal interviews, but to start informal conversations) about what topics of inquiry those in-service teachers would be interested in hearing the results of. The original design of the study involved the PSTs packaging their findings into a mini-professional development for those same teachers, and although this aspect

of the study was eventually removed (to be discussed in section 6.3.3), the CoP was still operating under the assumption that the mini-professional development would occur during these initial conversations. By discussing interesting opportunities for inquiry with their MTs, the PSTs were actively reframing their thinking about possible research topics from something that interested them as a student/PST/novice and into what inquiry they could take on that was interesting to them *and* to teachers with more experience.

In addition to these initial conversations about topics of inquiry, the method of data collection the CoP selected was semi-structured interviews. Each PST interviewed their own MT(s), then moved on to other teachers at their school site if they were able. Zoey directly remarked that her interactions with her MT were both impactful, and that she would have been unlikely to have conversations with her MT about those same topics had she not been doing the CAR project. Benjamin also noted on multiple occasions that he felt more comfortable speaking with his (two) MTs as colleagues because of the CAR project, and these conversations with his MTs may have assisted in laying the groundwork for that relationship.

6.1.1.3 Collaboration and Community.

There are several ways in which the collaboration in our CAR work and the community developed through the CoP directly influenced the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach. I intentionally incorporated Brown and Duguid's (1991) notion of a CoP's social structure into the framework used to guide the CoP (Wenger, 1998) because Brown and Duguid favored communal and improvisational knowledge generation and transmission over Lave and Wenger's (1991) description of masters and novices transmitting institutional knowledge, therefore Brown and Duguid's view were much more aligned with CAR/PAR recommendations for equity in the research group (Burns, 1999; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Although the PST participants had other

spaces in which they were able to *collaborate* with one another, like group projects for other classes and discussions during their seminar sessions, the CoP and CAR project provided intentional space for the PSTs to engage in work where their skills and knowledge were honored and valued. This work allowed PSTs to practice and grow skills while being positioned 'knowers' (or at least 'inquirers') rather than 'learners'. In addition to logistical and procedural data that demonstrates that the PSTs did in fact conduct their own research study from initial idea to (sort of) publication, which demonstrates that there were practical opportunities for growth related to the skills they exercised while conducting CAR, there were a number of discursive themes that demonstrated that *doing* CAR likely influenced the PSTs' growing readiness to teach in some way. Findings where the PSTs described feelings of pride in their work, framed their work as 'better than' the work of non-participating PSTs, and even moments of difficulty in which the PSTs expressed concerns that they were 'letting down the team' or 'not doing well enough' demonstrate the care and effort the PSTs took when engaging in the CAR work. Many of the findings that represented D3: Professional Engagement in Manasia et al.'s (2020) dimensions of readiness to teach can be linked to this notion, as the dimension of professional engagement encompasses skills like selecting appropriate sources of information for professional development, asking colleagues for feedback, continuously working towards self-improvement, reflecting on actions taken, communicating effectively, and working collaboratively to make communal improvements – all skills that are used frequently while conducting collaborative research.

There are also some ways in which collaboration could have been difficult for the PST participants. One of the partial participants who is a non-native English speaker preferred to communicate through text or chat, and one member of the Core Four would sometimes call into

group Zoom meetings from their part-time job and would need to remain off camera. The CoP would collectively try to be adaptable to variants in communication styles or circumstances, but sometimes switching from verbal to text-based conversations in the middle of a discussion caused delays or disrupted trains of thought. Multiple times throughout the project, various participants expressed statements of distaste for group projects (e.g., "I'm always afraid I'll end up doing all the work", "What if my partners don't do their share?"). There were never any specific complaints about an imbalance of work amongst the CoP members, particularly the Core Four, and there are several statements where the PSTs praised one another for being 'good' groupmates in comparison to other 'bad' groupmates. It is unlikely, however, that a participant in this particular group would have reported feelings of mild annoyance over CoP members choices for the sake of group harmony, as they all interacted with each other frequently in a variety of ways outside of the CoP. I do believe that a serious conflict would have been brought to my attention, but because journaling was optional and one-on-one interviews were not conducted until the very end, it is possible some mild interpersonal annoyance passed through unrecorded by my data collection methods. Additionally, some PSTs may have been privately comparing themselves to other PSTs in the group in a way that was negative to their mental health. Again, nothing significant in this regard was recorded or reported, and I believe that had a significant event occurred it would have been captured. But many of the PSTs, particularly the Core Four, had moments of doubt in themselves or their abilities, struggled with imposter syndrome, or gave someone else in the CoP praise at the expense of themselves (i.e. "Your [poster] is so much nicer than my piece of crap"). Social comparisons within a group of individuals is part of human nature, and social comparison-focused case studies surrounding CoPs with similar demographics to my study (e.g., Carpenter et al., 2023; McClellan, 2018) note that this is particularly common

around times of personal and professional identity change/construction. The transition from PST to novice teacher and from graduate student to full-time worker are both significant identity shifts (Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2014; Teng, 2017). Therefore, I argue that it is likely that my PST participants experienced some moments of social comparison while in the CoP, and that some of those comparisons may have detracted from their sense of readiness to teach by considering themselves 'less than' others in terms of specific skills or abilities related to teacher readiness.

6.1.1.3.1 Evaluating Communal vs Individual Readiness to Teach.

I will note here that, while the instrument and framework for assessing readiness to teach is aligned with scholarship that prioritizes collaborative work, the instrument is designed for measuring individuals rather than measuring collective readiness within the group. The instrument selected to measure the PSTs' emerging sense of readiness to teach (Manasia et al., 2020) was crafted by scholars with alignment towards the UNSECO ESD (education for sustainable development) initiatives (2017), which prioritize guiding teachers and students to engage in opportunities to strengthen collaborative problem-solving skills in order to better address the (significant) issues that threaten modern society such as climate change, food insecurity, worldwide rights and protections for women and girls, international cybersecurity, and many more. Although this scholarship related to the UNESCO initiatives are referenced less frequently in the United States teacher education publications, international teacher education scholarship surround ESD is something I have been aware of throughout the course of my graduate career and is addressed by some of the international scholars of teacher education whose work I greatly admire and follow closely. Selection of Manasia et al.'s readiness instrument does reveal a researcher bias in myself, and the instrument does favor metrics of

readiness that demonstrate proficiency will collaborative problem-solving. I argue that, although the direct association between Manasia et al.'s (2020) instrument construction and international initiatives calling for more collaborative problem-solving work in teacher education is intentional, the instrument is still an appropriate tool for measuring due to the thorough and diverse range of readiness metrics synthesized during the instrument's creation (described in section 1.1) that cover a wide variety of knowledge, skills, and demeanors that represent teacher professionalization.

6.1.2 Teacher Educators and PST Readiness to Teach

My second research question, which emerged during the study, asks:

How does a TE's membership in a CoP with a focus on conducting CAR contribute to PSTs' senses of readiness to teach?

TEs are often well-positioned to provide opportunities for PSTs to grow and develop their emerging teaching skills, though the kind of TE the individual is and the context in which they interact with PSTs is likely to impact those opportunities. An MT, for example, could provide their associated PST with opportunities to try different teaching techniques in their shared classroom. A professor could connect PSTs with a relevant researcher to deepen the PSTs' learning about a course topic. A program coordinator could arrange for PSTs to visit each other's classrooms or school sites for extra exposure to different learning environments. The ways in which I, in my identity as an AMT, provided opportunities for PSTs involved in the CoP are, unfortunately, less clear than the previous examples.

6.1.2.1 Formation of the CoP.

Broadly, my influence as a TE on my PST participants' emerging sense of readiness to teach while working in the CoP is through the simple fact that the CoP would not exist without

my intervention. Arranging for permissions for the CoP to exist, meet regularly, align with existing courses in the preparation program, and receive course credit all took significant coordination that extends beyond the expectations of securing participants for a dissertation study. There were options to conduct my research without the CoP, such as sharing time with the PSTs' weekly seminar course or through serving as a teaching assistant on the AR course. I thought these options would not be as suitable for the kind of work I intended to do, and that forming the CoP was the more favorable option. Therefore, all data that demonstrates PSTs growth in readiness to teach as a direct result of membership in the CoP is also a direct result of TE intervention.

This notion can be expanded upon by considering the ways in which my presence in the CoP may have contributed to PST growth in readiness to teach. As some of the findings presented in Chapter 5 indicate, it is possible that some growth across one or more sub-dimensions of readiness to teach may have been influenced by mirroring behaviors I modeled during CoP meetings. These include, but are not limited to, setting a clear meeting time, location, and agenda, communicating on a variety of platforms, checking for confirmation of understanding, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability when things changed, and encouraging equity of voice. There is clear evidence that some of these modeled behaviors were observed and repeated by the PSTs: Zoey took responsibility for coordinating the time, date, and location of 5 out of the 10 CoP meetings, and Kaitlin coordinated 2; Kaitlin and Zoey, with the help of Deanna, set up a group chat after polling the group for the overall preferred method of communication; Robert regularly took notes during CoP meetings and would share them with CoP members who had to miss meetings through their preferred method of communication; Benjamin would ask direct questions to CoP members, by name, if they had not spoken in a

while in order to get their opinion on the matters being discussed; and all of us collectively adapted to the ever-changing circumstances of our group with as much grace as possible. These are all related to sub-dimensions of readiness to teach, and the PSTs all showed growth in those dimensions between September and March. While I cannot argue that the activities listed above were the *sole* contributor toward PSTs' growth in readiness to teach, I can argue that I, as a TE, provided the PSTs with opportunities to practices these skills and that those opportunities are likely *one of* the contributing factors that led to growth in the PSTs' readiness.

A third aspect of the study that likely had a positive contribution towards the PSTs' sense of readiness was through optional participation. During recruitment, I made sure each participant was fully aware that being part of my dissertation study was optional. I prepared accommodations for the possibility of participants wanting to be in the CoP and engage in the CAR project but not be considered a dissertation participant, for PSTs wanting to be in the CoP but not engage in the CAR project, and for PSTs in other specialization cohorts (i.e. Social Studies, English as a Second Language, Math) who might request to join the CoP through a friend. I intentionally asked that each participant arrange a short in-person meet up or Zoom call with me so that they could meet me face-to-face and ask questions about the project before signing any consent paperwork. I took these steps in my recruitment process specifically because I wanted the participants to be aware of who I am and to have the option to back out if they felt our personalities would be incompatible. for over thirty years, Research has shown that forced mentoring relationships are often less successful than those that develop as a result of mutual choice (Carruthers, 1993). Additionally, I made sure that all participants knew that departure from the study at any time, for any reason, would be okay and not have any effect on their status within the program (outside of potentially having to re-do an assignment if they were receiving

course credit), or my opinion of them as a teacher or as a person. As both Zoey and Kaitlin pointed out during their debrief sessions, I must have made it clear that exiting the study was okay because 6 out of the original 10 participants did in fact exit the study.

6.1.2.2 Accidental Mentoring in the CoP.

As an AMT and member of the CoP, there are several ways in which the findings show how my involvement directly contributed to the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach. Throughout this dataset, findings related to the developing relationship between me and PSTs show the growth of trust and familiarity. This rapport is likely to have had some positive effect on the successful completion of the CAR project. I observed that the PSTs identified time and space with me as a safe space to express their true feelings and anxieties about the program, which were demonstrated through frequent asking of questions, direct requests for support or assistance, development of shared jokes, and "off the record" talk. For them, working with an AMT served as both an outlet for expressing emotions and for additional support or advocacy within the program or with specific instructors. Research indicates that, for some PSTs, asking for help or support from TEs is an emotionally vulnerable act that can cause significant anxiety, particularly if the TE also has the power to evaluate the PST's ability to teach (Akinsola, 2014; Hertzog, 2002; Heshmati & Lin, 2024). I argue that the PSTs' willingness to ask me for help and support demonstrates a positive relationship. Further, my role as an AMT had no power or authority to evaluate the PSTs' performances as teachers on a programmatic level. This supports the notion that my involvement in the CoP provided PSTs with a resource they would not have had access to otherwise.

Another way that accidental mentoring or my positioning as an AMT likely contributed to the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach is through oversight of the CAR process and CoP

activities. While I intentionally avoided taking a defined leadership role throughout the process, a synthesis of collected data makes it clear that the PST co-researchers did position me differently than they positioned each other. Instances of asking me for help, remarks about my perceived experience or expertise in relevant areas, or the notion that I might be able to advocate for them in spaces where they could not advocate for themselves made this positioning apparent. The benefits of this perceived leadership have largely already been discussed, however there is another interesting possible benefit to my perceived authority that two PSTs brought to my attention during their separate debriefs. Though I (thankfully) did not have to step in at any point to address serious interpersonal conflicts between PST members or take any form of disciplinary actions for negative behaviors in the group, the perceived authority that my involvement in the CoP carried with it possibly had the dual effect of reducing the likelihood for negative behaviors that might emerge in a PST-only CoP *and* increasing feelings of security that my involvement would be able to prevent negative behavior, or that I would take charge in addressing it should it arise. This was directly expressed by both Zoey and Robert in their closing interviews, noting that they were generally averse to group projects and would have been less inclined to join the CoP without the guarantee of TE oversight. By considering this point, some additional ways in which TE participation in a CoP might have positively influenced PSTs while conducting a CAR study are more apparent in considering what negative influences TE participation likely prevented. There are a number of 'what if' disaster scenarios that I can imagine a PST would feel unequipped or poorly equipped to handle on their own – failing a critical assessment or course, dealing with a serious personal emergency that caused an extended absence from the program, grappling with significant, unannounced program changes – would seem less disastrous for the PSTs if a trusted TE was helming a solution in collaboration with them. Versions of all these

disasters did occur, but there are many other variations that did not. Measuring the value of a role that prevents events that do not exist is an impossible task. However, this notion of perceived authority from a TE broadly, when combined with the safe space that is both emotionally supportive and affirming that an AMT can create, provides a compelling argument for the ways in which the TE in this specific scenario (me) was able to contribute positively towards the PSTs' collective senses of readiness to teach.

6.2 Implications

Adapting existing teacher preparation programs to foster increased growth in readiness to teach among PSTs is not an easy task. Through CoP engagement, CAR studies, or collaborative activities with similar structure and goals, this study has significant implications for the ways in which teacher education programs could be adapted to benefit PSTs.

6.2.1 Continuing and Adapting the CoP/CAR Project Model

The specific model of CoP/CAR project work created for this study could easily be replicated year after year, with almost no changes to the current program structure at the university of focus. While there were some organizational 'hoops to jump through' that TEs at other institutions may also need to navigate before they are able to implement the model, it is unlikely that those would be necessary to work through every year. In my case, I got permission from the department head and the teacher preparation program coordinator to approve my proposed CoP structure, and got confirmation from both of them that any professor who was willing to consider artifacts produced by the CAR study as replacement for any course assignment(s) was allowed to do so. The department chair also read through my study proposal and provided me with written confirmation that he found my proposed CAR study to be rigorous enough to be considered Master's level coursework, just in case that were to come into question

regarding any of my participant's grades. I coordinated with office staff to secure a regular meeting space on campus, then began conversations with the network of TEs that support PSTs, such as course instructors, university supervisors, site coordinators, other faculty affiliated with the teacher preparation program in order to make them aware of the CoP/CAR project and to open lines of communication should anything arise. Though this list is short, it took 7 months to get through this permission-requesting and communicating process. Once permissions are secured, in theory, any TE could start running a CoP conducting CAR without using any university resources beyond the TE's time and effort.

This model could be adapted and applied to content areas beyond Secondary ELA. As all PSTs enrolled in the MCERT program at the university of focus are required to take the AR course, there is very little that would limit the instructors from implementing an optional group CoP research project as an alternate for the solo research project regardless of content area. While the shared content area sometimes arose in conversation during this research, ELA was often not the main topic of discussion when compared to broader topics like general pedagogy, school policies, or university assignments. It is therefore likely that members of multiple content areas could participate in a CoP together with minimal change to the anticipated outcomes.

One concern for adapting this model into a program is finding (and paying) enough TEs to serve as a CoP participant per group. My involvement with the CoP for this study was voluntarily unpaid, but that it is not a pattern I recommend continuing. My primary suggestion to address the need for qualified TE CoP members is to consider this as a role for paid doctoral Graduate Assistants. Making this staffing adjustment would be a slight impact on university financial resources, as this would cost additional funding for the graduate students' time and possibly take graduate students away from other assignments. At the university of focus, there

are existing jobs for doctoral students in the TE-focused fields that could take on membership in one CoP as an additional duty, for example a graduate student university supervisor or teaching assistant, with minimal reduction in their other duties. When adapting this model at universities that struggle to have enough graduate students to fulfill all the work needed of them, my suggestion might not be the best solution, though universities with a high quantity of graduate students and few available jobs might find the increase in positions to be quite beneficial. I do not recommend having someone functioning in the role of TE for the CoP performing double duties with a grading or evaluation role, as I believe this was important to the rapport within the CoP that allowed it to function well. I believe this can still be addressed easily with a few adaptations, such as pairing any university supervisor graduate students with a CoP outside their content area or limit a teaching assistant graduate supervisor to CoPs where most, if not all, PST members are not enrolled in that course.

I believe this model could be adapted in such a way that the CoP tackles multiple assignments, or the CoP could create a single, large project that fulfills assignments across multiple courses. In my design and planning phases of this study, I examined syllabi for courses my participants were enrolled in for aligned assignments and did find several candidates. While only one course ultimately allowed students assignment credit in this study, there is the possibility of future research or future iterations of the CoP at the university of focus if the program leadership chooses to formally integrate the model. When the considering staffing and logistical needs of the university, it can be tempting to pre-assign or arrange PSTs into CoPs at the beginning of the school year. I do not recommend making CoP participation mandatory, nor do I recommend assigning PSTs to specific CoP groups. Multiple PSTs remarked throughout the process that the freedom of choice and the freedom to leave if they became uncomfortable were

key factors in continued their participation. My findings also indicate that forced participation in the CoP or forced assignment to a TE could significantly impact the ability of the CoP members to establish a rapport or positive working relationship. Positive (or at least cordial) interpersonal relationships across all CoP members were critical to the functionality of this model, so while failure to establish rapport may not result in failure of the CAR project, it could impact the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach.

6.2.2 Recommendations for TEs Engaging in CoP/CAR Work

While I argue that I did not serve as a full "leader" or "manager" of the CoP during my study, TEs engaging in work of this kind will likely have to take on some form of coordination responsibilities, at least until PST CoP members felt familiar enough with procedures and expectations to take over. TEs will also likely have to make some leadership-related logistical decisions for operations within the CoP.

I believe that this study could be replicated as-is with similar results if conducted at the same university or at another university with a similar program structure. One of the primary factors contributing to this belief is that I conducted some investigations with the cohort prior to my population of focus, and my interactions with that group indicated that we would have similar outcomes had they been the participants for this study. In a very broad sense, the program at the university of focus is not significantly dissimilar from most Masters-level, university-based teacher preparation programs. Therefore, my first recommendation is to try implement the CoP/CAR project model with minimal changes if possible, and to investigate changes for potential negative impacts of PSTs (such as increased work load, unbalanced assignments between solo and group project variants, activities that interfere with their teaching calendar or work expectations at their internship school site, etc.).

As mentioned above, I do believe that having a "supervisor" within the CoP was important to the project's success. Several of the participants remarked at various points throughout the process that having guidance from me, even if it was framed as more casual guidance, was important for their perception of the project and without it they might have framed the CAR work as "just another group project" that ultimately would not have received the same level of care and thought. While the findings do indicate that the PST members of the CoP exerted authority in the group much more often than I did, they still placed value on the existence of a TE as a safeguard. They additionally placed value on my ability to operate as an insider within the program leaders, though this is not always the case in practice, particularly for graduate student TEs. Despite some struggles arose during our study that I find challenging to address behind-the-scenes, the PSTs described my role in the CoP as someone could trust to answer their questions, get information from program decision-makers, and advocate for them behind closed doors. This is something that is not likely to be possible with an all-student CoP without some students being granted special privileges within the program of study to address problems as they arise.

One of the questions that came up for me, both during the planning stages of this study overall and again as I analyzed the data, is *does a CoP's task of focus have to be a CAR study in order to replicate these findings?* This is certainly a question that requires additional research to be able to answer definitively, with the data available at this time I would say that the task of focus does not need to be CAR *for sure*. This data set largely indicates that the act of conducting, analyzing, or presenting research was beneficial for the PSTs' growth and created opportunities for their senses readiness to teach to develop, but similar opportunities could be created for PST growth that are not specifically CAR and achieve similar results. For the most part, direct

evidence of growth in the PSTs' sense of readiness to teach was related to growing confidence in their own teaching skills. This confidence was bolstered by participation in the CoP itself and the supports that doing so provided. Therefore, I do not recommend eliminating the collaborative nature of this model. The CAR project was designed to satisfy just one assignment, and the PSTs in my study had a number of assignments (both large and small) throughout the semester that were discussed during CoP meeting time. There were, however, some identifiable benefits to the project being CAR. The necessary inquiry work caused the students, even ones reluctant to conduct research like Kaitlin, to investigate circumstances at their school site in a way that was meaningful to them. They also practiced making meaning of the data that they and their peers gathered. These are skills that a non-research-based project are unlikely to address, therefore I also recommend preserving the research or inquiry-based nature of the CoP focus if possible.

Lastly, our particular project had the specific benefit of a useful study topic – teacher work-life balance. The PSTs clearly demonstrated that they gained valuable perspectives about their future careers from their research work. Unfortunately, an important aspect of this study was allowing the PSTs to select their own topic, so it is unlikely that the topic of research would always be so valuable when replicating this study exactly. I do not recommend that TEs select the topic of research or exert authority over the CoP during the selection process, but it would be very possible for TEs to make guiding suggestions when brainstorming topics in order to ensure that the topic is feasible, ethical, and interesting for most (if not all) members of the CoP.

6.2.3 Incorporating Education for Sustainable Development into Teacher Preparation Work

To conclude this examination of the possibilities for incorporating aspects of this study into teacher preparation programs in order to create more opportunities for PSTs to grow their sense of readiness to teach, I look to the implications of this work drawing additional alignment

between US-based teacher education programs and UNESCO's ESD (education for sustainable development) initiatives. My US-based colleagues often expressed a lack of familiarity with sustainable education initiatives, and I was equally unfamiliar with it until my research interests led me to follow the work of a number of international education scholars. My international colleagues did often express familiarity with the sustainable education initiatives when it came up in conversations and during the planning stages of this dissertation. The ways in which the CoP/CAR project aligned to ESD initiatives without needing to make any programmatic changes at the university of focus indicates that incorporating direct learning about ESD initiatives should be equally adaptable. It seems our PSTs are ready to do the work, or are already doing the work, and we are just slightly behind when it comes to making the initiatives an explicitly stated and clearly conveyed component of our teacher preparation program.

6.3 Limitations

As with most research, there were some limitations to this study that emerged throughout the process. These mainly centered around issues with institutional structure: a lack of programmatic support for our work, or the fact that our work was unofficial, in that it was situated outside of any specific course credit. Other limitations center around time and expectations of the teacher preparation program itself. Finally, there were limitations related to the conclusions that can be drawn from this data. These will be explored in full below.

6.3.1 Participants

A significant limitation to data collection for this study was the ever-changing number of participants. As I described throughout this dissertation, the original 10 participants were down to 4 by the conclusion of the study – less than half. This can be attributed to several factors, some

of which is related to direct statements I was able to gather from participants while others are extrapolations based on circumstances.

One of the concerns I grappled with when designing this study is how the PST participants would be compensated for their time in the CoP. I sought out avenues for both academic and financial compensation. I spoke with multiple faculty members regarding the various assignments that the PSTs would need to complete throughout the year in order to determine if any could be supplemented with CoP work. While several professors expressed support for this project, only Dr. Maxwell was ultimately able to offer assignment credit to students enrolled in her section of the Action Research course. Early in the research process I informed the CoP members that I was actively applying to grants in order to provide financial compensation as well, but was cautious to let them know that many grant applications are not accepted and, even if we were lucky enough to receive this kind of support, the amount awarded was also not a guarantee.

A significant piece of evidence supporting the value of academic (course credit) compensation over financial compensation is the fact that the Core Four participants were all enrolled in Dr. Maxwell's course. Further, all of the participants who withdrew from the project were enrolled in courses with faculty members who were unable to offer academic compensation. Ultimately, I was awarded a small grant from the university's College of Education, 100% of which was divided amongst the remaining four participants as honoraria. I am grateful that I was able to give my participants both academic and financial compensation for their time. It is clear that, for many if not all of my full and partial participants, having their academic workload reduced by participating in the CoP was a much more significant motivator for participation in the study than financial compensation. Several participants specifically

mentioned this in their debriefs. Deanna, who exited the study while the CoP was conducting interviews, stated “I’d love to stay, really I would, but there just aren’t enough hours in the day. Now that I see what I have to do this semester too, I just can’t” (Personal correspondence, 2-4-24). Benjamin humorously remarked that “having this [assignment] off my plate is worth much more than a paycheck” (Personal correspondence, 5-17-24).

All participants were initially offered financial compensation if they were able to remain full participants for the duration of the project, though the exact amount was unknown as I was actively seeking grant funding. Six of ten participants actively turned down financial compensation due to my inability to secure academic compensation. The lack of academic compensation for all initial participants led directly to multiple participant departures, and the data that were able to be collected and analyzed were undoubtedly impacted by the loss of half of the initial participants during the process. Further, the ability to confirm academic compensation during participant recruitment may have led to an entirely different group of participants joining the CoP.

6.3.2 Program Design

Another limitation to the data collected for this study is related to the design of the teacher preparation program, or our exclusion from it. Although we received permission to operate the CoP and the CAR project was deemed rigorous enough for graduate-level coursework, the CoP was never made an official part of the teacher preparation program of study. While this was not initially an issue, several times throughout the course of data collection a significant change in program policies, procedures, deadlines, or assignments were made without including or informing any CoP members. While adaptability and flexibility is a sub-dimension of readiness to teach, the number of times the CoP members needed to be flexible

with unexpected changes was high enough to be disruptive to data collection. Had we been an official component of the teacher preparation program, I believe I or another CoP member could have advocated for our exception to certain changes, or known about changes with enough advanced notice to prepare. Small scale examples of this were 'mandatory' meetings for PSTs scheduled with little notice, one even scheduled hours before it was to take place, although some PSTs were exempt from these meetings if, for example, they had an overlapping class. I believe we could have advocated for CoP meetings to be considered a reason for exemption and would not have had to cancel 3 different CoP meetings, if the CoP was a recognized component of the teacher preparation program. Of those 3 meetings, we were only able to reschedule 1. That represents a loss of approximately 2 hours of discursive data, or potentially 17% of possible data to analyze, not accounting for the additional loss of written CAR project artifacts that could have been generated during those meetings.

Another significant instance of programmatic issues, or lack of programmatic support, that limited data collection occurred at the conclusion of winter break. I received a panicked text message from Kaitlin, stating that "this email from Wendy about Dr. Maxwell and our action research makes it seem as if nothing that we are doing is going to count for our action research class. This seems very different from what you have been telling us and I'm honestly concerned that I'm going to be starting from scratch on my whole project" (Personal correspondence, 1-30-24). Alarmed, I investigated as quickly as possible to determine what had changed and if a solution that worked for everyone was possible. I also reached out to my own support network to determine what would happen if this resulted in the dissolution of the CoP and the end of my dissertation research. After many conversations, I was able to figure out that the following had happened: Dr. Maxwell had decided over the break that the more 'creative' interpretations of the

poster presentations from the previous cohort were overall less rigorous and that she also wanted to require a component of the poster that involved more structured personal reflection for each student. Therefore, she decided that our originally agreed upon alternate group presentation was no longer aligned with her expectations for the assignment and that my participants would need to complete that. The change in assignment deeply impacted data collection, as the CoP was already in progress on a completely different set of artifacts to demonstrate the CAR project findings, and the CoP members decided to stop work on the original project in order to complete the new assignment instead. I believe the work lost due to this change would have generated data that would reflect PST growth in ways that the data set as it currently exists for this study does not reflect, particularly in the sub-dimensions related to planning and self-directing professional development experiences (as the original CAR presentation would have been a professional development for MTs designed by the PSTs). Further, as Kaitlin pointed out in her debrief, at least she (if not other) CoP members found the switch the poster to be an underwhelming end to a project that had taken a significant amount of time and effort. It is possible that the data for this dissertation are limited due to other TEs demonstrating limited interest in the CAR project, thus limiting the PSTs' interest reflected in the findings.

It is still unclear why Dr. Maxwell decided to inform the students of this through Wendy and not alerting me of the change, not why Wendy decided to communicate the change to the students in this way. When debriefing with my participants, I asked each of them what could be improved if I were to do this project again and, without exception, each of my participants cited this incident as one of the only negative experiences with the CoP or CAR project. Zoey remarked that "if there was one thing I could go back in time about this whole project and change it would be that. Unnecessarily stressful" (Personal correspondence, 4-17-24). Kaitlin

remarked that “it made me feel like I don't know how much, how much people will ultimately listen to what I have to say and make changes” (Final debrief, 4-9-24). It is clear that, in addition to the disruption in data from the assignment change, the CoP members also experienced emotional frustrations related to the change. According to understandings of PST growth as it relates to emotioncy (Pishghadam et al., 2022), the experience of this assignment change could be significant enough to have caused regression in PST readiness to teach, thus further impacting the data.

6.3.3 Losing the ‘Big A’ in CAR

As mentioned above, the change in AR assignment created limitations for this study’s dataset by altering my ability to fully evaluate the true impact the CAR project may have had on PST readiness to teach. As mentioned in the previous section, Dr. Maxwell opted to change the assignment requirements for study participants enrolled in her course halfway through the project. This resulted in changes to our planned ways of delivering our findings, which in turn limited my ability to evaluate readiness to teach in sub-dimensions related to planning and delivering professional development, and potentially further damaged data by generating feelings of frustration and helplessness for CoP members directly related to the artifacts they were supposed to be producing during an opportunity for positive growth in readiness to teach. I also believe this specific change limited the data for this study in another significant way.

Early in the planning stages of the overall dissertation study, I consulted with a number of faculty members who had previously taught the action research course and examined the syllabi from even older iterations of the course. One lost aspect of the course, which was no longer used due to faculty retiring and limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, was the involvement of the PSTs’ mentors and school-site colleagues in the presentation of findings. PSTs were

instructed to package their findings as a mini-professional development, which would be delivered at their practicum site and observed by school-site colleagues and the course instructor. This was to the be the "Action" aspect of our CAR project.

The "Action" of CAR, as well as in other forms of AR, is meant to note that the researchers should be doing more with their findings than writing them up in a paper or poster. This is described by de Schutter and Yopo (1981), cited and translated by Herr and Anderson (2015), as "the results of research are immediately applied to a concrete situation" (p. 29). The participants were invested in this notion, and the topic we selected (methods for improving work-life balance for teachers) was one we believed would hold high value for school-site teachers and result in an interesting and informative professional development opportunity. The loss of this component of our work meant the loss of significant community action, making this more of a CaR study than a CAR study. Therefore, I was not able to truly evaluate the effectiveness of CAR as it relates to growth in readiness to teach because the completed project artifacts did not meet my description of rigorous CAR artifacts. While some growth was able to be measured from the projects augmented form, this limited my ability to draw conclusions about CAR's impact on PST readiness to teach.

It also meant a lost opportunity for PSTs to further disrupt notions of traditional knowledge hierarchies by allowing them to act as instructors for their more experienced in-service teacher colleagues, which would have been a significant opportunity for the PSTs to experience growth in readiness to teach. As there are overlaps between multiple Manasia et al. (2020) readiness dimensions and the notion of delivering a professional development session for colleagues (i.e. (D3_2) commitment to professional development, (D3_4) selection of professionally relevant information), it is possible that the participants' readiness to teach would

be even stronger in those dimensions. Therefore, I identify the loss of this action component as a significant limitation to this study, and would recommend any TEs looking to replicate aspects of this work to consider this limitation in their own CoP/CAR project design.

6.3.4 The Ticking Clock of Teacher Preparation Programs

The timing of the PSTs' program of study represents the final major limitation to my ability to gather data for this study. While the program at the university of focus is fairly similar to most teacher preparation programs at universities in the United States, being restricted by program deadlines created significant time boundaries for data collection that are even more restrictive than a normal school year or academic semester. These restrictions in time prevented me from creating multiple CoPs at staggered times, primarily due to the teacher preparation program's rigid structure and extremely limited window in which data could be collected, in order to study comparative growth in readiness to teach across multiple CoPs.

The pacing of the program itself also proved difficult. Some students did not begin their full internship until October, so there were challenges in collecting data related to the sense of readiness to teach present in the CoP as a collective due to PSTs being misaligned in whether they had actually started teaching or not . Additionally, although many students were enrolled in an AR course, their meetings were infrequent at the beginning of the school year. That meant I was also unexpectedly explaining aspects of AR to the participants, or provide resources for them to teach themselves, or assist them in reading ahead in their textbooks. This likely influenced the data collected related to my second research question regarding a TE's role in the CoP, as stepping into a teacher role to explain elements of AR worked against my efforts to distance myself from a teacher/leader role in the CoP.

The third way in which the extremely fast and rigid timing of the teacher preparation program limited data for this study was related to the scope of data I was able to collect. I would have preferred to be able to collect data with PSTs at their school sites and observe some of their teaching for additional data related to their emerging sense of readiness to teach. I also planned to interview the PSTs' MTs myself regarding the ways in which they had observed their PST grow in readiness to teach and include their data as discourse from additional informants. I acquired permission to do so, but there simply was not enough time to be able to conduct site visits and additional interviews as a component of this inquiry given the time restrictions placed on when PSTs were allowed to be observed, when their MTs were available to be interviewed, when I was allowed to be in school buildings, and even the window of months in which I was allowed to interact with PSTs. I do not believe this prevented my ability to answer address either of my research questions, but they could have been answered more effectively by a more robust pool of data to draw from.

6.3.5 Factors Contributing to Readiness

While the data gathered from this study demonstrate that growth in readiness to teach occurred for the participants, and point to a relationship between some of the ways in which the participants may have developed a sense of readiness to teach and the specific activities we engaged in, I cannot claim a direct link between the work of the CoP and participant growth in readiness to teach, which is a limitation of this study. Dozens of factors contribute to the developing sense of readiness to teach in each PST candidate across many academic, professional, and individual experiences. The narrowed scope of this study meant that I was unable to capture many of those experiences happening outside of the CoP meetings, and thus only have anecdotal data from the participants. Without a better understanding of all the

experiences that contributed to each participant's readiness to teach, it is difficult to truly gauge the impact of the CoP or CAR work.

Further, this study did not include any data from a control group. One student, who was a member of the Secondary ELA cohort, had completed the AR assignment the previous year but was doing his other courses and teaching internship alongside my participants. He had agreed to provide interviews throughout the school year regarding his thoughts and observations on my participants' experiences with CAR, and even to attend some CoP meetings. He signed a consent form and we had an initial meeting that was not recorded to make some initial plans, however soon after this student transferred to a different institution to complete his degree. An alternate control subject was never identified. Future iterations of this research would benefit from including additional measures towards isolating the ways in which participation in a CoP or engaging in CAR work benefit a PST's sense of readiness to teach.

6.4 Future Research

The CoP members who remained throughout the duration of the project, and even some who had to exit but wish to rejoin now that their program is complete, have expressed an interest to continue working together and to work towards publishing some of our CAR work in journals directed towards early career practitioners or PSTs. The possibility of a future in which PSTs read articles during their coursework written by other PSTs is an interesting and exciting possible future for the field that honors the value of PST-generated knowledge. We would also like to reconvene to reflect at the end of their first year of teaching to consider whether they felt the CoP or their CAR experience benefitted them or prepared them in any noticeable way for the first year of their career.

There are also many dangling threads of questions left not fully answered by this study. Does it have to be a CAR project? Does the TE have to be an accidental mentor? What other benefits can a TE-guided CoP have for PSTs during program completion? Does my university's MCERT program, or other programs like it, have to have all those assignments or can they be combined? I believe this study shows enough evidence that the PSTs engaged in this study experienced growth in readiness to teach, both as evaluated by the Manasia et al. instrument and by their own expressions of readiness, to suggest that CoPs of PSTs conducting CAR is a beneficial potential addition or adaptation to a teacher preparation program.

There are questions I would like to answer, as we move forward towards more collaborative, accommodating, and humanizing teacher education programs overall. Perhaps participation in a CoP could be considered a credit-granting course or take the place of a single credit seminar course. Perhaps a dedicated TE could handle working with multiple CoPs in a school year if this was a primary focus of their job. Perhaps there are opportunities for collaborative PST work that creatively interprets this model into something completely different.

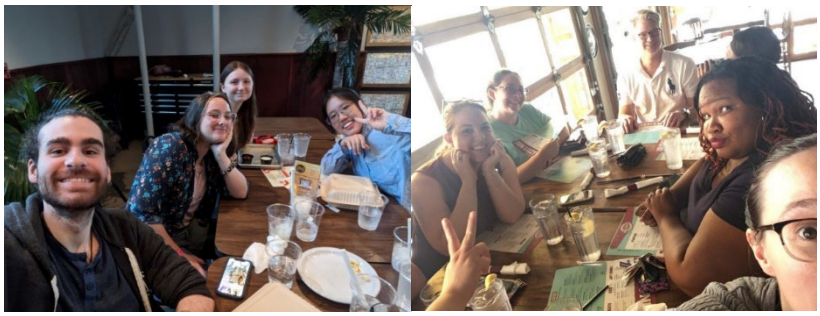
What I am most excited for are the possibilities for teacher education programs overall. As I said in my preface, we need more teachers in our schools, we need them to be well-prepared, we need them to be well-suited for the job, and we need them now! There are so many ways in which we can create the next generation of teachers to be more successful in their work than ever before, and those possibilities are at our fingertips as scholars.

Epilogue

Though this dissertation concludes, the stories of the very real individuals who made this work possible do not. Kaitlin and Benjamin were both offered jobs in their internship districts and are, as of the time of writing, early career teachers. Robert had a few more courses to complete before finishing the program and is now on the job market himself. Zoey was able to secure a teaching position in Taiwan and plans to teach there for a while before returning to the United States. From there, she may teach in a PK-12 school or she may return to the university setting to pursue a PhD. For Dr. Schafer's CoP, the old group text threads became very lively when they were told about their inclusion in this dissertation. They are doing well, and many of them are still teaching in different parts of the US. And although I do not know where this work will take me, having successfully defended my dissertation, I can say that the first step in this new phase of my career is to stop writing and end this sentence.

Figure 10 & 12

Mel's CoP & Dr. Schafer's CoP



We have been ready to change teacher education for the better,

and now the universe is ready to catch up.

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Appendix A: Reproduction of Survey Instrument

Source: Manasia et al. (2020)

D1: Professional Knowledge	
Picture yourself in the following situation: Starting from tomorrow, you are a teacher in pre-university education, teaching a specialized discipline for which you are qualified. To what extent do the following statements apply to you? Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = applies to me to a very small extent, 5 = applies to me to a great extent, and follows the matrix.	
1	I know the scientific content of the discipline taught
2	I know which instructional strategies to use in my lessons in order to achieve cognitive goals and to boost critical thinking, problem solving, complex situations analysis and decision-making
3	I know the curricular documents that the teacher must use in their teaching activity
4	I am able to organize the scientific content in teaching sequences
5	I am able to formulate the learning objectives of a lesson
6	I am able to imagine learning activities that will contribute to achieving the learning goals and will foster transformative competences (e.g., student agency, decision-making)
7	I know the students' learning styles and know how to adapt the teaching strategy accordingly
8	I know how to effectively use technology (ICT) in the teaching activity
9	I know the students' age particularities and their influence on the learning process
D2: Professional Practice	
In the practice of your future teaching profession, you feel ready to:	
10	Set learning goals to foster ESD pillars
11	Plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents
12	Design the teaching activities taking into account the age particularities of the students and how they can influence the learning
13	Apply different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills (e.g., decision-making, teamwork, conflict solving)
14	Integrate a wide range of resources into the teaching activity, including ICT, in order to engage students in their own learning process and to help them know themselves and others
15	Use different communication techniques to encourage students to get involved in activities and work together effectively
16	Involve all the students in class activities (including those with special educational needs)
17	Manage classroom activities and set clear rules
18	Manage students' behavioural changes in order to help them to self-regulate emotions and behaviours

19	Contribute to students' safety within the school, respecting the law requirements
20	Use technology (ICT) in the teaching activities in a safe, responsible way, respecting ethical norms and legislation
21	Apply different strategies for evaluating (formative and cumulative) the students' results through which to verify the acquisition of all the competences provided by the school syllabus
22	Build different assessment tools, with clear criteria and help compare the learning outcomes of students
23	Provide adequate and timely (at the right time) feedback to the students in order to boost their ability of learning to know and to learn
24	Interpret the students' learning outcomes
25	Communicate the results of the assessment to the students so as to encourage them to learn
26	Assist students in self-assessment so as to make them aware of their level.
D3: Professional Engagement	
In the practice of your future teaching profession, you feel ready to:	
27	Identify your own training needs
28	Establish a professional development plan to cover the identified learning needs
29	Develop/perfect your own learning strategies
30	Select appropriate information sources and resources in order to develop professionally
31	Continuously improve yourself in order to improve the students' learning process
32	Ask for feedback from your colleagues to improve your teaching skills
33	Communicate effectively with the parents (regarding students' school situation, keeping the confidentiality of results, solving certain problems, etc.)
34	Respect the ethics and conduct principles of the teaching profession
35	Respect the national legislation for the teaching profession, as well as the regulations imposed by the school organization
36	Reflect upon the teaching practices (analysing and evaluating one's own performance, student outcomes, etc.) to improve teaching strategies
37	Respect the values of the school organization
38	Get involved in various related activities, in order to contribute to the development of the school
D4: Self-Management	
In the practice of your future teaching profession, you feel ready to:	
39	Create a well-being atmosphere at school/in the activities
40	Effectively manage one's own activities (planning, organization, responsibilities, etc.)
41	Effectively manage one's own emotions in the activities
42	Effectively manage the time allocated to the activities
43	Self-motivate and self-discipline

44	Show flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes (new situations/working contexts, legislative changes)
45	Make decisions related to the teaching career

Appendix B: Adaptation of Survey Instrument

Q#	Manasia et al. version	Author's version
D1: Professional Knowledge		
1	I know the scientific content of the discipline taught	How confident are you feeling with the content you (or your MT) are currently teaching?
2	I know which instructional strategies to use in my lessons in order to achieve cognitive goals and to boost critical thinking, problem solving, complex situations analysis and decision-making	How do you feel about using different strategies to help your students understand the material or meet the standards you're working on in your class?
3	I know the curricular documents that the teacher must use in their teaching activity	How confident are you feeling about the curriculum you are working with?
4	I am able to organize the scientific content in teaching sequences	How are you feeling about arranging the flow of your teaching into sequences?
5	I am able to formulate the learning objectives of a lesson	How are you feeling about being able to turn the curriculum or lesson plan into student learning objectives?
6	I am able to imagine learning activities that will contribute to achieving the learning goals and will foster transformative competences (e.g., student agency, decision-making)	Do you think you would be able to come up with different activities to meet learning goals in a creative way? What have you come up with so far, and have you been able to try it in your classroom?
7	I know the students' learning styles and know how to adapt the teaching strategy accordingly	How confident do you feel about identifying student learning styles and adjusting your teaching style to match?
8	I know how to effectively use technology (ICT) in the teaching activity	How confident are you feeling about teaching technology?
9	I know the students' age particularities and their influence on the learning process	How confident are you feeling about your understanding of how students at different ages learn?
D2: Professional Practice		
10	Set learning goals to foster ESD pillars	What are you (and your MT) doing to help your students become self-directed learners?
11	Plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents	How confident are you in your current lesson planning abilities, especially with

		planning out the curriculum you've been given?
12	Design the teaching activities taking into account the age particularities of the students and how they can influence the learning	How do you feel about and leveling materials appropriately for different age groups?
13	Apply different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills (e.g., decision-making, teamwork, conflict solving)	In what ways are you (and your MT) integrating life skills (teamwork, conflict solving, etc.) into your classwork?
14	Integrate a wide range of resources into the teaching activity, including ICT, in order to engage students in their own learning process and to help them know themselves and others	How confident are you in your ability to find engaging teaching material and resources on your own?
15	Use different communication techniques to encourage students to get involved in activities and work together effectively	How do you feel you are doing as a communicator with your students, and how are you thinking about different students' communication styles when you interact?
16	Involve all the students in class activities (including those with special educational needs)	How are you feeling about your ability to include all students in class activities?
17	Manage classroom activities and set clear rules	How are you feeling about classroom management and rule setting?
18	Manage students' behavioural changes in order to help them to self-regulate emotions and behaviours	How are you working with students who might have behavioral concerns to help them self-regulate their emotions and behavior?
19	Contribute to students' safety within the school, respecting the law requirements	In what ways do you feel you're contributing to the safety of your classroom and your school?
20	Use technology (ICT) in the teaching activities in a safe, responsible way, respecting ethical norms and legislation	How do you feel you are doing when it comes to using technology safely and responsibly in the classroom?
21	Apply different strategies for evaluating (formative and cumulative) the students' results through which to verify the acquisition of all the competences provided by the school syllabus	How confident are you about your ability to know what kinds of assessments to use when?

22	Build different assessment tools, with clear criteria and help compare the learning outcomes of students	How confident are you in your ability to come up with different kinds of assessments (formal and informal) to gauge your students' learning?
23	Provide adequate and timely (at the right time) feedback to the students in order to boost their ability of learning to know and to learn	How do you feel about giving feedback to your students, and in what ways are you giving feedback?
24	Interpret the students' learning outcomes	What are the ways you can tell if a student is learning, and what ways are you currently using?
25	Communicate the results of the assessment to the students so as to encourage them to learn	How do you feel you're doing with giving grades, and with making students feel encouraged even if they get a low grade on something?
26	Assist students in self-assessment so as to make them aware of their level.	What are your thoughts about students using self-assessment, either now or in your future classroom?
D3. Professional Engagement		
27	Identify your own training needs	What do you still think you need to be trained on as a teacher, and how do you know?
28	Establish a professional development plan to cover the identified learning needs	How confident do you feel in identifying your own professional development needs?
29	Develop/perfect your own learning strategies	What do you need as a learner, and how do you know? What strategies work best for you?
30	Select appropriate information sources and resources in order to develop professionally	How confident do you feel about finding your own sources to learn more about teaching on your own?
31	Continuously improve yourself in order to improve the students' learning process	How do you feel about self-improvement as a teacher, and how are you thinking about continuing to learn about teaching once you've graduated?
32	Ask for feedback from your colleagues to improve your teaching skills	How comfortable are you feeling about asking for feedback from people at your school?
33	Communicate effectively with the parents (regarding students' school	How are you feeling about communicating with parents? What are

	situation, keeping the confidentiality of results, solving certain problems, etc.)	the different ways (or reasons) you talk to parents now, and would you do things differently in your own classroom?
34	Respect the ethics and conduct principles of the teaching profession	How are you feeling about the principles of ethics in teaching and whether or not you're sticking to them?
35	Respect the national legislation for the teaching profession, as well as the regulations imposed by the school organization	How are you feeling about your school and district rules, and how are you enforcing them or not?
36	Reflect upon the teaching practices (analysing and evaluating one's own performance, student outcomes, etc.) to improve teaching strategies	How confident are you in reflecting about your own teaching?
37	Respect the values of the school organization	What are the values are important to the culture of your school, and how do you relate to those values?
38	Get involved in various related activities, in order to contribute to the development of the school	What non-teaching activities are you currently doing at your school? How do you feel about getting more involved?
D4. Self-Management		
39	Create a well-being atmosphere at school/in the activities	How do you feel you are contributing to your students' mental wellbeing?
40	Effectively manage one's own activities (planning, organization, responsibilities, etc.)	How are you currently feeling about your work-life balance?
41	Effectively manage one's own emotions in the activities	How are you doing emotionally, and how do you feel you're doing managing your emotions at school?
42	Effectively manage the time allocated to the activities	How are you doing with managing your time with the practicum, university, and personal activities?
43	Self-motivate and self-discipline	How do you motivate yourself to get work done?
44	Show flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes (new situations/working contexts, legislative changes)	How flexible and adaptable do you think you are, and how are you currently thinking about future changes you might encounter like curriculum changes or changes to education laws?

45	Make decisions related to the teaching career	How confident are you in making career-related decisions right now?

Appendix C: PST Participant CAR Paper

This paper was collaboratively written by Zoey Ai, Bejamin Everett, Robert Martinez, and Kaitlin Moore. They each wrote their own positionality statement and concluding reflection, but the rest of the text was identical across the four submissions. The full reference list, positionality statements, and personal reflections have been excluded from this appendix as they are represented elsewhere in this document. Notations for where they would appear are included.

Introduction

Not everyone who studies to become a teacher remains a teacher for their whole career. According to ongoing studies by Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, close to 44% of people who become teachers exit the profession within the first five years (Sutcher et al., 2019). Factors that contribute to the longevity of teachers' careers were consistently brought up during this research team's discussions about important topics that would likely impact our future careers as teachers. One of the many problems that plagues past, current, and future teachers is the fact that teachers often lack a sense of work-life balance (WLB).

WLB is "...the need to balance the demands of working life with the demands of life outside of work in order to lead a satisfying life" (Adams, 2013, p. 5). This often means drawing a line somewhere to differentiate personal time and space from work time and space. This can be difficult especially for teachers, who, "like all professional people, have always had a lot to do but…the changes which are taking place in the world of work make it more difficult for everyone in work to achieve sound work-life balance." (Adams, 2013, p. 5). Through this understanding of WLB, our team sought to understand what pre-service teachers could learn from experienced in-service teachers in developing and maintaining a sense of WLB, understanding the additional roles and responsibilities of in-service teachers that add to one's

workload, and seeking support from school peers and leadership. Our work was guided by the following research questions:

- **What are the ways in which in-service teachers conceptualize their own work-life balance and what steps do they take to maintain this balance?**
- **What can pre-service teachers and early career teachers learn from the experiences of other teachers as they develop their own sense of a work-life balance?**

Additionally, each member of our research team developed a research question that guided their specific contributions to the overall project. These questions included:

- *What incongruities exist between in-service teachers' conception of an ideal work-life balance and their actual current practices?*
- *What help do teachers seek from their colleagues, administrators, other staff around the school, or other individuals in their life for work-life balance practices?*
- *How much time do you spend grading paper? How do you balance grading while also making sure you can enjoy your personal life?*
- *How does the COVID-19 pandemic impact the work-life balance of teachers and pre-service teachers (PSTs), and what lessons can be learned for future challenges? What policies and practices can educational institutions implement to enhance the work-life balance of teachers and PSTs?*
- *How much do the expectations imposed on English teachers in the classroom as well as other school responsibilities affect their ideal work-life balance?*
- *How were you managing your work/life balance before COVID? How did it change after COVID?*

Through an examination of current academic literature, as well as interviews with veteran teachers, our research seeks to not only determine what factors influence a healthy WLB for teachers but also how PSTs can develop their own sense of WLB as they enter the teaching profession.

Researcher Perspective & Positionality[17]

Study Setting & Participants

For this study, the members of our research team interviewed their mentor teacher (or teachers) at each of their assigned school sites. We had a total of 5 participating teachers across three different school sites. These teachers represented a wide range of working experience, from five to over twenty years, and represented the full gamut of secondary ELA content from 7th grade all the way to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. A summary of our participants is described below in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Participants

Teacher Name*	School Name*	Grade Level/Content	Years of Experience
Ms. A	Trudeau MS	7th Grade ELA	5-10
Mr. T	Clara Barton HS	9th and 12th ELA	20+
Ms. M	Deer Run MS	8th Grade ELA	5-10
Ms. B	Clara Barton HS	10th Grade ESOL ELA, AP Language & Composition, 12th Grade ELA	20+
Ms. S	Trudeau MS	8th Grade ELA	18

Participants were determined based solely on assigned mentor teachers. While there was no particular inclusion or exclusion criteria that guided participant selection, some members of the

[17] Individual participant positionality statements were included here. Each participant included only their positionality statement in their "version" of the completed paper when submitted for grading.

research team had multiple mentor teachers and opted to only interview one for this particular study.

Literature Review

Overall the literature that I examined for my specific research question focused around three major themes which I will briefly examine below: 1. The Impact of Workload on Teachers/Work-Life Balance, 2. Impact of Teacher Workload/Stress on Students, and 3. Teacher-Student Relations Post COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Impact of Workload on Teachers/Work-Life Balance

Articles such as Steiner & Woo (2021) found that "job-related stress poses immediate and long-term threats to the teacher supply" (p. 2), particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Farmer (2020) cites a "myriad of issues, from violence within the classroom to workplace expectations that are beyond the scope of their professional knowledge" (p. 1) as reasons why teacher stress is at an all time high. The stress threatens teacher mental and physical well-being, affecting their WLB and overall feelings towards their profession.

Impact of Teacher Workload/Stress on Students

Rhys-Evans (2020) focuses on how the workload imposed on teachers can affect how well students are doing academically in the classroom. Overall, not only did the study find that "There was no impact on student outcomes: the progress of students in the intervention was not measurably different from that of those in the control group" (p. 1) meaning that student learning was not harmed by reducing teacher workload, but they also found that "With the increased focus on the quality of feedback and on the immediacy with which students receive feedback, we have seen student outcomes … improve year on year" (p. 1). By reducing the quantity of work

teachers are expected to do, the teachers are able to focus more on quality feedback to students, helping said students improve.

Teacher-Student Relations Post COVID-19 Pandemic

Overall, the research that we have found suggested that many of the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on teaching as a profession has to do with the relationship between students and teachers, or the lack thereof. Soemantri et. al (2023) found that "teachers' roles are far beyond teaching, aiming not only to nurture students' competencies attainment, but also to nurture meaningful interpersonal student-teacher reciprocal relationships" (p. 8). Since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the role of teachers has been expanded to become emotional-nurturers of students to ensure that there is a tangible connection between the teacher and their students in order to successfully have a strong learning environment.

Our research team also collaboratively examined a selection of studies focused on WLB in order to determine what methods of research are being utilized by contemporary scholars. We found that, across six studies conducted in the last five years, five studies relied exclusively on surveys for their data and only one used interviews as a method. Based on this knowledge, our team decided to focus on interviews as our primary method of data collection.

Methods

During our early stages of our project, we had conducted a collaborative research review surrounding the topics of work/life balance as an educator and met with each other after to share our findings as well compare impressions. After a lengthy discourse and taking some time to reflect on our colleagues' perspectives, we decided how to move forward with obtaining data. It came to our attention that most of the methodology used in the research studies and articles on work/life balance for teachers were qualitative interview questions. Ranging from a wide series

of questions that make teachers reflect on their work/home habits, responsibilities as a teacher, and their mental/emotional health, we felt that constructing an interview questionnaire would be a more fitting approach in terms of receiving the data for our topic.

With interviewing as our method of data collection, each research team member contributed questions to a list of interview questions related to their specific individual research question. We also collaboratively composed several questions designed to target our overall research questions. The list of interview questions is included as Appendix A.Each member of the research team conducted an interview with their assigned mentor teacher. Each team member submitted transcriptions and notes taken during their interview session through a shared Google Drive, then we began coding our data.

We used the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), meaning that we identified emerging patterns (both as individual researchers and compared across the research team for additional validity) and then grouped those patterns into codes to examine the collected body of interview data. The research team met frequently to discuss our collective findings in order to ensure that we understood the contexts of participant responses, and to establish inter-coder agreement about our findings.

Findings

The interviewed participants expressed the structure of how their time is divided while in the school building in terms of time spent teaching, grading, attending meetings, covering other classes, and planning. Details of participant responses are located below in Figure 2. Multiple participants noted that these in-school obligations can extend outside the hours of school operation, with meetings or other activities required for teachers taking place before or after school.

Figure 2

School Hours of Operation

School Name*	Grade Levels	Start of School Day	End of School Day
Clara Barton HS	9th-12th	8:45 AM	3:15 PM
Deer Run MS	6th - 8th	8:30 AM	3:10 PM
Trudeau MS	6th - 8th	7:55 AM	3:00 PM

Below, we use data from across the collection of interviews to synthesize some generalized advice or behaviors related to WLB. We also draw on some of the specific anecdotes shared by our participants in order to draw out some behaviors related to WLB that may not be explicitly expressed. Broadly, our work identified four reoccurring themes: (1) Establishing boundaries between school and not-school; (2) Collaboration and preparation; (3) Protecting emotional health; and (4) Managing time.

Establishing boundaries between school and not-school

The most commonly appearing theme throughout our data related to establishing boundaries between a teacher's school life and outside of school life. Most participants recommended drawing a hard line between work and life. Mr. T described how this line was drawn for him due to other obligations outside of his teaching job, such as holding a second job and belonging to a band that had frequent rehearsals, and also remarked that when he had children he "stopped bringing work home, period." Another participant, Ms. S, reflected that she did not often discuss WLB with colleagues. She explained that many teachers may not have the same life circumstances as her, such as being a parent, and those differences lead to vastly different obligations outside of the school setting.

Several participants also advised early-career teachers to identify things outside of school to engage with that are unrelated to school. Ms. A eloquently remarked that "you should maintain activities, vacations, and continue playing sports that help you take your mind away from school. Those things help us remember that we are human and that we are more than a person who talks about the same subject all day Monday through Friday for a living." Ms. B described her personal non-academic hobbies, like taking nature walks and traveling, and recommending spending time physically far away from the school building.

Another noted that establishing a routine early in one's career and sticking to it as closely as possible can be critically important towards maintaining a WLB later on. "If you do not start off with one [routine for WLB] then it will be difficult to create one. Whereas if you have one, you can make the necessary adjustments and have something already in place." Broadly, all participants expressed variations of the notion that school-related activities have a way of filling available time in a teacher's schedule, and that intentionally allocating time to other activities assists in preventing school from taking up too much of a teacher's time.

Collaboration and preparation

The second theme that emerged from our data related to 'working smarter, not harder' when accomplishing school-based tasks through collaborating with colleagues and making use of prepared materials. Ms. M advised new teachers to ask for curriculum and existing resources for your assigned grade and content as soon as you are hired, and to request and shareable materials from the team leader as well. Multiple interviewees also remarked that asking questions and sharing resources during collaborative planning sessions is a beneficial practice for both new and experienced teachers. Ms. A noted that, in her experience, teachers who have only one content to

prepare for will often assist teachers with multiple grade levels or content areas to prepare for. Ms. B added that having lunch with other teachers is a good source of informal collaboration.

Another piece of advice shared across multiple participants was to create slides or other materials that could be used repeatedly throughout the school year. Ms. M advised creating lesson slides that can be easily used repeatedly to cut down on work, while several other participants mentioned that establishing classroom routines early and repeating instructions often can ultimately make a teacher's work more efficient.

Protecting emotional health

Across all participants, the message for new teachers to take steps to protect their mental health was clear. The specific suggestions on how to do so, however, varied between participants. Mr. T spoke about avoiding sending emails when emotional, a sentiment echoed by Ms. S. In reflecting about her time teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. H noted that the ability to pause and step out of the school environment was beneficial to her mental health. Ms. B remarked that she will often work away from her desk for similar reasons.

Managing time

The final recurring theme throughout the data was to manage time efficiently. Ms. B recommended making sure all materials, such as books and photocopies, were prepared at least one day before a lesson. Ms. M had a similar recommendation, and added the advice to allow yourself ample time and not to stay up too late at night trying to prepare for the next day.

In their description of additional tasks expected of teachers, such as communicating with parents or grading assignments, a variety of suggestions for efficiency emerged from the data. Ms. S advised to create fewer assignments with combined purposes, and to consider not grading every assignment. Ms. B noted that she looks at student data to determine whether she can

remove assignments from her curriculum in future years. While several participants remarked that waiting up to 48 hours to respond to emails, as they are a lower priority task that often does not need immediate attention, others instead suggested that teachers respond to emails immediately in order to quickly remove 'easier' tasks from their to-do lists.

Discussion

The discussion here answers the prompt of "How did you ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data? Explain your results in relation to your research question, any implications for teachers, and future research directions." One of main takeaways from the research is that teachers are open to collaboration but may not be starting conversations about work/life balance or SEL health and PST/ECT may need to start those conversations. The types of teachers that tend not to seek out advice on work/life balance are veteran teachers who already have systems in place to manage their work/life balance. New teachers may have to rely more on the advice of veterans so that they will be able to develop sustainable work/life balance practices. Teachers sharing resources and discussing their workloads with each other leads to reduction of time spent searching for resources. This is how work/life balance is developed through collaboration.

Outside of sharing resources, time management with parental correspondence is an essential part of an educator's workload as well. Educators making sure to promptly answer parent emails in a calm headspace is better for teachers' relationships between parents and students. Taking time for mental peace has better long term payoffs for educators in the long term. Calm, well thought out responses can calculate all the variables in volatile situations, and protect the educator from unintended consequences. Additionally, the hard line teachers must draw between work and life is sometimes a result of other obligations relating to their personal

lives such as maintaining a family life. It is impossible to concentrate all of their efforts on school work when they have to maintain important interpersonal relationships outside of school. The overall implications for the intern cohort that conducted this research apply to our work as we are about to become first year teachers. We can get advice from our current mentor teachers and the collective insight of interview answers for work life balance suggestions in our current internship and in the upcoming years. Furthermore, we can continue to seek advice from our veteran colleagues wherever we end up working.

[*Reference list from PST Participant Collaborative Paper has been excluded from this Appendix*.]

Appendix D: Interview Questions for PST CAR Project

Interview Questions

1. How do you seek help from your colleagues with respect to work/life balance advice?
2. Do you have any advice for aspiring educators on work/life balance management?
3. How long does it take for you to respond to an email after you have first received it? Has this changed since the pandemic?
4. Do you find that parents/administrators/other teachers expect you to respond faster to their messages?
5. In the 24 hours of a day, how many hours are dedicated to work and how many hours are dedicated to your own personal life (not including sleep)?
6. Did your view on your work/life balance change after COVID? If so, could you describe some changes that you made to your approach as an educator?
7. How many hours did you spend grading at home per week before COVID? How about after COVID?
    a. Hrs. per week grading before COVID
    b. Hrs. per week grading after COVID

8. Do you find that after the pandemic, do you find that students are better or worse at learning? Has that affected the time you must put into your lessons or students?

9. On average how much time per week are your planning periods taken up by mandatory meetings, class coverage, or other expectations other than planning and/or grading?

10. Do you find that you have to do more work outside of scheduled school hours than expected or than is ideal?

11. How often do you reflect on your work/life balance and make adjustments to your approach?

12. Are there specific resources or coping mechanisms you've found beneficial in maintaining mental well-being as an educator?

Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for PST Participant Debriefs

- What was your main takeaway from working with the CoP?
- What motivated you to join the CoP in the first place?
- What do you think went well and did not go well with the CoP?
- Do you think being a member of the CoP influenced your readiness to teach? If so, how?
- What was your main takeaway from the CAR project?
- Do you think conducting the CAR project influenced your readiness to teach? If so, how?
- What do you think went well and did not go well with the CoP?
- Is there anything you would do to change the CAR project for future students?
- Is there anything you would change about the CoP for future students?
- How did you see your role in the group?
- Do you feel like everyone had equal roles, or something else?
- What were your thoughts about having me as a group member?
- How do you feel the group would have been different with no TE in the group?
- Anything else?

Appendix F: Detailed Mentorship Framework Table

Domain/Indicator	Current Study
Domain 1: Collaborating with the university	
Develop a collaborative relationship with the university	MET: *The PI worked collaboratively with program coordinators and the department chairperson when designing the study*
Develop a dialogic interaction with university academics/lecturers & the PST	MET: *The PI worked with two faculty who taught courses in which the participants were enrolled; the PI frequently engaged in dialogue with these faculty, both alone and with the PST participants*
Develop a shared view of good teaching with university academics	NOT MET: *While all parties are likely aligned, a shared view of good teaching was not explicitly discussed with university academics*
Develop a shared vision of the responsibilities of the mentor role within the university	MET: *Though not labeled as a mentor, the responsibilities of the PI's role within the university program were clearly defined*
Integrate on-campus elements of the teacher education program with professional experience	MET: *The CoP was explicitly designed to connect the teacher education program to inquiry that was professionally relevant and lead to developmental experiences both on and off campus*
Domain 2: Developing a disposition & professional knowledge in mentoring	
Demonstrate an enthusiasm & passion for the mentoring role	MET: *The PI of this study engages in both the scholarship of and advocacy for mentor teachers*
Develop a pedagogy of professional experience learning	MET: *The PI of this study is a scholar of teacher education and professional development*
Employ different mentoring styles to elicit different types of learning from the PST	NOT MET: *The PI generally utilized the same style of mentoring throughout the study, although often different pedagogical and leadership moves were made to facilitate the CoP's functionality*
Formally train & undertake professional development as a mentor	NOT MET: *While the PI has designed and facilitated professional development for mentor teachers, they have not participated as a learner*
Intrinsically motivated to take on the role of a mentor	MET: *The PI demonstrates motivation by volunteering to serve as a mentor in other situations*
Possess experience as a teacher & mentor	MET: *The PI has been both a classroom teacher and a mentor teacher*
Possess strong academic & professional knowledge	MET: *The PI has both work experience and academic experience with teaching and learning*

Receive training in giving constructive feedback	NOT MET: *As noted previously, the PI has not received explicit training in this*
Understand the responsibilities of the mentor	MET: *The PI has engaged in extensive research related to the responsibilities of a mentor*
Domain 3: Establishing an effective relationship with PSTs	
Connect to the PST at a personal level	MET: *The PI intentionally spent time conversing with participants about topics unrelated to the study*
Develop a relationship based on reciprocity	MET: *The CoP members (including the PI) participated and contributed equally*
Engage in genuine conversations to nurture a good interpersonal relationship	MET: *The verbal markers in CoP meeting transcripts demonstrate positive interpersonal relationships*
Engage in open dialogue with PSTs to gain their perspective & share their ideas about the mentoring process	MET: *The PSTs were frequently empowered to share their ideas and take the lead in CoP meetings and activities*
Establish a professional relationship with the PST	MET: *The PSTs and the PI developed strong professional relationships with each other during CoP meetings and collaborative work*
Incorporate respectful, responsive, reciprocal & reflective elements to the mentoring relationship	MET: *The PI made space for feedback and reflective practice, such as journaling, throughout the research. process*
Provide the PST with equal power & appropriate autonomy	MET: *The CoP provided equal power to all CoP members and intentionally allowed the PSTs to take on leadership roles at different times in the research process*
Understand & appreciate that learning to teach is a complex phenomenon	MET: *As a former teacher and scholar of teacher education, the PI has a strong understanding of the complexities of learning to teach*
Use good questioning skills to foster genuine conversation	MET: *The PI posed intentional questions during CoP meetings in order to start genuine conversations*
Domain 4: Facilitating the PST's learning	
Employ tools that help the PST to think, question, analyse [SIC] & problem-solve	NOT MET: *Though reflection was a frequent component of CoP conversations, practical tools and methods for analyzing and problem-solving were not provided as a component of this study*
Encourage ethical informed action for the public good	MET: *The CoP's research project followed a PAR methodology meant to take action and provide support to their community*

Encourage PSTs to be inquiry-oriented, critical, reflexive & reflective	MET: *The nature of the research study conducted by the CoP members inherently encouraged inquiry and criticality, and the team was guided to be reflexive and reflective by the PI*
Encourage PSTs to engage in theory-practice reflection	MET: *The PI guided CoP members in comparing their practitioner-generated knowledge to researcher knowledge available through academic literature, and to make connections*
Encourage PSTs to use metaphors to identify their needs & wants	NOT MET: *While this may have happened organically, this was not an intentional component of the PI's work with the PSTs*
Engage in a dialogic interaction with the PST in a shared experience of meaning construction	MET: *The basis of the CoP meetings were dialogic interactions, and the group shared in collaborative meaning construction*
Engage in reciprocal learning with the PST	MET: *The PI encouraged the PSTs to share their learning with the group and to learn from each other, as well as the PI learning from the PSTs*
Facilitate the PSTs learning	MET: *The PI arranged for the PSTs to engage in a specific kind of learning through the design and execution of this study*
Optimise [SIC] the strengths of the PST by responding to their existing knowledge, experience & learning style	MET: *The PI intentionally designed the CoP dynamic to allow for each group member's strengths to be highlighted, and any weaknesses to be supported by fellow group members; the PI made changes throughout the research process that adapted to the unique needs of the different CoP members*
Provide regular, critical & actionable feedback related to practice	MET: *The PI consistently engaged in regular reflective practices with the participants, including providing feedback to the PSTs and encouraging the PSTs to give and receive feedback with each other*
Provide teaching advice to the PST	MET: *While informal, the PSTs frequently engaged the PI in discussions of problems of practice and requested advice on the matter, which the PI provided when able.*
Provide tools for PSTs to self-assess & set goals	MET: *The PSTs filled out self-assessment surveys at the beginning and end of the project, and were frequently verbally encouraged to set and continue to work toward personal goals*
Domain 5: Modelling effective teaching & making connections between theory & practice	

Adopt a critical, reflexive & reflective disposition	MET: *The inquiry practices of the CoP viewed existing scholarship through a critical lens and challenged conventions by centering PSTs as researchers and scholars*
Demonstrate a knowledge & understanding of theory & make connections between theory & practice to help bridge the theory/practice gap	MET: *One of the guiding factors in the overall project design was to explicitly connect theory (particularly theory related to inquiry stance and reflective practices for teachers) into practice in a way that felt relevant to the PSTs and their internship contexts*
Demonstrate a knowledge & understanding of theory & integrate theory in their feedback	MET: *During the writing process, the PI provided feedback that integrated a deeper understanding of theory into the CoP's shared work, both in verbal conversations and in written feedback*
Demonstrate an enthusiasm & passion for the job of teaching	MET: *The PI frequently brought up funny and positive stories about their teaching experiences and encouraged students to share their moments of joy in student teaching*
Model diversity & inclusion	MET: *The PI demonstrated inclusive practices in the CoP and gave explicit advice and feedback about being inclusive in the PSTs' internship classrooms*
Relate learning to the Teacher Professional Standards	NOT MET: *Work related to teaching standards was briefly discussed, but was not an intentional component of the CoP's work*
Responsive to the needs of students from different sexual orientations	MET: *Though the topic did not often come up, all members of the CoP demonstrated respect and responsiveness related to the sexual orientation and preferred pronouns of everyone, both inside and outside of the CoP*
Role-model practice	NOT MET: *While verbal discussion, reflection, and feedback related to teaching practice happened frequently in CoP team meetings, there was not a component of the CoP in which members watched each other practice teaching*
Self-evaluate & reflect	MET: *The PI demonstrated the value of self-evaluation and reflection by asking the CoP members for feedback and thinking aloud about ways to improve their practice*
Domain 6: Providing direction & support	
Provide direction & support	MET: *The PI provided intentional directions frequently, but also provided clear space for PSTs to*

	take on leadership roles within the CoP with the PI's support
Provide emotional & psychological support	MET: *The PI was responsive to PST needs for "brain breaks" and altering meeting schedules to accommodate emotional and psychological needs of the CoP members*
Provide practical & technical support	MET: *The PI gave practical advice towards other assignments and teaching work that was unrelated to the research study*
Show empathy & provide emotional support	MET: *CoP members frequently sought advice and emotional support from the PI on an individual basis after CoP meetings, and members of the CoP demonstrated empathy for each other in and outside of meetings*
Domain 7: Using a progressive mindset & supporting PSTs to nurture a teacher-identity	
Adaptable, flexible, & responsive to the needs of individual PSTs	MET: *The study design was intentionally created to be flexible and responsible to meet the needs of the CoP as a whole, as well as the needs of the individual members*
Adopt an inclusive mindset & be responsive to the needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, & socioeconomic backgrounds	MET: *The CoP was open and inclusive, and the PI made intentional moves to include and be responsive to the needs of all potential members*
Support PSTs to nurture a teacher-identity, a teaching style of their own & feelings of competence, well-being & success	MET: *Developing an individual teacher identity and sense of readiness to teach were central to the study design*

Appendix G: Student Pre- and Post-Survey Data

	Robert -Pre	Robert -Post	Zoey -Pre	Zoey -Post	Benjamin -Pre	Benjamin -Post	Kaitlin -Pre	Kaitlin -Post
I know which instructional strategies to use in my lessons in order to achieve cognitive goals and to boost critical thinking, problem solving, complex situations analysis and decision-making	5	5	3	5	2	3	4	4
I know the scientific content of the discipline taught	4	4	3	5	3	4	5	5
I know the curricular documents that the teacher must use in their teaching activity	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	4
I am able to organize the scientific content in teaching sequences	3	4	3	5	2	4	3	5
I am able to formulate the learning objectives of a lesson	5	5	2	5	3	4	4	5
I am able to imagine learning activities that will contribute to achieving the learning goals and will foster transformative competences (e.g., student agency, decision-making)	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	5
I know the students' learning styles and know how to adapt the teaching strategy accordingly	4	5	3	5	3	3	3	5
I know how to effectively use technology (ICT) in the teaching activity	5	4	3	5	2	2	3	5
I know the students' age particularities and their influence on the learning process	4	2	3	5	3	3	2	5
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE:	40	37	26	45	25	31	32	43
Set learning goals to foster ESD pillars	4	2	2	5	1	2	2	3
Plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	4
Design the teaching activities taking into account the age particularities of the students and how they can influence the learning	4	5	3	5	3	3	3	4
Apply different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills (e.g., decision-making, teamwork, conflict solving)	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	5
Integrate a wide range of resources into the teaching activity, including ICT, in order to engage students in their own learning process and to help them know themselves and others	3	4	3	5	3	3	3	4
Use different communication techniques to encourage students to get involved in activities and work together effectively	2	4	3	5	3	3	4	4
Involve all the students in class activities (including those with special educational needs)	4	4	2	5	3	3	3	4
Manage classroom activities and set clear rules	3	2	2	5	3	4	4	4

Manage students' behavioral changes in order to help them to self-regulate emotions and behaviors	5	4	2	5	2	3	3	4
Contribute to students' safety within the school, respecting the law requirements	5	5	3	5	3	4	4	4
Use technology (ICT) in the teaching activities in a safe, responsible way, respecting ethical norms and legislation	5	4	2	5	2	3	4	5
Apply different strategies for evaluating (formative and cumulative) the students' results through which to verify the acquisition of all the competences provided by the school syllabus	4	4	2	5	3	4	3	5
Build different assessment tools, with clear criteria and help compare the learning outcomes of students	2	5	3	5	3	3	4	3
Provide adequate and timely (at the right time) feedback to the students in order to boost their ability of learning to know and to learn	5	2	3	5	4	2	4	4
Interpret the students' learning outcomes	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	4
Communicate the results of the assessment to the students so as to encourage them to learn	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	5
Assist students in self-assessment so as to make them aware of their level.	4	3	3	5	3	3	3	4
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:	68	64	46	85	49	55	59	70
Identify your own training needs	5	4	3	5	4	5	4	5
Establish a professional development plan to cover the identified learning needs	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	4
Develop/perfect your own learning strategies	2	4	2	5	3	3	3	4
Select appropriate information sources and resources in order to develop professionally	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	4
Continuously improve yourself in order to improve the students' learning process	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5
Ask for feedback from your colleagues to improve your teaching skills	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4
Communicate effectively with the parents (regarding students' school situation, keeping the confidentiality of results, solving certain problems, etc.)	2	2	3	3	2	3	4	4
Respect the ethics and conduct principles of the teaching profession	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	5
Respect the national legislation for the teaching profession, as well as the regulations imposed by the school organization	5	4	4	5	3	4	5	5
Reflect upon the teaching practices (analyzing and evaluating one's own performance, student outcomes, etc.) to improve teaching strategies	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4

Respect the values of the school organization	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5
Get involved in various related activities, in order to contribute to the development of the school	2	1	3	5	3	3	4	5
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT:	45	48	41	58	43	45	50	54
Create a well-being atmosphere at school/in the activities	4	5	3	5	4	4	5	5
Effectively manage one's own activities (planning, organization, responsibilities, etc.)	3	2	4	5	3	3	3	4
Effectively manage one's own emotions in the activities	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	4
Effectively manage the time allocated to the activities	5	5	3	5	3	3	4	5
Self-motivate and self-discipline	3	5	4	5	3	3	4	5
Show flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes (new situations/working contexts, legislative changes)	2	5	4	5	3	3	4	5
Make decisions related to the teaching career	5	4	3	5	3	3	4	4
SELF-MANAGEMENT TOTAL	26	30	24	35	22	23	28	32
OVERALL	**179**	**179**	**137**	**223**	**139**	**154**	**169**	**199**

Appendix H: Partial Participant Pre-Survey

	Deanna	Chris	Samaira
D1: Professional Knowledge			
I know which instructional strategies to use in my lessons in order to achieve cognitive goals and to boost critical thinking, problem solving, complex situations analysis and decision-making	4	3	3
I know the scientific content of the discipline taught	1	2	3
I know the curricular documents that the teacher must use in their teaching activity	4	2	4
I am able to organize the scientific content in teaching sequences	3	2	3
I am able to formulate the learning objectives of a lesson	5	3	4
I am able to imagine learning activities that will contribute to achieving the learning goals and will foster transformative competences (e.g., student agency, decision-making)	4	5	3
I know the students' learning styles and know how to adapt the teaching strategy accordingly	4	3	3
I know how to effectively use technology (ICT) in the teaching activity	4	2	3
I know the students' age particularities and their influence on the learning process	4	3	3
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE TOTAL:	33	25	29
D2: Professional Practice			
Set learning goals to foster ESD pillars	2	2	3
Plan the teaching process based on the curricular documents	3	3	3
Design the teaching activities taking into account the age particularities of the students and how they can influence the learning	4	3	3
Apply different teaching strategies in order to integrate life skills (e.g., decision-making, teamwork, conflict solving)	3	4	3
Integrate a wide range of resources into the teaching activity, including ICT, in order to engage students in their own learning process and to help them know themselves and others	2	2	3

Use different communication techniques to encourage students to get involved in activities and work together effectively	4	3	3
Involve all the students in class activities (including those with special educational needs)	4	4	3
Manage classroom activities and set clear rules	5	4	3
Manage students' behavioral changes in order to help them to self-regulate emotions and behaviors	4	4	3
Contribute to students' safety within the school, respecting the law requirements	4	4	3
Use technology (ICT) in the teaching activities in a safe, responsible way, respecting ethical norms and legislation	4	2	3
Apply different strategies for evaluating (formative and cumulative) the students' results through which to verify the acquisition of all the competences provided by the school syllabus	4	2	3
Build different assessment tools, with clear criteria and help compare the learning outcomes of students	3	2	3
Provide adequate and timely (at the right time) feedback to the students in order to boost their ability of learning to know and to learn	3	3	3
Interpret the students' learning outcomes	4	3	3
Communicate the results of the assessment to the students so as to encourage them to learn	3	4	3
Assist students in self-assessment so as to make them aware of their level.	3	4	3
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE TOTAL	59	53	51
D3: Professional Engagement			
Identify your own training needs	3	3	3
Establish a professional development plan to cover the identified learning needs	2	2	3
Develop/perfect your own learning strategies	3	3	3
Select appropriate information sources and resources in order to develop professionally	3	2	3
Continuously improve yourself in order to improve the students' learning process	5	4	3

Ask for feedback from your colleagues to improve your teaching skills	4	5	3
Communicate effectively with the parents (regarding students' school situation, keeping the confidentiality of results, solving certain problems, etc.)	5	3	3
Respect the ethics and conduct principles of the teaching profession	5	4	3
Respect the national legislation for the teaching profession, as well as the regulations imposed by the school organization	3	5	3
Reflect upon the teaching practices (analyzing and evaluating one's own performance, student outcomes, etc.) to improve teaching strategies	4	4	3
Respect the values of the school organization	5	3	3
Get involved in various related activities, in order to contribute to the development of the school	4	4	3
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT TOTAL	46	42	36
D4: Self-Management			
Create a well-being atmosphere at school/in the activities	5	5	4
Effectively manage one's own activities (planning, organization, responsibilities, etc.)	5	5	3
Effectively manage one's own emotions in the activities	5	5	3
Effectively manage the time allocated to the activities	4	3	3
Self-motivate and self-discipline	5	4	4
Show flexibility and adaptability in the occurrence of changes (new situations/working contexts, legislative changes)	4	4	3
Make decisions related to the teaching career	4	5	3
SELF-MANAGEMENT TOTAL	32	31	23
OVERALL	170	151	139

Appendix I: Quick-Write Prompts

9/26/23 – No quick write prompt (pre-survey)

10/10/23 – Think about what has contributed to you wanting to become a teacher. Did you have one (or more than one) really great teacher in your life that inspired you? Did you have a bad experience with a teacher that motivated you to do better? Do you have a friend or family member in education? Did you grow up feeling like you "wanted" to teach, or did you fall into it? What is the story of how you came to be here today? Remember that with quick writes, the object is to write stream-of-consciousness and not worry about pretty or perfect writing. Let the words flow and try to avoid the temptation to erase.

10/25/23 – There are a lot of holidays coming up! Last week we talked about rewarding positive classroom behaviors with celebrations. Are you and your mentor (or your whole school) doing anything creative/fun for an upcoming holiday? Remember that with quick writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

11/7/23 – Last week we talked a lot about the tensions between focusing on teachers as the subject of our research versus students as the subject of our research. How are you feeling about that this week? As always with quick writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

11/20/23 – We've selected interviews as our method of research. Is there anything you are worried about related to doing an interview with your MT? If you feel confident, do you have any tips and tricks to share with those who might not be as confident? As always with quick writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

12/7/23 – With our interview questions ready to go, we've been talking a lot about "fun" questions. What's something you wish you could ask your mentor about but are afraid to/don't think they'd give you the answer you're looking for? As always with quick writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

1/18/24 – Now that we have finished conducting interviews, reflect on the process for a moment. What was the most challenging part for you? What was the most rewarding part? As always with quick writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

2/6/24 – We've been talking about what happens to data that seems interesting or important but doesn't seem to go with any other kind of data when we group or code data. What are your current thoughts and feelings on this? What do you think "professional" researchers do when this happens? What can we do? As always with quick

writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

3/5/24 – Soon we will be sharing our research with your peers. What is the part of our work that you are the most proud of? Is there anything that you are nervous about sharing? As always with quick writes, remember that the object is to let the words flow and to avoid the temptation to erase.

3/12/24 – No quick write prompt (post-survey)