The Professional Identities of Mainstream Teachers of English Learners: A Discourse Analysis

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THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS
OF ENGLISH LEARNERS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

by Adrian D. Martin

This qualitative study investigated the professional identities of four mainstream teachers of English learners (ELs). Four teachers in two school contexts (urban and suburban) were interviewed five times and observed during formal instruction four times. Adopting a sociocultural perspective on identity, the study employed discourse analysis to answer the research questions: (a) what are the professional identities of four mainstream teachers of English learners in Northern New Jersey schools; (b) in what ways are these identities constructed by the participants; and (c) what seem to be the influences on these teachers' professional identities? The interview data were analyzed using three of Gee's (2011b; 2011c) building tasks of language: relationships, politics, and identities. Observations were coded using open and axial coding. Findings suggest that despite differing identity conceptions, making ELs comfortable in the classroom, students’ English language acquisition, and inclusion in academic activities were central elements in the professional identities of all of the participants. Relationships with students, parents and families, colleagues, and former teachers emerged as influences that supported the enactment of professional self. Linguistic, cultural, and national identities surfaced as having differential influence on the professional identities. Despite differences in their constructions of professional self, the teachers’ reported enactments of their identities in interviews and within the context of formal instruction were more
similar than different. That is, there was greater variation in the enactment of professional self in the context of informal instruction and engagement with members of the school community other than students than during formal instruction. Differential constructions of linguistic, national, and cultural identities in relation to teacher identity emerged even among teachers of the same social and cultural backgrounds. While affirming ELs’ inclusion in the classroom through efforts to make students feel comfortable was important to all participants, they struggled with identifying research-based pedagogical practices to promote (rather than solely include) ELs in the classroom. The findings reaffirm the need for a teacher workforce that identifies as linguistically responsive. A consideration of these findings in relation to the research literature is discussed along with recommendations for teacher education practice and teacher education research.
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I cannot thank Dr. Michele Knobel enough for her invaluable contribution to my academic development and appreciation for discourse analysis. Her expertise has guided and informed my thinking about qualitative research and was instrumental in attending to the language of the study. I thank her for her guidance throughout this process and her enthusiasm for my work.

I would especially like to extend my thanks and gratitude to my family, friends, and loved ones. Their belief and faith in my ability to complete my doctoral studies and this dissertation has given me the drive and motivation to achieve these goals. I am fortunate to have a network of individuals whose love and support for me remain a constant source of inspiration and motivation. I love them all.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and my father.

There are no words that fully express my gratitude, my love, and my appreciation for everything they have each done for me.
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Chapter One: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The education of English learners (ELs) in the United States has been an issue of debate among policy makers and education researchers for many years (e.g., Cummins, 2000; Fenner, 2014; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Questions regarding the language of instruction and the instructional placement of ELs have persisted since the 1970s (Crawford, 2007; Herrero, 2007). While bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs received federal support in the 1980s and 1990s (Cummins, 1998; Ovando, 2003), shifts in political ideology, the growing English-only political movement (Crawford, 2008; Varghese & Stritikus, 2005), and the limited number of ESL/bilingual specialists, in conjunction with a growing EL student population and reduction of stand-alone ESL classrooms in more recent years, have led to the increasing inclusion of ELs in mainstream classrooms (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Gibbons, 2002; Skilton-Sylvester, 2003). While largely centered in urban areas and large coastal cities, the EL population is the fastest growing student group throughout the country, including in areas where they have not had a strong historical presence (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Fix & Capps, 2005; Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, 2011; Valdes & Castellon, 2011). Thus, the student demographic in today’s classrooms is changing, and mainstream teachers are more likely to teach a linguistically diverse student population than at any time in the recent past.

Such a shift necessitates a change in teachers’ perceptions of themselves. They need to see themselves as teachers of a culturally and linguistically diverse student
population rather than a homogeneous one. However, there is little evidence to suggest that teachers are developing this professional identity. Preservice and in-service teachers receive little preparation or professional development focused on ways to support ELs’ academic and language needs (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Bunch, 2013; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Lucas, 2011; Nutta, Mokhtari, & Strebel, 2012; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Zeichner, 2005), most of them have had little experience with culturally and linguistically diverse individuals (Banks, 2013; Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and some express little interest in learning how to teach them (Lucas, Villegas & Martin, 2015; Marx, 2002; Walker, Shafer, & Iams, 2004). Thus, it appears that teachers may not be encouraged to construct their professional identities to reflect the changes in the student population. The lack of research in this area means that, in fact, little is known about how mainstream teachers understand, construct, and enact their professional identities in relation to teaching ELs. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the construction of and influences on the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs and whether (or how) these identities are responsive to the academic and language needs of these students.

**Justification of the Research**

There is a growing body of research on teachers’ beliefs about ELs (Lucas et al., 2015; Pettit, 2011), on the knowledge base for teaching ELs (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Turkan, de Oliveira, Lee, & Phelps, 2014), and on instructional practices to support these students (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012; Fenner, 2014; Solomon, 2008). While research in these areas provides guidance on what
teachers should value, know and do in classrooms with ELs, it ignores the relationship between how the construction of one’s professional identity as a teacher relates to the educative experiences of ELs. Given that facilitating academic and language development for ELs requires specialized approaches by teachers (Graves, Gersten, & Haager, 2004; Lucas, 2011; Ray, 2009; Short & Echevarria, 1999; Valdes, Bunch, Snow, Lee, & Matos, 2005), it is important to understand teacher identity in order to prepare teachers who see themselves as teachers of ELs and who therefore seek to learn about and apply those specialized approaches. To illustrate, a teacher who constructs her identity as a mathematics content specialist may fail to engage in instructional practices to facilitate English language development for ELs because the construction of her professional identity centers on teaching content, not language. This would adversely affect ELs’ ability to learn mathematics (academic content) and use the discourse of mathematics (language). Research on the professional identities of mainstream teachers is necessary to gain insight into how the construction and enactment of these identities relates to the educative experiences of ELs.

The second reason for conducting research in this area is the lack of scholarly investigation regarding how mainstream teachers of ELs negotiate a range of influences on their professional identities. Although research on teacher identity has been growing since the early 2000s (see Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Vasquez, 2011), research on the identities of mainstream teachers of ELs is in its infancy. More prevalent has been research on teacher identity among ESL/bilingual certified educators working with ELs (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, Johnson, 2005). However,
this research focuses on teachers who have some degree of specialization in ESL and bilingual education and therefore enter the teaching profession as teachers of ELs. It does not reflect the personal and professional experiences or contextual conditions of the overwhelming majority of teachers of ELs—that is, mainstream teachers—and how those conditions influence their professional selves.

The U.S. teaching force has been and continues to be predominantly White, middle class, monolingual, with limited experiences with culturally or linguistically diverse individuals (Fernandez, 2000; Kushner & Ortiz, 2000; Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boone, & Zimmer, 2009; Soto, 1991; Worthington et al., 2011); mainstream teachers tend to have deficit views of ELs (Lucas et al., 2015; Pettit, 2011); and mainstream teachers consider themselves unprepared to teach ELs (Cho & Christenbury, 2000; Escamilla, 2006; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; O’Neal, Ringler, & Rodriguez, 2008; Penfield, 1987; Polat, 2010; Reeves, 2006; Rodriguez, Manner, & Darcy, 2010; Walker, et al., 2004) and are more supportive of the general idea of EL inclusion than of actually having ELs in their classrooms (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Penfield, 1987; Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). This profile of the teaching force suggests that research is needed to better understand the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs. The persistent academic achievement gap between ELs and their mainstream peers (Abedi, 2002; Fry, 2008; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Reardon & Galindo, 2009) makes it more pressing than ever to examine the construction of and influences on the professional identities of their teachers to gain insight as to how the
enactment of these identities is conducive to the academic and language development of ELs.

**Theoretical Framework**

Identity is a topic of interest for scholars and researchers in diverse fields of study, including psychology, education, philosophy and sociology. The study of identity highlights possible reasons why individuals assume certain paths and make particular decisions (Kroger, 2007), affiliate with particular social groups over others (Brewer, 2001) and enact certain practices (Haniford, 2010). Different disciplinary perspectives define and conceive of identity in different ways. Those differences carry assumptions about the process by which identities emerge and the role of the individual and context in shaping or constructing an identity. In this section, I first provide an overview of three major theoretical perspectives in the literature on identity—the psychological, postmodern and sociocultural. I then explain my decision to adopt the sociocultural perspective to frame my dissertation study on teacher identity.

**Conceptions of Identity**

The psychological perspective is the oldest of the three perspectives, emerging in the literature around the 1960s (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). From a psychological perspective, identity is thought to develop through mental processes in which an individual autonomously engages as she works to make sense of herself (Côté & Levine, 2002; Waterman, 2011), ultimately relating to and enacting the role she seeks to play in life (Burke & Tully, 1977; Marcia, 1966; Thoits, 1986). Because it is assumed that the individual is free to choose her identity and develop it autonomously, she is seen
as exerting agency throughout the identity development process (Erikson, 1968). The notion that a person has a core, essential self (or identity) is also assumed from this perspective (Erikson, 1968; Goossens, 2001). Identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Turner, 1987) and social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) are two psychologically grounded theories that share these tenets. The former is concerned with how the individual perceives herself in relation to a role she seeks to embody (e.g., teacher or daughter), and how she develops and ultimately enacts that role (Stets & Burke, 2000). The latter examines the individual’s developing identification within a particular group (e.g., teachers, journalists). Thus, while identity theory emphasizes recognition of oneself in terms of the development of a particular identity, social identity theory emphasizes identity development in relation to a group. Despite this important difference, both theories position the individual as engaged in an autonomous process of developing a certain identity.

In contrast, the postmodern perspective focuses on identities as products of social and cultural discourses that individuals adopt by virtue of their affiliation with particular social categories, such as ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender, and sexuality (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1987). As used here, discourse refers to the norms and practices that are socially enacted and reenacted by members of a particular group (Cherryholmes, 1988). As such, discourses serve as social, historical, institutional and cultural instantiations of particular identities and practices reflective of groups or institutions (Foucault 1965; 1978). Thus, identities are socially produced and reproduced. This suggests that the identities by which a person recognizes herself and is recognized by others actually pre-
date her in that they are rooted in social and cultural institutions. Because identities are thought to be the product of social and cultural discourses, an individual is not seen as possessing a core, essential identity. Rather, the enactment of an identity is considered performative, akin to an actor engaging in a performance; and in following the social script assigned, the individual unconsciously produces and reproduces roles or identities (Butler, 1990). Socially, identities are reproduced and re-inscribed. It is only as social norms change over time that identities change as well. In this sense, identities are discontinuous and changing. As the above suggests, from a postmodern perspective agency plays little to no role in an individual’s identity.

To help explain the process of production and reproduction, postmodernism provides the concept of subjectivity. Subjectivity refers to “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (Weedon, 1987, p. 32). This sense of self is “produced historically and change[s] with shifts in the wide range of discursive fields” (Weedon, 1987, p. 33). Weedon (1987) argues that the process of recognizing how the sense of self is a product of this process can support a reinterpretation of self as an actor engaged in playing the part of a particular social position (e.g., middle class, gay, woman).

While the two perspectives discussed above have been used widely to study identity (e.g., Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, 2010; Friesen & Belsey, 2013; Morgan, 2004; Zembylas, 2005), each is limited in important ways. The psychological perspective’s focus on the mental processes an individual undergoes as she
develops an identity overlooks the influence of context on the identity development process. The psychological conception of identity fails to attend to how the interplay between context and individual agency shapes an individual’s identity. Along different lines, the postmodern perspective’s critique of identities as socially produced and reproduced denies a central, core identity that would clarify how an individual is recognized across various contexts and periods of time. In addition, treating identities as social constructions that are reproduced rather than as a facet of the individual “wrongly dismiss[es] the many worthwhile processes of identification through which people orient themselves in and collectively confront the world” (Stone-Mediatore, 2002, p. 129). If identities or subjectivities lack a core essence, then how “can we demand more truthful representations of the world, if we view all truth-claims as equally unreliable?” (Stone-Mediatore, 2002, p. 126). Fortunately, the sociocultural perspective of identity addresses these limitations.

From a sociocultural perspective, identities are constructed not only through mental processes and social norms and practices, but through human action as well. According to Gee (2011c), identity involves “being recognized as a certain kind of person.” A person’s identity is recognizable to oneself (through mental processes) and to others (through discourses and actions). Identity is not developed just within the individual or reproduced solely through social discourses. It is through interactions within specific contexts that individuals construct their identities. Importantly, because identity construction is related to context, and the individual engages in multiple contexts, one can possess multiple identities and exercise some agency regarding which identities
to construct. As the above suggests, the sociocultural perspective allows for the possibility that an individual can possess a core, essential identity while still enacting multiple identities in different contexts at different moments in time (Gee, 2011c) and thus enabling recognition across time and space. This approach attends to the context within which an individual is situated and how that individual interprets and engages within that context. The following quote by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) encapsulates the core themes inherent in the sociocultural perspective, as discussed above:

Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others’ perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts. (p. 606)

The assumptions built into this sociocultural perspective frame identity as a dynamic construct. Identity not only changes across time but also according to the context and the purposes for which the individual engages in that context (Norton, 2006; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Context in this sense refers not only to the immediate local setting, but extends to include cultural, social and historical resources (e.g., language, ethnic group membership, past events), institutional influences (e.g., laws, policies), and social norms (e.g., politeness, appropriate physical appearance) (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). The individual engages (alone or with others) in a given context wherein an
identity is constructed. Given that contexts change, the identities of individuals within that context also change; and given that individuals participate in multiple contexts, identities are multiple as well. This element of change complexifies the postmodern considerations of identity as multiple, fluid and discontinuous by suggesting that the discontinuity and fluidity of identity relate to particular purposes and are not random occurrences or solely the result of larger social discourses.

From a sociocultural perspective, then, identity is constructed through the complex interplay between the individual who uses cultural tools (e.g., language) and the sociocultural and/or institutional context (e.g., a religious function, a school) (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). While this interplay can enable or constrain particular identities (Norton, 2006), how the individual exercises agency in this interplay is important (Lasky, 2005). The idea that individuals have some capacity to recognize themselves, and be recognized by others, in a particular way contrasts with the postmodern critique of identity as socially produced. Thus, the sociocultural approach maintains that, while context plays a role in identity development, individuals are able to exercise some agency in the construction of their identities (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Lasky, 2005).

What individuals do with the cultural tools and resources available to them in a given context offers a window into how they exercise agency (Lasky, 2005). Language, in conjunction with “actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects” (Gee, 2011c), is a means for examining this process of exercising agency because it is largely through language that individuals construct
their identities (Buchwoltz & Hall, 2005; Norton, 2006; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Thus, language does more than to serve a communicative function; it is through language that individuals act in the world by saying, doing, and becoming (Gee, 2011b; 2011c). For example, when a police officer utters the words, “You are under arrest,” the officer is making a statement, indicating that an individual is being apprehended. Through the utterance, the officer is not only indicating that the individual is being arrested (the saying), but is also temporarily restricting the individual’s freedom (the doing). This saying and doing also constructs the officer’s identity as an officer (the becoming) because it is only members of law enforcement who can say, “You are under arrest,” with the aforementioned indication and resultant action. Within a sociocultural framework, then, identity is constructed through an encounter between the individual’s language choices (agency) and the cultural resources available (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995).

Studying identity through a sociocultural lens involves examining how individuals engage in the complex interplay between themselves and their context, both in their immediate local setting and within the larger social and historical context. As a sociocultural tool, language gives researchers a window into how individuals construct their identity, and the analysis of language use can reveal how individuals engage in such interplay within particular settings.

According to Gee (2000), identities (both broad and localized) can be classified into four categories, each of which defines an individual as a certain type of person: nature identity (which a person is born with), Discourse identity (which surfaces through speaking, appearance and actions by which one is recognized in a certain way by others),
institution identity (which is authorized or sanctioned by authorities), and affinity identity (which is derived from engaging in a certain process). For instance, a person might identify as a “born teacher” (nature identity); a teacher by virtue of possessing a professional teaching license (institution identity); a teacher due to her dressing, speaking and acting in particular ways that are customary for a teacher (Discourse identity); or a teacher as a result of her participation in professional organizations about teaching (affinity identity). The identity of a teacher emerges contingent upon how the individual understands herself, the context that she is in, and what she does within that context. Thus, a sociocultural perspective takes into account these multiple facets of identity, which neither the psychological nor postmodern perspective does.

By considering both micro-level (the individual) and macro-level (the social or contextual) influences on identity construction, a sociocultural perspective offers a fuller and more nuanced analysis than either the psychological or postmodern perspective. For that reason, I have adopted it as a conceptual perspective for my dissertation study. In brief, the framework posits that identities can be assumed or assigned (Gee, 2000), can change based on how individuals position themselves and others (Harré & Langenhove, 1991), and surface as a result of being in a certain place and time (Daniels, 2007). Gee’s perspective on identities serves as a means by which to theorize the emergence and practice of identities and comment on the social and contextual influences that shape identity construction. It expands beyond psychological meaning making processes and social discourses to consider how views of nature, rules of institutions, norms and traditions, and the workings of groups coalesce in the construction of an identity. This
analytic lens was productive in my examination of the identities of mainstream teachers of English learners. Table 1 provides an overview of key points across the three perspectives.

**Table 1. Perspectives on teacher identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Sociocultural</th>
<th>Postmodern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity develops through mental processes.</td>
<td>Identity is constructed through interaction with others and socio-cultural tools, artifacts, and discourses.</td>
<td>Identity is produced and reproduced through discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity is continuous.</td>
<td>Identity is dynamic (changes purposefully).</td>
<td>Identity is discontinuous, shifting and fluid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity is unitary and has a core.</td>
<td>Identity is multiple and there might be a core identity.</td>
<td>Identity is multiple and there is no core identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity is autonomous irrespective of time and context.</td>
<td>Individuals can exercise some agency in their identity construction.</td>
<td>Individuals have no agency in identity construction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perspectives on Teacher Identity**

While the previous section provided an overview of conceptualizations of identity and my argument for adopting a sociocultural perspective on identity, in this section I examine the dominant perspectives of teacher identity as reflected in the literature. As with other concepts (such as teachers’ beliefs), teacher identity is discussed in different ways by different scholars (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). While the lack of a central definition of the term can make it challenging to compare studies at times, this lack can also be useful as a means of investigating the work of teachers and teacher educators in different contexts and through different methods (Anspel, Eisenschmidt, & Lofstrom, 2012).
Identity—from a sociocultural orientation—has been characterized as the act or process of “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’” (Gee, 2000, p. 99) and the response to the question “Who are you?” (Vignoles Schwartz & Luyckx, 2011, p. 2). Following from these conceptions, teacher identity can be considered as the act or process of being the kind of teacher one is recognized as and who one is as a teacher, or how one sees oneself as a teacher. This seemingly simple definition captures the complexity of attending to both internal (psychological) and external (social) aspects of being a teacher. It also suggests how larger social constructs, such as discourses, define teachers. As with the literature on identity in general, the literature on teacher identity takes psychological, postmodern, and sociocultural perspectives. The psychological perspective examines teacher identity as an internal cognitive phenomenon; the sociocultural perspective examines teacher identity as a social phenomenon involving engagement and the interaction of the individual with others in a context; the postmodern perspective attends to the social production and reproduction of teacher identity. All three perspectives can support the examination of teacher identity as a framework for understanding the work of teachers. The psychological and sociocultural perspectives are concerned with teacher identity as a process, while the postmodern, with its emphasis on identity production, is concerned with how individuals fit (or do not fit) into existing models of what it means to be a teacher (Britzman, 1992; Søreide, 2007). Ultimately, the differences among the perspectives stem from the central focus of the researcher and the conceptual or theoretical framework she or he assumes.
Some scholars see teacher identity as a psychological phenomenon. Research from this perspective calls attention to individuals’ mental attachment (a pervasive and unconscious self-affiliation) to being a teacher and what it means to be a teacher (Cardelle-Elawar & Lizarraga, 2010). This attachment relates to how the individual interprets herself as part of the teaching profession. The psychological perspective attends to the cognitive (how the individual processes and interprets being a teacher) and motivational (the desire to enact or reflect being a teacher) processes of the individual. It considers teacher identity to be part of “...the inner-self [an individual’s self-understanding and self-recognition], which affects everything a teacher does in the classroom” (Cardelle-Elaware & Lizarraga, 2010, p. 294). From this perspective, teacher identity is related to the individual’s sense of self-esteem, self-consistency, self-efficacy and self-regulation, thus influencing her behavior (Cardelle-Elawar, Irwin, & Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga, 2007; Rots, Aelterman, Vierick, & Vermeulen, 2007).

Approaching teacher identity from the psychological perspective gives attention to understanding the process of developing teacher identity over a period of time as reflected in the meaning making of teachers. This perspective is productive for gaining insight into teacher identity formation during preservice education (e.g., Brown, 2006), the transition from preservice education into early professional experiences (e.g., Tait, 2008; Wilson & Deane, 2010), and the process through which teachers make sense of their professional identities as they engage in their professional responsibilities and duties (e.g., Gu & Day, 2007; Upadhayay, 2009). From this view, teacher identity involves the ongoing interpretation and re-interpretation of experience with learning to teach,
teaching, working as a teacher, and former experiences as a student (Danielewicz, 2001; Joseph & Heading, 2010; Meijer, Graaf, & Meirink, 2011).

Other scholars who take a psychological perspective view teacher identity as a framework rather than a process. While approaching teacher identity as a process calls attention to change or development over a period of time, teacher identity as framework takes a cross-sectional perspective focused on one point in time. A framework can be understood as a conceptual structure or map useful for considering how various elements constituting teacher identity serve to inform it. From the psychological perspective this involves examining numerous variables such as self-efficacy, relationship satisfaction, or occupational commitment and motivation (as defined in the psychological literature) to identify how these constructs contribute to a teacher identity (Canrinus, et al., 2012). Approaching teacher identity as a framework from the psychological perspective can shed light on how teachers make sense of the challenges in their work and the ways in which they integrate various influences (such as beliefs and values) into their understanding of professional self (Flores & Clark, 2004; Olsen, 2008).

Of central importance to the psychological perspective is gaining an understanding of the role of the constructs discussed above in the development of teacher identity and the use of those constructs as a framework for understanding identity. This perspective holds interactions as a peripheral concern to the ongoing individual cognitive processes of interpretation and understanding about being a teacher (Stenberg, Karlsson, Pitkaniemi, & Maaranen, 2014). It is in the internal meaning making regarding relationships with others (such as members of the school community), and regarding
one’s engagement in a context (such as the school community) that the process of teacher identity takes place (Friesen & Belsey, 2013; Wilson & Deane, 2010).

In contrast, the sociocultural perspective on teacher identity maintains that the central defining characteristic of teacher identity is that it is shaped through interaction with others and with the context engaged in. Burns and Bell (2001), for example, argue that teacher identity is “...constructed in social contacts and reshaped through interactions with others” (p. 53). Teachers’ interactions with their work context and with others influence how teachers see themselves and the manner in which teachers exercise agency in their teacher identities (Kelchtermans, 2009; Lasky, 2005). This interpretation views teacher identity as a type of professional identity, akin to an identity as a doctor, psychologist, or lawyer (Kelchtermans, 2009). From this perspective, being or seeking to be a kind of teacher may also involve integrating group characteristics, such as those of colleagues and other professional peers (Friesen & Besley, 2013).

The sociocultural perspective recognizes the influence of context, relationships and the meanings teachers make of their experience and their interactions with members of the school community and with the teaching profession as they construct their teacher identities (Meijer et al, 2011; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Teacher identity is shaped not only through interaction with others, but also through interaction with cultural contexts and institutions (Wilson & Deane, 2010). These interactions occur through the medium of language (Zemyblas, 2005) and the identities are recognized by others (e.g., members of the school community, parents, students). This recognition is shaped by pre-existing cultural models (both within the local and larger social contexts) in terms of what it
means to be a teacher. In short, teacher identity is constructed through interaction (via language) and recognition in a given context embedded in power relations, ideology and culture.

Research on teacher identity from the sociocultural perspective, like the psychological, approaches the construct both as a process and/or as a framework. The process approach highlights how teacher identity is constructed and reconstructed through the perceptions of teachers and other members of the school community (Richmond, Juzwik & Steele, 2011). Further, it examines how, given contextual differences, a teacher’s identity might change (Cheng, Wang, & Zhang, 2013; Gu, 2011) or how interactions with members of the educational community support the construction of particular teacher identities (Namaghi, 2009; Trent & Gao, 2009). Thus, a sociocultural process approach emphasizes how individuals construct and reconstruct teacher identities and are recognized within particular contexts.

Scholars who view teacher identity as a framework within the sociocultural perspective argue that this teacher identity framework (a conceptual window on how the role of teacher is constructed) facilitates the examination of teachers’ work, how teachers grapple with the tensions and challenges of their profession, and how being a teacher can be understood (Cheng et al., 2013; Horn, Nolen, Ward, & Campbell, 2008; Sachs, 2005). A teacher identity framework may be constituted by a number of elements, such as beliefs and attitudes, teaching practices, the experiences of teachers (both professional, such as interactions with other teachers and members of the school community, and personal, through relationships and events with others throughout life history) and norms
regarding the role of the teacher in society (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Teachers can use a teacher identity framework as a means to develop their own understanding of the teaching profession and the role of the teaching profession in society, which in turn, can facilitate professional development (Stenberg et al, 2014). This position supports Sugrue’s (2013) assertion that teacher identity, conceived as a framework, facilitates a continuous examination of what it means to be a teacher. For example, if a teacher’s identity is that of a content generalist (with a vast repertoire of content-based instructional strategies) and little or no responsibility for adapting her instruction for particular students (such as ELs), she draws on this identity in considering how to approach teaching ELs in her classroom. With this identity, she is unlikely to modify instruction in a particular way for ELs. If this teacher becomes aware of this teacher identity framework and its influence on her instruction, she may be more likely to see that she can change her professional identity to include attention to the needs of ELs and, in turn, adapt her instruction for these students.

The third perspective on teacher identity is the postmodern. Researchers who adopt this lens examine teacher identity as reflective of social discourses (or prevalent, dominant models) on what it means to be a teacher. Rather than examine how individuals construct (as in the sociocultural) or develop (as in the psychological) a teacher identity, the postmodern perspective suggests that teacher identity is produced and reproduced as a result of power differentials in the larger society and consider how individuals counter this process of reproduction (Britzman, 1992). While the previous two perspectives provide insight into the experiences of individual teachers and how they
actively engage in constructing or developing a teacher identity, the postmodern is concerned with the implications that social discourses on teacher identity have for education and how teachers can break free from those discourses.

Whereas from the psychological and sociocultural perspectives, teacher identity is seen as a process, from the postmodern perspective, it is seen as a product. Teacher identity is produced and reproduced through socially identifiable models of what a teacher is (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). For example, Sugrue’s study (1997) considered how media depictions of teachers contributed to social models concerned with being identified as a teacher and examined how these depictions informed student teachers’ understanding of what it would mean to become a teacher. Thus, the postmodern perspective is concerned with restrictions on how teacher identity is conceived within socially recognizable discourses. A teacher who does not conform to the dominant models of what it means to be a teacher or would be seen as disruptive or deviant would not be recognized as one. Furthermore, consistent with the postmodern literature on identity in general, there is no recognition of a core or essential identity that may transcend time and context.

What the postmodern perspective does share with the other perspectives is that some scholars who take this view see teacher identity as a framework. A teacher identity framework lens is used to examine how social discourses concerning what it means to be a teacher are reflected in the experiences and narratives of actual practitioners (Hall, Gunter, & Bragg, 2013) and how those discourses function as a template to determine how to appropriately enact teacher identity (Janzen, 2013). Others have used the
framework approach to illuminate how policy documents and regulations reflect a socially recognizable teacher identity and how these are accessible to teachers (Søreide, 2006; 2007).

In this dissertation, I am employing a definition of teacher identity that draws from the sociocultural perspective. Thus, I am examining teacher identity as discursively constructed (Zembylas, 2005) through interactions with others (Burns & Bell, 2011) in a particular context (Kelchtermans, 2009), integrating personal history and narratives (Rogers & Scott, 2008; Søreide, 2006) with larger social and institutional discourses on what it means to be a teacher (Sugrue, 1997; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998) and how one recognizes oneself (Cardelle-Elawar & Lizarraga, 2010) and is recognized by others as one (Gee, 2011b; 2011c).
Chapter Two: Review of the literature

In this chapter, I describe the methods by which I identified the empirical literature on teacher identity. I then present findings from my review of the empirical literature on teacher identity, organizing them according to the dominant themes that emerged during the research. Each of these thematic sections includes a subsection that examines studies focused on the teacher identity of teachers of ELs. I am using this structure to distinguish how teacher identity has been examined in the literature overall and then, more specifically, in relation to teachers of ELs. Having discussed theoretical conceptions of identity and teacher identity in Chapter One, I focus only on empirical literature on teacher identity in this chapter.

Search Procedures and Selection Criteria

I examined peer-reviewed publications of empirical research that focused on teacher identity in general and on teacher identity in relation to ELs in particular, focusing on studies of teachers who had taught or were teaching ELs. The search for the literature was conducted in two phases. First, I searched for studies on teacher identity in general without any further restrictions on the scope of the search. To identify as much of the literature as possible, I chose not to include any date parameters. I used the following search terms: teacher identity, identity theory and identity theories. I selected the latter two search terms so I could identify studies that would include some focus on theoretical conceptualizations of teacher identity. I obtained the literature for this study from various research databases—ERIC, Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete, and the Professional Development Collection. The search yielded 121 articles.
A review of the abstracts led me to identify 33 international empirical studies focusing on teacher identity among teachers from preschool through higher education. I examined the references to determine whether any additional articles could be identified.

My second search focused on preschool-12th grade in-service teachers of ELs. As I did not restrict the search geographically, I found several studies that examined teacher identity in relation to students learning English in nations with a dominant language other than English, where the socio-political environmental factors varied considerably. As elaborated upon by Norton (2000), a host of affective, social and cognitive influences can facilitate or hinder the second language (L2) learning experiences of nonnative speakers of the dominant language. Therefore, in order to ensure some consistency in the socio-political context in which teachers’ identities are enacted with ELs, and to align with the contextual setting where I conducted my dissertation research, I have included only those international articles that report on teachers working with ELs in contexts where English is the dominant language.

An initial search on teacher identity and English language learners resulted in a limited number of studies, most of which were irrelevant to my dissertation topic. Since the results numbered so few, I found it necessary to include numerous combinations of additional key terms to expand the search, including: teacher, teacher identity, linguistic diversity, ELL, English language learner, bilingual, ESL, English as a second language, language identity, LEP, limited English proficiency, sociocultural identity. A review of the abstracts from the string searches yielded 86 studies that included some discussion of teachers, identity, and diverse student populations. I examined the references of those
studies to determine whether any additional articles could be included in the literature review. Finally, I conferenced with a professor to identify any additional or auxiliary references that would be of value. I ultimately included studies that met the following criteria: (a) They focused on in-service P-12 teachers working with ELs in contexts where English is the dominant language; (b) they explored or investigated teacher identity; (c) they were peer-reviewed; and (d) they were empirical.

The literature included a number of studies focused on teacher identity and the teaching of English in non-English speaking countries (e.g., Duff & Uchida, 1997) as well as studies focused on student teachers (e.g., Allard & Santoro, 2006; Chang & Anagnostopoulos, 2011). In addition, a few studies focused on nonstandard varieties of English (e.g., Branch, 2004; Haddix, 2012) or the experiences of teacher educators (e.g., Farrell, 2011). While these provide insight into issues of identity and L2 learning and teaching, they were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Ultimately, a review of these studies resulted in 22 that satisfied the criteria for inclusion.

Combining the relevant studies from both searches yielded 55 studies that met the criteria for inclusion. I began to analyze the studies by reading them, looking for key words and focusing on how teacher identity was being investigated. I used Google Drive to organize my notes and keep track of the theoretical framework, research questions, methods and findings. I used the tables and the keywords to generate categories (Merriam, 2009) that illustrated the major themes across the articles.

Findings
Two themes emerged in relation to teacher identity after my review of the 55 studies: (a) influences on teacher identity, and (b) teacher identity development. I reexamined the studies to determine how each explored these categories. The findings of this review are discussed in the following sections. The first section on each theme examines how it has been explored in the literature on teacher identity without a focus on ELs. The second section focuses on the theme in relation to studies of teachers of ELs. Studies that are discussed provide insight into teacher identity as a type of professional identity. The terms employed by the researchers for ELs vary across the studies. I will use the researcher’s term when it is specific to the study, but will use ELs as the umbrella term for all linguistically non-mainstream students.

**Influences on Teacher Identity.** Studies in this portion of the review examined influences on teacher identity—that is, a range of factors that have the capacity to have an effect on the professional identities of teachers. The influences identified in this review had some effect on how teachers’ understood their role or their ability to enact a particular professional identity. Representative studies highlighting the influences are discussed.

**Influences on teacher identity: Not focused on English Learners.** The studies in this portion of the review focus on influences on teachers’ identities in general, without any special focus on teachers of ELs. The influences identified were previous experiences as a student and as a preservice teacher candidate; other identity categories; changes in professional context and duties; differences between teachers’ desired
identities and the identities thrust upon them by their schools; value for relationships with colleagues and students; emotions; and policy.

*Previous experiences as a student and a preservice teacher candidate.* Prior experiences as a student and preservice candidate were influences on teacher identity, as discussed in seven studies. Overwhelmingly, the studies drew from a sociocultural perspective, with the exceptions of the studies by Cardelle-Elawar and Lizarraga (2010) and Wilson and Deaney (2011), each of which drew from a psychological perspective.

Experiences as students were examined in the narratives of in-service teachers in the study by Cardelle-Elawar and Lizarraga (2010). The participants’ stories continuously referenced the schools they attended as students and the classroom teachers they learned from as strong influences on their teacher identities. Although the study did not label or characterize particular teacher identities, commitment to student learning was a motivational factor for remaining in the teaching profession and a noted characteristic of the participants’ former teachers. This study suggests that early school-based experiences may have informed the teacher identities of the participants. In a related study, Trent and Gao (2009) drew similar conclusions in reference to how previous professional experiences influenced the identities of second career teachers.

The influence of experience as a preservice candidate emerged in two other studies (Wilson & Deaney, 2011; Latta & Kim, 2011). These researchers examined teachers’ conceptions of teaching, and found that the values and perspectives about teachers that were espoused during the participants’ preservice programs differed from those in their work environments as teachers. In fact, the differences were so great that
the participants decided to either leave the profession or assume a teaching identity that they did not necessarily “feel at ease with, but [that became] a survival mode” (Latta & Kim, 2011, p. 680). Although there is a body of research on the disconnect many teachers experience between preservice preparation and the in-service context (Chubbock, 2008; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Roy, 2003; Veenman, 1984; Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981), that literature is largely focused on the practice of teaching, not identity. The studies in this review demonstrate that the disconnect may be relevant not only for instructional practices learned in preservice education, but also for the construction of teacher identity.

Thus, the enactment of teacher identity is influenced by what a teacher brings to her professional role and how the context in which she works constructs that professional role and identity. When these are not aligned, tension and dissatisfaction can arise. Support for such alignment may be derived from professional dialogue between schools and teacher preparation programs. Trent and Lim (2010) investigated the efforts of a school university partnership in Hong Kong that was influential in supporting teachers’ ability to negotiate and take ownership of their professional learning and identities, facilitating their capacity to exercise agency. The partnership may have aided in diminishing differences between preservice learning and the responsibilities and duties of in-service teachers that can surface as tension (Latta & Kim, 2011; Wilson & Deaney, 2011). Research by Trent (2010) suggests that supporting teachers’ examination of the link between theoretical content learned in preservice education and their actual practice supports a “modern” teacher identity as teachers who actively engage in research and
reflection, and who explore theory (learned in preservice education) in relation to their teaching (enacted as in-service practitioners). Thus, school-university partnerships can potentially support constructions of teacher identity that are consistent across preservice and in-service contexts.

Such a partnership may have been useful for the participant in the study by Vetter, Meacham and Schieble (2013). The researchers examined the classroom level practices of a teacher in relation to his professional identity in a case study of one preservice high school English teacher. A White male in his early 20s, the participant learned about critical pedagogy in his preservice education and expressed a desire to enact it in his teaching. Drawing from positioning theory (Harré & Langenhove, 1991), Vetter and colleagues investigated how the participant related to his students, how he positioned them and how he himself was positioned in different sections of the same course he taught during his practicum experience. Discourse analysis was used to analyze videotaped lessons. Although the participant strongly wanted to enact critical pedagogy (enacting a teacher identity as a critical pedagogue), his ability to do so was hindered in a course section wherein classroom management was a challenge. Yet, in another course section, he did not have such a challenge and was able to teach as a critical pedagogue. The researchers suggest that in the challenging classroom environment the participant’s teacher identity was characterized as a “power-control” identity, wherein he sought to use his authority as teacher to manage the behavior of his students. In the other course section, his teacher identity was characterized as “power-share,” wherein he actively sought to facilitate learning among the students rather than issue directives (as in the
power-control identity). This case illustrates how a teacher in different classes in one school can have different or multiple teacher identities. The researchers suggest that attention to changes at the classroom level contributed to understanding the reconstruction of teacher identity and shed light on how this teacher navigated and confronted challenges in practice.

*Other identity categories.* Four studies focused on how various racial, cultural, linguistic and sexual identities related to the enactment of teaching identities. Only Burns and Bell (2011) drew from a sociocultural perspective (the remainder drew from postmodernism) and most of these studies did not elucidate the professional identities themselves. One study that did focus on aspects of teachers’ professional identities is the study by Beynon, Ilieva, Dichups and Hirji (2003). The authors examined how British teachers of cultural and linguistic minority backgrounds constructed and represented their backgrounds in relation to teaching. The teacher participants, of Punjabi and Chinese ancestry, incorporated their linguistic backgrounds in different ways. Punjabi teachers incorporated their bilingualism as an asset in their professional identities, allowing them to communicate with the families of students, while the bilingualism of the Chinese teachers facilitated the incorporation of literacy practices in Chinese with their students. For both groups, being bilingual was an aspect of their professional identities.

However, some teachers may not have such an awareness of their linguistic or cultural backgrounds in relation to their professional identities. In contrast to the findings of Beynon and colleagues (2003), Delano-Oriaran and Meidl (2012), whose work examined awareness of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of White American
teachers, suggest that if not for participation in a book club (centered on conversations about race and culture) the participants would not have had an awareness as to how their White backgrounds related to particular social, cultural and economic privileges not shared by culturally and linguistically diverse students. The development of this awareness among the participants began to manifest as the participants acknowledged the role and influence of the social construction of race and the means through which they could foster social change through their pedagogy.

This contrast suggests that being a member of a minority or non-mainstream background may facilitate awareness of how one’s background influences one’s teacher identity to a greater extent than being from culturally dominant and linguistically privileged backgrounds. Such awareness was evident among the participants in the study by Burns and Bell (2011), who provided narratives of their experiences as individuals with dyslexia and how being dyslexic informed a teacher identity that encompassed empathy and sensitivity to the needs of students. The work by Whitlock (2010), examining her own identity as a Queer woman and its relation to her identity as a teacher, suggested that awareness of her identity as a sexual minority shaped her practice and understanding of self as a researcher and teacher educator. Yet, it was challenging to reconcile her Queer identity with her teacher identity as the professional context that she was in did not facilitate discussions on gender or sexuality. While the researchers in these studies did not investigate the various characteristics or aspects of the professional identities of the teachers, they suggest that other identity categories, particularly those of non-mainstream backgrounds, do figure into teachers’ identities. Further, the work of
Delano-Oriaran and Meidl (2012) demonstrates that such awareness can be promoted among teachers of culturally and linguistically dominant backgrounds.

Changes in professional context and duties. Four studies show the important influence of changes in context on teachers’ identities. In two of those studies (Gu, 2011; Cheng et al., 2013) (both drawing from a sociocultural perspective), teachers moved from one country to another, where the professional environment and expectations were quite different. The change in national and professional contexts challenged the enactment of the participants’ professional identities, and linguistic differences surfaced as a source of misunderstanding and miscommunication with students and colleagues. These factors challenged the identities of the Chinese preservice teachers who attended an education institute in Hong Kong in Gu’s (2011) study. The participants’ language and teaching styles gave them legitimacy in the Chinese classrooms in which they had completed initial practicum work, but they lacked such legitimacy in later practicum work in Hong Kong. The related case study by Cheng and colleagues (2013) of a Chinese higher education faculty member who relocated to the United States highlighted similar challenges, leading the participant to experience doubt and anxiety about himself as a teacher. In order to enact a new teacher identity that more closely reflected the language use and teaching styles in the new contexts, participants were forced to adjust their instructional approaches. In both studies it was the manifestations of those cultural differences within the school environment that influenced teacher identity.

Another circumstance that can influence teacher identity is having different duties within the same larger context. O’Conner and Macdonald (2002) found that differences
in how the participants—secondary physical educators who also worked as sports coaches—perceived that their roles facilitated their ability to adapt to different duties (those of the classroom and the sports field) and to persevere in their professional environment. The authors suggest that maintaining multiple professional identities (such as both physical educator and sports coach) enabled the participants to engage professionally both in the classroom and on the sports field. The related study by Angelle and Schmid (2007) drew from a psychological perspective like O’Conner and Macdonald (2002) and highlighted that the individual tasks and duties teachers are assigned can support multiple professional identities. The examined duties and tasks (including non-instructional) of U.S. elementary and high school teachers were associated with various roles including decision maker, educational role model, positional designee, and suprapractitioner and visionary.

Differences between teachers’ desired identities and the identities thrust upon them by their schools. A sense of challenge and professional dissatisfaction arises when teachers are expected to enact professional identities not aligned to their own (Hall et al., 2013; Namaghi, 2009; Tsui, 2007; Upadhay, 2009). The four studies in this portion of the review drew from postmodern (Hall et al., 2013; Namaghi, 2009), sociocultural (Tsui, 2007) and psychological (Upadhay, 2009) perspectives. The researchers found that teachers’ professional identities were closely tied to their professional knowledge and skills (Hall et al., 2013; Namaghi, 2009; Tsui, 2007) and values for equity mindedness (Upadhay, 2009). When the construction of the role of teachers in their professional contexts ran counter to teachers’ own constructions of their identities, they were
prevented from enacting the kinds of identities that they valued. The resultant dissatisfaction with the enactment of their professional roles caused them to struggle to persevere in their professional contexts.

For example, Namaghi (2009) examined how the teacher identities of five Iranian teachers (all male) were influenced by their work context. The participants’ teacher identities were closely tied to their professional knowledge and skills. However, the school administration had adopted a detailed scripted curriculum and prescribed teaching practices that all members of the faculty were expected to implement; this change did not allow these teachers to manifest their knowledge and skills. Similarly, the emphasis on standardized test preparation in a U.S. school created a context in which an African-American fifth grade science teacher could not enact the teacher identity to which she aspired—an identity oriented towards constructivist practices and equity mindedness (Upadhay, 2009). In another study (Hall et al., 2013), a teacher who sought to incorporate distributed leadership practices into his work (adopting the role of leader in his professional identity) found that this view of his role as a teacher stood in conflict with the hierarchical structure of the school.

Despite these differences, teachers in these studies continued to engage in their professional duties and tasks, even if they felt engagement in those tasks did not reflect the kind of teachers that they considered themselves to be (Hall et al., 2013; Namaghi, 2009; Tsui, 2007; Upadhay, 2009). Yet they remained steadfast in their views of themselves and of how to enact their professional roles and work. Tsui (2007) suggests that values reflected in a professional identity may be resilient when contrary to
institutional mandate or perspectives based on the results of the study. However, Tsui also argues that the resultant tension from this difference may promote a conception of illegitimacy in the identity of a teachers (from their perspective) and therefore teacher education programs, mentors, and instructional leaders should support teachers in the development of their professional identities and have those competencies recognized (a suggestion also offered by Namaghi, 2009).

Value for relationships with colleagues and students. Other researchers have focused on the influence on teacher identity of relationships teachers form with colleagues. In the psychological study by Canrinus et al., (2012), quantitative analysis was conducted on the survey responses of 1,214 in-service Dutch teachers exploring how self-efficacy, job satisfaction, occupational commitment and level of motivation informed teacher identity. The researchers suggest that a teacher identity characterized by a high sense of self-efficacy, job satisfaction and motivation is facilitated through supportive relationships with colleagues. For preservice teachers, who have yet to begin forming such relationships, teacher identity was found to be centered upon and characterized by a value for the teacher-student relationship (Stenberg et al., 2014). Situating their work from a postmodern perspective, Stenberg and colleagues (2014) suggest that perhaps, once these preservice teachers begin their professional practice, aspects of relationships with colleagues may surface as important to their teacher identities. An emphasis on this contextual aspect of teachers’ work was missing from the studies by Namaghi (2009), Upadhay (2009), Wilson and Deaney (2011), and Latta and Kim (2011). Thus, we are
unable to ascertain how professional relationships with colleagues (or the lack thereof) may have contributed to the noted professional dissatisfaction reported by the teachers.

*Emotions.* Attention to teacher identity, circumstances, and events at the classroom level were explored in two studies that drew from a postmodern perspective (Janzen, 2013; Zembylas, 2005) with particular attention to how emotion surfaced as influential. While the case by Vetter and colleagues (2013) focused on the participant’s desire to enact a particular pedagogy (in alignment with his view of the kind of teacher he wanted to be), these researchers suggest that teacher identity is rooted neither in certainty nor in expertise, but rather in emotions that surface when dealing with the uncertainties that arise. For example, Zembylas’s (2005) ethnographic study of an elementary teacher highlights how emotions factored into the teacher’s decision making, particularly in moments of difficulty, and how emotion was constituted and regulated in the work of the teacher. The practices and social conventions of the school environment reinforced how (and when) the participant was supposed to demonstrate emotion. Emotional expression not only resulted from internal feelings, but was regulated through the external environment. This, Zembylas argues, constitutes teacher identity:

In my conception of emotion, teacher emotions are not private, nor merely the effects of outside structures, nor simply language-laden, but are performative—that is, the ways in which teachers understand, experience, perform, and talk about emotions are highly related to their sense of identity. Thus, teacher identity can be studied in the classroom and other school settings where teachers are emotionally engaged in how their selves come to be constituted (p. 937)
**Policy.** Søreide’s work (2007) extended beyond the classroom or school setting itself, considering how Norwegian policy documents influenced teacher identity. Rather than looking at the individual identities of a particular teacher, Søreide conducted a discourse analysis and drew from postmodern and poststructural theories (Weedon, 1987) on identity as discursively produced. The documents that she examined were three national curricula that were significant for teachers and teacher education programs in Norway. Søreide suggested that because these documents are influential, they serve as a form of “narrative control” on what it means to be a teacher in Norway and how that identity is constructed. Although there was no discussion of whether teachers adopted or desired the teacher identities that surfaced from the discourse analysis, the findings suggest that the artifacts can influence teacher identity—in the case of Norway, to reflect a belief that democracy in Norway is dependent upon the knowledge, communication and abilities of teachers to teach their students, the need to accommodate instruction to support student learning, and the teacher’s personal responsibility “for the maintenance of the child’s immanent urge to learn” (Søreide, 2007, p. 138).

**Influences on teacher identity: Teachers of English Learners.** This group of studies examined five influences on the identity of teachers of ELs: other identity categories (racial [Ajayi, 2011; Liggett, 2008] and linguistic [Casimir, Mattox, Hays, & Vasquez, 2000; Conteh, 2007; Diniz de Figueiredo, 2011; Jackson, 2006; & Weisman, 2001]); guidance (or lack thereof) on how to teach ELs (Haworth, 2008; Varghese, 2006; Varghese & Stritikus, 2005); changes in policy (Assaf, 2008; Varghese & Stritikus,
2005); belief in building relationships with students (Flores & Clarke, 2004; Motha, 2006; Yoon, 2008); and school climate (Wenger, Dinsmore, & Villagomez, 2012).

Other identity categories. The identity categories of teachers working with ELs were explored in 11 studies in different contexts and grade levels. None of the studies in this section drew from a psychological perspective. Instead, most drew from sociocultural views with the remainder (Ajayi, 2011; Jackson, 2006; Liggett, 2008; & Weisman, 2001) drawing from postmodernism. In contrast to the studies of teacher identity among teachers of general student populations, this group of studies gives greater emphasis on other identity categories. Both Ajayi (2011) and Liggett (2008), for example, examined how race, ethnicity and culture influenced the teacher identities of their participants. Ajayi’s examination of elementary and secondary California ESL teachers suggested that Hispanic and African-American teachers recognized their racial and/or linguistic backgrounds as an influence on their work, informing a sense of commitment to teach ELs well as part of their teacher identity. The White teachers in the study, like those in Liggett’s, failed to acknowledge how their own socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds mediated their professional practices and approaches to teaching ELs. Unlike the participants in the study by Delano-Oriaran and Meidl (2012), discussed previously, Liggett’s participants did not recognize or express a desire to enact a socio-politically conscious teacher identity. Reeve’s 2006 study of a secondary language arts teacher who worked in a school environment that paid little attention to the needs of ELs reflected similar circumstances. The teacher in the study gave little thought to the particular linguistic and academic needs of ELs. His teacher identity was as a language
arts teacher, not a teacher for ELs or any other student population. This teacher had no opportunity to examine or reflect on his own White background.

Other White teachers, such as those in the study by Pennington and Brock (2012), recognized the interplay between language and race in relation to teaching and learning. By reflecting on their life experiences through a Critical White Studies framework (Helms, 1995), the participants eventually came to view their cultural identity as part of and connected to their teacher identity—which the researchers described as a teacher identity characterized by or possessing a value for equity-minded practice. A benefit of reflecting on their life experiences was that it provided the teachers insight into the language learning experiences of their ELs and demonstrated knowledge of and value for the students’ L1.

The challenge of enacting a socio-politically conscious teacher identity is not exclusive to White educators. Minority teachers, such as the Hispanic participants in the study by Cahnmann and Varhgese (2005), also experienced difficulty in enacting a socio-politically conscious teacher identity, albeit for different reasons. The teachers experienced professional isolation as few colleagues shared a value for bilingual education, the incorporation of native language into the instructional practices, or connecting the lives of the ELs with school-based literature. Both of the teachers in the study maintained that their teacher identity was firmly intertwined with their cultural and linguistic identities, and each recognized that these socio-linguistic identities were means of connecting with their students. Thus, the participants’ teacher identities were characterized by a value for connecting language and culture with the lives of their
students. Due to contextual factors that did not value bilingualism and a xenophobic climate, these educators, who drew from their own identities to affirm that of their ELs, decided to quit teaching.

Other studies have found that minority teachers’ linguistic identity plays a role in their awareness of sociopolitical factors impinging upon the classroom (Casimir et al., 2000; Conteh, 2007; Diniz de Figueiredo, 2011; Jackson, 2006; & Weisman, 2001). In these studies, the teachers’ awareness of their own minority status and the language learning experiences of minority individuals showed “their awareness of the ways in which such issues impinged on their work in school” (Conteh, 2007, p. 463). The studies suggest that there is a relationship between bicultural and bilingual identity and an affirming disposition towards ELs. The fact that the participants in the above studies were of diverse linguistic backgrounds and/or bilingual themselves suggests that language was recognized by these teachers as part of their own and their students’ cultural identities. The teacher identity of these teachers is thus one that values the inclusion and affirmation of diverse languages.

What these studies did not address is how such views compare with the views of monolingual teachers. This theme was examined in the work of Tong, Castillo, and Perez (2010). In this quantitative study the researchers conducted a survey of 89 Latino Texas public school teachers from a large urban district with high numbers of ELs. All the participants were either bilingual or ESL certified. The survey results suggested that bilingual certified and alternate route certified teachers were less acculturated to U.S. culture than ESL certified teachers (who were monolingual) or traditionally certified
teachers. The findings also suggest that those teachers who more strongly identified with Latino culture were more likely to seek bilingual teacher certification, while those less identified sought ESL certification. Although the monolingual teachers had some understanding of issues regarding second language learners (they were ESL certified), the attachment to Latino culture was not as evident as it was with the bilingual certified teachers.

*Guidance or lack thereof on teaching English Learners.* Some researchers attributed professional identity confusion and uncertainty among teachers of ELs to lack of direction and policy on how to teach ELs. The three studies in this portion of the review highlighted this issue and drew from a sociocultural perspective (Haworth, 2008; Varghese, 2006; Varghese & Stritikus, 2005). Mainstream teachers in a school in New Zealand (Haworth, 2008) struggled with the lack of a clear, cohesive school policy to support their own learning needs for teaching their English as an additional language (EAL) students. Lack of professional clarity was also influential for Pennsylvania teachers studied by Varghese (2006), who were uncertain about how to teach their bilingual students. The New Zealand teachers in the aforementioned study were described as classroom managers who, in order to attend to the EAL students, began to assume some of the tasks and duties assigned to the EAL specialist teachers. It is not identified in the study what led the New Zealand teachers to assume agency towards reconstructing their teacher identities. Thus, some unidentified influence supported the teachers to reconstruct their professional identities to better attend to the needs of their EAL students.
Changes in policy. While none of the reviewed studies show formal school policies positively contributing to the enactment of affirming and supportive teacher identities for ELs, two studies drew from a sociocultural lens and suggest that changes in policy can influence changes in teaching practices and the need to negotiate a new teacher identity (Assaf, 2008; Varghese & Stritikus, 2005). For example, in the study by Varghese and Stritikus (2005) of California teachers working under Proposition 227, which prohibited native language instruction, the participants were frustrated at not being able to enact their former teaching identity (as bilingual teachers) and engage in the instructional practices that they had previously used once the new school environment focused on English-only language instruction. This tension resulted in the participants’ enacting a professional identity that they believed did not align with their values.

In contrast to teachers with such an awareness of language and cultural issues among ELs, deficit views and a lack of advocacy for the language learning needs found among the South African teachers in the study by Pillay, Gokar, and Kathard (2007) influenced their work with students. Although the official policy had changed from de jure segregation to racial integration, the views of the teachers did not mirror the values espoused in the new political climate of racial integration. The influence of policy in this study inadvertently reinforced the previously held attitudes and beliefs of the teachers rather than changing them and strengthened their resolve to maintain their desired teacher identities. The participants expressed deficit views of bilingualism and the inclusion of the students’ native languages in schools and maintained Standard English as the only valid form of the language. For some of the participants, their daily teaching practice
involved linguistic segregation within the classroom with students not proficient in English physically seated apart and not fully incorporated into the classroom community. The professional identities of these teachers led them to position students as deficient and revealed the teachers’ ignorance of the socio-political aspects of language. Both the study by Varghese and Stritikus (2005) and Pillay et al. (2007) highlight the resilience of teachers’ desired professional identities (a theme echoed by Tsui, 2007) even when the policy context changes and teachers are expected to enact a new identity.

Belief in the need to get to know and build relationships with students. Three studies by other researchers suggest that the belief that they should get to know and build relationships with students, especially ELs, can be an influence on teacher identity (Flores & Clarke, 2004; Motha, 2006; Yoon, 2008). Two studies drew from a sociocultural lens (Motha, 2006; Yoon, 2008) and the work by Flores and Clarke (2004) from a psychological lens. Participants in these studies believed they were responsible for the educative experiences of all their students, including ELs, and assumed responsibility for teaching them. For example, a participant in Yoon’s (2007) study, Mrs. Young, believed that the most important thing she needed to do for her ELs’ education was to build trusting relationships and actively get to know her students. She attributed their trust to her supporting ELs’ participation in the English language arts classroom and saw evidence of their trust in their view of her as someone they could ask assistance of rather than as an authority figure. Yoon suggests that Mrs. Young’s belief in relationship building informed her professional identity as a caring and approachable teacher.
School climate. School climate is an influence on teacher identity in the studies of teachers of ELs as reflected in the work by Wenger et al. (2012) and Diniz de Figuerido (2011), both drawing from a sociocultural lens. At a rural charter school discussed by Wenger and colleagues (2012), the school climate influenced a number of dispositions that informed the teachers’ identities. These included valuing all members of the school community, expecting to learn from ELs and staff, expecting to collaborate and continuously learn from one another, and bringing one’s language and culture to the classroom. Likewise, the nonnative ESL teachers in the study by Diniz de Figueiredo (2011) indicated that they felt affirmed and valued in their professional environment, contributing to a teacher identity that positioned their bilingualism and biculturalism as assets and resources. These studies demonstrate that a school climate or culture that values linguistic diversity may be supportive towards promoting a teacher identity attentive to ELs.

Teacher Identity Development. The studies in this next section examined the development of teacher identity among preservice and in-service teachers and, in one case, a novice teacher educator. The professional identities of the participants were examined to understand how they developed over time. Thus, while there is some attention to influences, the unifying theme in this section is temporal progression, either through noted differences between preservice and in-service teachers (Hammon, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010) or through reflection during one semester (Joseph & Heading, 2010). As a whole, the studies underscore some of the challenges and tensions individuals confront as teachers and how these can serve as a catalyst for teacher
identity development (Friesman & Belsey, 2013). With the oldest study in this section having been published nine years ago (Søreide, 2006), the reviewed research examines teacher identity development in the current 21st century context, both domestically and internationally.

Teacher Identity Development: Not focused on English Learners. In these eight studies, conceptualizing a future self was a consideration in the development of teacher identity. All but three studies (Friesman & Belsey, 2013; & Hammon et al., 2010 [psychological perspective] & Søreide, 2006 [postmodern]) drew from a sociocultural perspective.

To begin, in their study, Hammon and colleagues (2010) drew from “possible selves theory” (Markus & Nurius, 1986), a framework that investigates how individuals conceptualize possibilities for future action. Findings suggest that the participants conceptualized their possible selves according to four main categories. Preservice teachers tended to identify with task-based categories (classroom management and instruction) whereas the in-service teachers identified with quality-based categories (interpersonal relations and professionalism). The study suggests that teachers at different phases in their careers are focused on different possible selves and their identities may develop from task-based to quality-based. In a related study, Kimmons and Veletsianos (2014) focused on how preservice teachers considered who they wanted to become as teachers and worked towards developing a teacher identity reflective of the standards and expectations of them as expressed through coursework, mentor teachers and the culture of K-12 education. Both studies raise the possibility that teacher identity
development can be supported by investigating the possible selves of teachers and using the resulting insight in teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development to link participants’ coursework with practice and hence foster reflection (Carrington, Kervin, & Ferry, 2011; Friesen & Belsey, 2013).

Søreide (2006) also explored teacher identity development, focusing not only on possible identity positions that teachers could assume but also on larger categories that encompass these identity positions. The researcher suggests that teacher identity develops over time through a confluence of various resources (e.g., life history, professional work environment, interactions with students). How teachers position themselves in relation to these resources serves to develop teacher identity. Søreide employed narrative research and used interviews of five Norwegian in-service elementary and secondary teachers as her data source. The findings suggest that teacher identity is understood through narrative and that insight into how teacher identity develops can be gained through narrative. Applying discourse analysis to the transcripts, Søreide found four main identity categories: the kind and caring teacher, the creative and innovative teacher, the professional teacher, and the typical teacher, meaning (as related by a participant), one who is “strict, demanding perfectionist. Yes, who’s picky and points to your flaws” (Søreide, 2006, p. 538). Søreide contends that these identity positions develop over time and as a result of the sum of experiences and backgrounds of the teachers engaging with the educational context in which they work.

The study by Joseph and Heading (2010) also examined the use of narrative as a means of investigating teacher identity development. The use of reflective journals
throughout the course of a semester on the part of a preservice teacher examining music education in the elementary classroom led her to recognize the value of music for non-instructional purposes such as classroom management and helping keep students on task. The researchers suggest that her professional identity developed to include music as an integral component in the elementary classroom and in her work as a teacher, a consideration that the participant did not previously maintain. Meijer et al. (2011) suggest that reflection on the part of teachers themselves can aid in understanding teacher identity (as noted by Hammon et al., 2010) and that moments of challenge or incidents that cause dissonance can foster the development of a teacher identity (as similarly highlighted by Friesman & Belsey, 2013 and Wood & Borg, 2010).

**Teacher identity development: Teachers of English Learners.** The studies grouped in this section both draw from a sociocultural perspective and continue the previous discussion on the development of teacher identity. By examining the narratives of teachers (e.g., Galindo, 2007) and engaging in ethnographic inquiry (e.g., Giampapa, 2010), researchers were able to gain an understanding of teacher identity development among teachers of ELs. The findings suggest that reflection is a means for promoting teacher identity development.

Such was the case in Giampapa’s (2010) qualitative ethnographic study of a 4th grade Canadian teacher working with ELs. Periminder, a black female and religious minority teacher, described how by reflecting on her own life she better understood and related to the experiences of her ELs. Periminder actively reflected on challenges for ELs and how their experiences contrasted with her own early school circumstances,
which permitted the use of her first language. She considered how some of her own students had negative views of native language use, which spurred her to reconsider how to incorporate L1 and use linguistically responsive instructional approaches. She also recognized how her multiple identities as a woman, as a person of color, and as a member of her religious faith influenced her understanding of self.

Another elementary teacher working with ELs engaged in reflection, as reported by Galindo (2007). Using narrative inquiry, Galindo sought to examine how a teacher constructed her professional identity. Galindo conducted multiple interviews with Maria Elena, a bilingual Chicana teacher working in the Southern United States. Maria Elena’s work with bilingual children partially stemmed from her own early schooling experience wherein instruction was exclusively in English. Recognizing and valuing Spanish as a facet of herself, Maria became a teacher for bilingual children precisely because she wanted to provide her students with a bilingual education that affirmed native language and culture in contrast to her own early schooling experience. Thus, Galindo connects the participant’s life history and the values she maintained towards the development of the kind of teacher that she wanted to be and in turn, the sorts of instructional practices that she sought to enact.

**Discussion**

The studies reviewed in this chapter shed light on the influences on teacher identity and teacher identity development. The identified influences in studies not focused on teachers of ELs were past experiences as students and preservice education, other identity categories, changing professional context or duties, differences between
desired identities and those identities thrust upon teachers by their schools, value for relationships with colleagues and students, emotions, and policy. The identified influences in studies on teachers of ELs were other identity categories, guidance or lack thereof on teaching ELs, changes in school policy, school climate, and the belief in the need to get to know and build relationships with students. In relation to teacher identity development, the review suggests that conceptualizing a future professional self can support the development of a teacher identity as well as how teachers position themselves in relation to life history, the professional work environment and interactions with students. A means of supporting this is through reflection on oneself and one’s instructional practice.

Collectively, these studies on teacher identity have sought to examine how who one is as a teacher is related to persevering in one’s work, how the construction of what it means to be a teacher has implications for the kinds of practices teachers engage in, and how the enactment of teacher identity is constructed from teachers’ prior histories (e.g., Galindo, 2007), their identity categories (e.g., Beynon et al., 2003; Burns & Bell, 2011), institutional mandates and duties (e.g., Angelle & Schmid, 2007; Tsui, 2007), identities expected of them (e.g., Hall et al., 2013; Namaghi, 2009; Tsui, 2007; Upadhay, 2009) and the socio-cultural context in which they work (e.g., Gu, 2011; Cheng et al., 2013). The research also highlights the productiveness of examining language use by teachers (e.g., Vetter et al., 2013) and, in one study, teacher identity as potentially constructed by official policy documents (Søreide, 2007). Studies that approached teacher identity from the psychological perspective (e.g., Canrinus et al., 2012) highlighted how psychological
constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, regulation, satisfaction) correlated to teacher identity. Studies that drew from a postmodern approach to teacher identity (e.g., Hall et al., 2011) suggested how social discourses serve to perpetuate teacher identities. Studies that investigated teacher identity from a sociocultural perspective (e.g., Kimmons & Veletsianos) highlighted how teachers’ engagement within a particular context constructed particular teacher identities.

Although these insights are gained from the literature, many questions remain unaddressed. We do not know how language relates to teacher identity, to teachers’ professional context, or to the instruction of mainstream teachers of ELs. We do not know how mainstream teachers of ELs use language to construct teacher identities or how policy documents or other institutional artifacts influence teacher identity through their content and language. Because particular practices and activities are accessible only to certain socially recognizable identities (Gee, 2011b; 2011c), it is unclear how the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs relate to the enactment of teaching practices. Research on the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs is needed to shed light on how they understand themselves and their professional roles as teachers of these students and how their identity constructions relate to the enactment of teaching practices.

The limited empirical work on the identities of mainstream teachers of ELs makes this an area ripe for research. Of the reviewed studies, only three focused on mainstream teachers of ELs: Conteh (2007) in England, Pillay et al. (2007) in South Africa, and Yoon (2007) in the United States. None of these studies provides insight as to how a
linguistic analysis of language use constructs the professional identities of teachers of ELs as in studies of teachers of mainstream students (Søreide, 2006; Trent, 2010; Trent & Gao, 2009; Vetter et al., 2013). Thus, there is a gap in the literature as to how language use contributes to the construction of the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs, how teachers understand themselves in relation to this role and the practices they enact, and how this relates to the institutional role in teacher identity construction.

Since teachers draw from numerous sources in the construction of their professional identities, including previous experiences as students, social constructions of teachers, and preservice learning (Cardelle-Elawar & Lizarraga, 2010; Latta & Kim, 2011; Sugrue, 1997; Wilson & Deaney, 2011), and given that most mainstream teachers lack in depth preparation for teaching ELs and have historically taught in homogenous classrooms, it is imperative to examine how the inclusion of ELs in the mainstream classroom influences the professional identities of teachers as examined through their own language. Research on teacher identity of mainstream teachers of ELs would serve to highlight not only what their professional identities are, but if (and how) those professional identities lead them to attend to the linguistic and academic needs of ELs.

Insights from such research could better inform preservice teaching and professional development with regard to what professional identities should be supported in the effort to cultivate a teaching force that attends to the language and academic needs of all students. In addition, if schools seek to support the academic and language learning needs of ELs, then a consideration of how the professional identities of mainstream
teachers who now find themselves in linguistically diverse classrooms support or hinder ELs’ learning and development needs. It is not enough to provide teachers with a list of practices. Research is needed to understand how professional identity enables, hinders, or negotiates the implementation of pedagogical practices. If members of the education community value teacher preparation and development for students of diverse linguistic backgrounds, then research on how the professional identities of their teachers is constructed is necessary.
Chapter Three: Methodology

My primary goal in designing this study was to ensure that the research process, the data sources, and the analytic procedures allowed me to examine how language constructs and reflects teacher identity. In keeping with the definition of teacher identity as discursively constructed, language used by teachers served as the primary data source for investigating teacher identity. At the same time, it is in the combination and integration of language with actions, interactions, values and other tools or symbol systems that socially recognizable identities, including professional identities, are enacted (Gee, 2011b; Gee, 2011c). Thus, I also examined the actions, interactions, practices and activities in which teachers engaged (the enactment of their professional identities) in addition to the language that they used. Given this perspective and the socio-cultural theoretical orientation I assumed, my research questions were as follows:

1. What are the professional identities of four mainstream teachers of ELs in Northern New Jersey schools?
2. How are these professional identities constructed by the participants?
3. What are the influences on these teachers’ identities and how are these influences negotiated in the enactment of their professional identities?

Methodological Approach: Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is defined by Gee (2011c) as “the study of language-in-use” (p.8). For some linguists, discourse analysis entails the study of the grammatical elements of language and how particular stretches of language achieve their meaning. This approach, referred to as formalist on the continuum of approaches to
discourse analysis described by Schiffrin (1994), is associated most closely with Noam Chomsky’s approach to linguistic analysis. Chomsky “tend[s] to regard language primarily as a mental phenomenon” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 21). This orientation to studying language focuses on the structural analysis of linguistic units in relation to each other and determining how the linguistic elements construct the meaning conveyed. The goal is to describe language. As an example, speech act theory, an approach to discourse analysis proposed by John Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969) and one also located on the formalist end of the continuum (Schiffrin, 1994), posits that language is used to perform actions and examines how the structure of stretches of speech (or writing) enact the completion of a task or goal. Austin and Searle, along with other analysts who examine discourse from a formalist approach, describe how discourse—stretches of speech or writing—relates or communicates something. Factors beyond the stretch of language (such as time, place, and context) are ignored.

In contrast, such factors are of central importance to researchers on the other end of the discourse analysis continuum—those who could be described as functionalists. Linguists on the functionalist end of this continuum actively seek to examine how “patterns of talk are put to use for certain purposes in particular contexts and how they result from the application of communicative strategies” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 32). For example, Fairclough (2010) examines how interactions between an officer and a pedestrian perpetuate social norms and relations between police and the citizenry. This lens positions language and the social interactions of individuals as intertwined with culture and context (Schiffrin, 1994). The goal of functionalist analysts is to consider
how utterances or types of utterances follow one another, how the construction and organization of the discourse facilitates the ability to communicate and interpret content within certain contexts, and how particular utterances influence the communicative content of others (Schiffrin, 1994).

This approach to discourse analysis thus examines language as it interacts not only with the larger linguistic context in which it occurs but also with the social and communicative context. Functionalist approaches to discourse analysis include several relatively well-defined approaches, including ethnography of communication, proposed by Hymes (1974). Ethnographers of communication are interested in how setting, participants and act sequences relate to the culture(s) and norms of the speaker and listener. Another approach, pragmatism, is focused on the relation of signs to interpreters and how participants recognize the speaker’s intention as related (or not related) to conventional meanings (Grice, 1957). Variation analysis, deeply influenced by Labov (1972), examines how the same or similar meaning can be expressed in different ways and the social and linguistic factors that contribute to language variation (Schiffrin, 1994).

In my study, I employed Gee’s approach to discourse analysis, which is on the continuum between formalist and functionalist approaches. While this approach recognizes the importance of the structural units of discourse (Gee, 1988), its primary goal is to examine how language is used to say things, be things, and do things. The benefit of this approach to discourse analysis is that it reaches beyond the descriptive analysis of language structures alone, instead applying the analysis of linguistic structures
to examine language as a constructive element of the human experience, encompassing such aspects of experience as the construction of a professional identity (the focus of my dissertation). Thus, this approach employs linguistic tools to examine the structures of discourse to support claims as to how a stretch of language is situated within a particular context (Gee, 2011b; 2011c), how speakers are members of particular communities (Gee, 1989; Michaels, 1981), and how the language can be used to comment on or critique social norms or conventions beyond the immediate context of the discourse (Gee, 1991). Gee borrows from various approaches to discourse analysis and conceptualizations in literary theory and philosophy to develop his own theoretical constructs for discourse analysis (Gee, 2011a), integrating diverse bodies of thought into a cohesive whole that can be applied to language in use and that is intrinsically tied to the application of theory.

Gee argues that all language is political (Gee, 2011a; 2011b; 2011c). In any stretch of language, issues of power and the distribution or denial of a socially recognized benefit (social goods) is at stake. Examining teachers as members of a community and of a particular professional context can highlight how issues of power and politics emerge through language use. Gee argues that because all language use is political, all discourse analysis is (or should be) fundamentally critical. He asserts that “discourse analysis can illuminate problems and controversies in the world” (Gee, 2011c, p. 10). Examining issues of power and politics among teachers and their contexts is one means of illuminating issues of social justice and equity in schools. In my dissertation, I used discourse analysis to shed light on how mainstream teachers understand themselves given
the social debates on the education of and in particular the language of instruction for ELs (Crawford, 2007).

Gee (2011c) theorizes that language (both oral and written) is used to both build and destroy the reality that humans experience. He conceives of the building or destroying (which represent ends on a continuum rather than a binary) that is enacted through discourse as divided into seven categories, or building tasks. These building tasks serve as a means of inquiry for conducting research using Gee’s approach. The building tasks conceptualize how language shapes understanding, meaning and purpose for members within a particular context. Researchers using Gee’s approach can apply these building tasks to stretches of language and use them as analytic tools for examining meaning and meaning construction.

These building tasks are: (a) significance, (b) practices, (c) identities, (d) relationships, (d) politics, (e) connections, and (f) sign systems and knowledge. Gee’s conceptualization of the building tasks of language extends the analysis of a given stretch of language beyond the scope of the speakers and the immediate context in which they are situated. In that these tasks build or destroy individuals’ immediate realities, each task contributes to the furthering or transforming of social norms, ways of knowing, and relations. Examining the building tasks in a given stretch of language in relation to saying, doing, and being can help to illuminate larger, socially recognized constructs, including identities. In any given discourse, individuals engage in more than one building task. Thus, building tasks operate in conjunction with each other rather than in isolation. Therefore, I considered all of the building tasks in my analysis of the data.
Further, Gee’s approach is in alignment with the sociocultural theoretical perspective I assumed for this dissertation in that it calls attention to how individuals construct their identities and the various factors within the immediate and non-immediate context that contribute to this construction. Table 2 provides a definition for each of Gee’s building tasks.

**Context of the Study**

The study reported in this dissertation examined the professional identities of four mainstream teachers of ELs to gain insight on how the role of teacher is constructed and potential influences for these constructions. As discussed previously, this is an issue of importance because insight is needed into how mainstream teachers are integrating, negotiating or negating conflicting perspectives on the highly politicized issue of the instruction of ELs in their professional identities. Given the current trend toward placing students classified as ELs in mainstream classrooms (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Fenner, 2014; Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel & Sun-Irminger, 2006; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) and the politicized issue of the instruction of ELs, it is imperative to examine how mainstream teachers of ELs construct their identities and the implications of such for the educative experiences of ELs.

This study was conducted at two schools in two school districts (one urban and one suburban) with an EL student population in Northern New Jersey. These were schools where ELs spend the majority of the instructional day with mainstream teachers, although in one of the schools (the suburban one) ELs are pulled out of class by an ESL
specialist for a period each day. I established contact with school leaders through my professional network of teachers, administrators, and supervisors.

I informed the school leaders about the study and answered questions they had. Leaders in two school districts accepted my request to conduct the study at their schools. One district was Springbrook (a pseudonym), a suburban city with numerous elementary schools, middle schools and a high school. Although historically the population has been predominantly of Jewish and Italian descent, the demographics in Springbrook have changed within the past ten years and it now has a growing number of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian residents. I conducted the study in a kindergarten-fifth grade elementary school. Mainstream teachers provide instruction in English language arts and mathematics (content areas tested on standardized assessments) to ELs. ELs represent a growing segment of the student population.

I consulted with the school principal to gain permission to contact teachers who might qualify as potential participants. I used the following criteria to select participants: (1) They were mainstream teachers of ELs. (2) Because most teachers lack preservice education or expertise for teaching ELs (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Fenner, 2014; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008), they were not ESL or bilingual certified. (3) They were teaching one or more ELs at the time of the study. I used purposeful sampling to identify participants who met the above criteria (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 2009). Two kindergarten teachers expressed interest and ultimately participated in the study.

Jessica, one of the Springbrook kindergarten teachers, was in her early to mid-twenties and in her fourth year of teaching at the time of this study. A lifelong resident of
Table 2.

*Table 2. Theoretical Building Tasks of Language (Gee, 2011b; 2011c)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>The use of language to signal the importance (or to downplay the importance) of something.</td>
<td>Focusing on a nation’s humanitarian efforts while ignoring its military actions gives significance to the former and diminishes the latter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>The use of language to support a socially recognized endeavor.</td>
<td>Proclaiming “I now pronounce you husband and wife” supports the social practice of marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identities</td>
<td>The use of language to be recognized as being a certain kind of person.</td>
<td>Consistently being humorous and making jokes supports recognition as being jovial or good-humored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>The use of language to build or destroy relationships with those being communicated with.</td>
<td>A romantic letter full of promises and compliments intends to further the relationship between the author and the admired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>The use of language to extend or deny social goods (anything taken as valuable in a society) to others.</td>
<td>Referring to initiatives and programs a corporation supports that are environmentally conscious extends the social good of being “green” or eco-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>The use of language to associate or disassociate topics, themes or issues or individuals from one another.</td>
<td>Relating cultural or linguistic backgrounds with levels of achievement on standardized assessments supports a connection between academic aptitude and culture or language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Springbrook, Jessica reported a deep value and appreciation for Springbrook and her prior experiences as a student. A monolingual native speaker of English, Jessica reported minimal experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse individuals. At the time of the study, she was completing a master’s degree in reading and looked forward to many more years of teaching in her future. Coming from a family of teachers (her mother and sister were teachers in other school districts), Jessica stated that she had always known she would enter the field of education and work with children. She completed her preservice teacher education within a traditional university-based teacher preparation program. During data collection, Jessica had four ELs in her class of twenty students. Two ELs were native speakers of Hebrew, one spoke Polish, and one spoke Russian.

The other participant from Springbrook was a colleague of Jessica’s and also a kindergarten teacher. Lucille was in her late forties to early fifties at the time of the study. Teaching was a second career for her. After a few years in publishing, Lucille had come to the conclusion that it was not personally meaningful to her and she decided to pursue a master’s in teaching at an ivy league institution. Lucille taught for four years at a neighboring school district as a fourth grade and in-class support teacher but reported that she stopped teaching for a number of years to work as a fulltime mother to her children. By the time of the study, Lucille was in her third consecutive year of teaching at Springbrook. Lucille expressed a love of literacy and an enthusiasm to promote a love of reading in her students. She reported that she saw herself as remaining a teacher in the future, although by the end of the study she informed me that she had been transferred to teach fourth grade at another elementary school in Springbrook for the following school
year. Of her twenty students, Lucille had one EL, a native speaker of Hebrew, in her class during data collection.

The other research site was a preschool in Underdale (a pseudonym), an urban city in the New York City metropolitan area. Underdale is a historically culturally and linguistically diverse city with a large Caribbean and Central and South American population. The city’s school district is composed of numerous preschools, elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Although Underdale has a bilingual education program for elementary through high school students, preschool ELs are mainstreamed and taught entirely by the classroom teacher. I used the same selection criteria at Underdale as at Springbrook and consulted with the school director to gain permission to contact teachers that might qualify as potential participants.

Two Underdale preschool teachers participated in the study. Dolores, an El Salvadorian English-Spanish bilingual in her mid-thirties, had eight Spanish speaking ELs in her class of 15 students. Dolores was a former resident of Underdale and had attended the public schools there when she immigrated to the U.S. Dolores reported that prior to working as a teacher in Underdale, she held a variety of odd jobs and at the suggestion of a family member began to consider teaching as a career. She completed a university-based alternative route teacher certification program and had been teaching in Underdale as a preschool teacher for eight years. Dolores reported her own experiences as a former EL student and how challenged she felt to verbally express herself in school. She stated that although she was professionally satisfied as a teacher, she envisioned herself as moving into school supervision in the future, with an interest in providing
professional development to other early childhood educators. At the time of the study she had completed a number of credits in a master’s program in special education.

The other Underdale participant was Valentina, a Cuban-American English-Spanish bilingual in her early to mid-thirties. Valentina reported having been raised in the neighboring area near Underdale and, like Dolores, completed a university-based alternative route teacher certification program. Valentina’s eight years of teaching experience were exclusively at the preschool. Valentina had six Spanish speaking ELs in her class of 20 students. She reported having had ELs of other language backgrounds (such as Arabic) in previous academic school years. Valentina emphasized her identity as a Latina during the research process and how this served as means of connecting with her students and their families. She saw herself as remaining in the teaching profession in the future, potentially in the role of an in-class support teacher. At the time of the study Valentina had completed a number of credits in a master’s program in education.

**Data Sources and Data Collection**

Data were collected from the following sources:

- A journal in which I logged my activities during the data collection period;
- Five individual semi-structured interviews with each participant throughout the spring and summer of 2015;
- Four classroom observations of each participant;
- My notes from post-observation conferences;
- One semi-structured interview with one school leader who worked with each participant;
Analytic memos documenting my thought process and meaning-making of the data.

I conducted the study in the spring and summer of 2015. I maintained a daily researcher journal to log my data collection process and track my thinking during the research process (Janesick, 1999). In the journal, I documented my research activities, reflected on the process, and noted suggestions or insights for subsequent data collection. I conducted five formal interviews and four observations for each of the participants from May through August, 2015. In initial pre-interviews, I gathered demographic information about the participants, such as information about their life experiences, years teaching, years teaching in the district, and educational backgrounds. I also used conceptual interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014), which allowed me to explore how the participants made meaning of constructs such as identity, good teaching, and responsibility. The interviews were semi-structured, with interview questions focused on eliciting the teachers’ views of themselves as teachers of ELs and how they enacted this role with their students. The interviews offered an opportunity for participants to reflect on their observations and experiences working with this student population. Each teacher interview was audio recorded with a digital recording device, and I transcribed the interviews.

I also conducted four observations of each participant teaching. I observed different content areas (e.g., language arts, math, science) to gain insight on the enactment of professional identities. I took field notes without audio-recordings during the observations. The observations lasted the length of the lesson. My field notes
included a running description of the teacher’s instruction, student responses, and the activities of the classroom, with notes in the margins to record my analytic insights, interpretations, and questions for the participants. Through observations, I was able to identify some of the non-linguistic manifestations of the participants’ construction of their professional identities (e.g., practices and interactions that combined with the language they used). I collected additional data through informal conferences with each participant after each observed lesson to gather their reflections and perspectives on the lesson as they related to teaching ELs. Finally, I interviewed a school leader who worked with each of the teachers. This interview shed light on the institutional construction of teacher identities and how (through the leader’s language) that construction was promoted at the building level.

Although the nature of the interviews evolved as I become more familiar with the participants and their contexts, I developed some points of discussion to reflect the literature on teacher identity in general and teacher identity in relation to teaching ELs. Thus, I drew from the literature to construct some of the interview questions as well as to inform the sequence of foci for the interviews. Each interview had a thematic focus with potential areas of exploration. Table 3 illustrates the interview sequence and the focus in each interview.

I conducted three or four observations or interviews per week during the data collection period. This allowed me to transcribe the audio recordings after each interview and review my field notes, which also gave me time to identify emerging themes or themes of interest as introductory points of conversation in subsequent interviews. I used
Table 3.

*Participant Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic focus</th>
<th>Potential areas of exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teacher interview 1. Early life and schooling experiences as a student | - Experiences with former teachers  
- Reasons for going into education and becoming a teacher  
- Preservice/teacher learning experience with attention to ELs  
- Perspectives on being a teacher and, more specifically, on being a teacher of ELs |
| Teacher interview 2. The professional context | - Professional assignment and duties  
- Professional assignments and duties with ELs  
- Connections between previous teacher learning and the in-service context  
- Relationships with professional colleagues  
- Attention in the professional context to the needs of ELs  
- An understanding of the school climate in relation to ELs |
| Teacher interview 3. ELLs in the Mainstream classroom | - Professional development for ELs  
- Comfort level in teaching ELs  
- Scenarios in teaching  
- Perspectives on the teachers’ role in teaching ELs  
- Responsibilities with and for ELs |
| Teacher interview 4. Cultural/Linguistic and other backgrounds | - Connection between cultural/linguistic identity and being a teacher  
- Connection between other possible identities and being a teacher  
- Connections between cultural, linguistic and other identities and being a teacher of ELs |
| Teacher interview 5. Future identities | - Where the participant sees herself in the future as a teacher  
- Perspectives on the changing role of teacher and how it relates to the participant  
- Possible future directions for teaching ELs  
- What, if anything, the participants consider necessary to engage in their work with ELs |
| School leader interview 1. Institutional construction of mainstream teachers | - Duties and responsibilities of mainstream teachers with ELs  
- How teachers are supported in their work with ELs  
- Ways that mainstream teachers are expected to support ELs  
- Ways that leadership promotes professional learning and development for ELs  
- School’s vision for its work with ELs |
analytic memos to keep a record of how I made sense of the data and the process of identifying emergent themes or findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Thus, data analysis occurred concurrently with data gathering.

Given the data collection plan described above, the primary data sources for analysis were the transcripts of the interviews with the teachers and with the school leaders and field notes of the classroom observations. Questions asked during the interview process guided (but did not limit) the thematic foci of the participants’ discourses in their constructions of their professional selves. Secondary data sources were the analytic memos and my researcher journal. All of these data are rooted in language, and as such each of the data sources aided in the process of discerning multiple constructions of teacher identities that surfaced. Data sources that captured the language of the teacher participants reflected how they constructed their own teacher identities. The secondary data sources served as a form of record keeping. The researcher journal captured what I did and how I made sense of the research process (Ortlipp, 2008).

Analytic memos recorded how I made sense of the data and the process of identifying any emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Field notes allowed me to capture the nonlinguistic aspects of the observed lessons, providing documentation for the actions used in conjunction with language to facilitate the enactment of an identity.

I transcribed all of the audiotaped interviews as soon after the interview as feasible. Transcription gave me access to the language employed by the participants. The transcription process (an aspect of the data analysis itself) occurred as the study was being conducted, beginning from the onset of data gathering. Thus, the researcher
journal that I maintained served not only to capture my own meaning making of the research process, but also to document the steps that I took in gathering, transcribing, and analyzing the data.

**Transcription**

Because discourse analysis is the primary analytic approach for this study, it is important that I explain my approach to transcription. Transcription only captures certain aspects of language use since it is impossible to document every nuance of language in use (Edwards, 2001). Thus, any researcher transcribing text is confronted with deciding what aspects of language use to document, how to represent the language on the written page, and how such decisions factor into analyzing the discourse itself. Details captured in the transcription need to be relevant to the study and meaningful in the context of the study. Thus the organization of the discourse and the noted details need to contribute to the analysis.

Gee (1991; 2011b; 2011c) does not favor any single approach to transcription. Rather, he gives examples of different ways in which researchers can approach the transcription process. In keeping with Gee’s approach to discourse analysis (stressing attention on how language is constructed and how it functions), I included linguistic details that were integral to understanding how the language was conveying identity. These included stresses placed on particular words or stretches of language, final and non-final intonation contours, and pauses or hesitations in the speech. I used the methods described by Gee (2011b) to visually illustrate these features of oral language:

- Fully capitalized words are stressed;
• / indicates a non-final intonation contour;
• ? is a final rising intonation contour;
• // is a final falling intonation contour;
• (.) marks a short pause;
• [] indicates when two speakers spoke at the same time.

In relation to representing the segments of speech, I present the text as numbered tone units, or segments of speech that are spoken with one uniform intonation contour. For discourses that involve more than one speaker, an initial followed by a colon is included at the onset of the initial turn taking line. Below is an example from an interview I conducted in a previous doctoral course. The initial “A” refers to the interviewer and “I” to the interviewed.

1. **A:** Tell me about an experience with linguistically diverse students//
2. **I:** Sure/
3. **I** guess I’ll reference ONE example of teaching students who were acquiring English/
4. **And** whose first language is Spanish//
5. **These** children were a group of four children/
6. **Two** were from Mexico originally and two were from the Dominican Republic//
7. **Okay (. )** so all these children were ( . ) a ( . ) would be considered English language learners/
8. **and** their native languages would be considered Spanish//
9. So a teacher was working on test prep/
10. for the students//
11. When I walked in she was really flustered/
12. with THESE four children/
13. especially because they were not getting the prompt/
14. and they weren’t getting the passage//
15. They weren’t able to answer the writing prompt//

Data analysis

Approaches to discourse analysis vary depending on the purpose of the analysis (Rogers, 2011). Some researchers examine language use and the intricacies of language without giving attention to broader social or political meanings or implications of the language. Others, such as researchers who adopt a critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough, 2010), examine language to gain insight into social issues or circumstances in order to facilitate or call attention to equity issues. Gee’s contention is that in any stretch of language, issues of power and equity are always present. Hence, all discourse analysis in this sense is critical (Gee, 2011a). Given that there is no single, prescribed method of analysis, I reviewed literature on discourse analysis to gain a sense of how the various approaches have been used and what approach would be productive for my own study (Gee, 2011c). Because Gee’s approach aligns with the sociocultural perspective on identity that I assumed for this dissertation, and because his approach to discourse analysis explicitly considers identity as an aspect of human experience that is constructed through language, his approach is most appropriate. Therefore, in my data analysis I
followed Gee’s approach to discourse analysis, which calls attention both to the mechanics of the language being used and to the context in which the language is used. This approach allowed me to describe or illustrate how the language functions to relate or construct teacher identities, and how those identities relate to the participants’ contextual environment and how teachers negotiate the numerous influences in their work with ELs.

For each participant, I examined the interview transcriptions and observation notes. For the transcripts and journal entries I first used the theoretical tools (Table 4) and building tasks of language (Table 2) that Gee proposes. I continued the analysis by focusing on the mechanics of the language, applying Gee’s discourse analysis tools to examine how the linguistic structure of the discourse aided in the construction of a particular meaning. Finally, I examined each of the building tasks in relation to each of Gee’s six theoretical tools. This yielded a total of 42 questions regarding the function of the language to be asked and analyzed for each piece of data (Table 5). Having considered these larger theoretical questions, I then revisited the data for a closer linguistic analysis, and continued relating this analysis to the theoretical considerations of the building tasks until possible meanings were exhausted. Table 5 provides a matrix of the seven building tasks and each of the theoretical tools of inquiry used to investigate each task.

Given that I did not have audio-recordings of the observations, my analysis of the field notes differed from the transcription data. Because the notes captured my observations of the events in the classroom, I used Gee’s building tools and theoretical tools as much as possible to examine how the non-linguistic aspects of the observed
### Table 4. Theoretical Tools of Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Tool of Inquiry</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situated meanings</td>
<td>The specific meaning or phrases and words as they are used in a particular context.</td>
<td>-Saying “She broke a leg” has different meanings in the context of a theater (gave a good performance) versus in a hospital (a literal breaking of a bone).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social languages</td>
<td>A variety of speaking or writing associated with a particular group of identity.</td>
<td>-Standard English, Ebonics, Academic English, or a technical language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Figured worlds                         | A folk theory or cultural model that presents a simplified world view and what is taken to be normal or typical. | -Democracy and capitalism are naturally intertwined and good   
  -The Hollywood industry is exciting and glamorous.                                                                                           |
| Intertextuality                        | Words or phrases used in speech or writing that quote, refer to or allude to other texts (including words others have said). | -During a political speech someone quotes the Bible by saying, “And it came to pass…”  
  -A comedian’s punchline for a joke refers to a raven and states “Nevermore”.                                                      |
| Discourses                             | Ways of combining and integrating language with actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity. | -The combination of wearing a robe, holding a gavel, sitting at the head of a courtroom and using legal terms and jargon enact the Discourse of a judge.  
  -The combination of dancing en pointe on a stage, moving gracefully while wearing a pink tutu enacts the Discourse of a ballet dancer. |
| Conversations                          | Debates or controversies in society or in particular social groups that are large numbers of people recognize, including the “sides” that there are to the debates. | -The social debate on the legalization of abortion (pro-choice) or those opposed to it (pro-life).  
  -The social debate on extending marriage rights to gay couples from supporters (same-sex marriage supporters) and opponents (defense of marriage). |
### Table 5.
**Matrix of the building tasks and theoretical tools of inquiry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools of Inquiry</th>
<th>Significance: How does the language build up or lessen significance for certain things and not others?</th>
<th>Practices: What practices is the language building or enacting?</th>
<th>Identities: What identity or identities is the language being used to enact or get recognized?</th>
<th>Relationships: How does the language build, change or sustain relationships?</th>
<th>Politics: How does the language build what counts as social goods? How are these distributed or withheld?</th>
<th>Connections: How does the language connect or disconnect things?</th>
<th>Sign systems and knowledge: How does the language privilege or dis-privilege sign systems or different ways of knowing or believing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situated meanings</strong></td>
<td>What situated meanings do words and phrases have?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social languages</strong></td>
<td>What social languages are enacted in the discourse?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figured worlds</strong></td>
<td>What figured worlds does the language assume or invite the listener to assume?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intertextuality</strong></td>
<td>What words or phrases quote, allude to or refer to other texts or social languages?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discourses</strong></td>
<td>How is language being used with ways of acting, interacting and using various tools or objects to enact a socially recognizable identity or practice?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversations</strong></td>
<td>What public issues, debates or themes are being referred to in the discourse?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lesson contributed toward the teachers’ identity. Considering each participant as an individual case, I examined how the multiple data sources for individual participants supported the construction of particular teacher identities. I used my researcher journal to document my process and analytic memos to keep track of how I arrived at particular conclusions. I then began a cross-case analysis. I examined the emergent identities across all participants to determine commonalities and differences among them. This cross-case approach highlighted the larger themes related to the professional identities of the teachers, while comparing individual cases demonstrated how those identities varied.

**Ethical Issues**

Prior to beginning the study, I gained permission from the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research with human participants. The ethical concerns or issues in this study include those that apply to any research involving human participants. When initially meeting with participants, I was forthright in explaining that I was a doctoral student seeking to do research for my dissertation. I explained that the risks in participating in the study did not exceed those encountered in everyday life and that I would take measures to minimize the potential of harm, risk, or deception to the participants. I maintained an open dialogue with the participants to answer any questions they had about the study as clearly as possible prior to asking them to decide on their participation. I maintained confidentially throughout the study. Only I am able to connect the participants with the data gathered. I will not disclose the identities of the participants in any sharing of the findings in publications or presentations. I obtained informed consent for all participants.
I informed all of the participants in writing and in person that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participation in the study had no bearing on their performance evaluation. Any information that the participants consented to have included in the study was made anonymous as far as possible. I conducted interviews at a time and location convenient for both the participants and myself.

I kept the audio-recordings of the interviews, the transcripts, and all other data sources in password-protected files on my password-protected computer. No one other than myself has access to the files. I identified the participants with pseudonyms that I assigned and shared with no one. Since the participants were observed in their classrooms, I informed them that the study did not require any changes in classroom routines, procedures, or teaching and I was as unobtrusive as possible during the observations. I obtained site approval to conduct the study in the schools where I conducted the observations and I collected consent forms from all participants. No identifying information for any students in the classrooms was collected.

**Validity and positionality**

Validity in this discourse analysis is constituted by four elements proposed by Gee (2011c): convergence, agreement, coverage, and linguistic details. Convergence refers to the degree to which analytic conclusions agree from different building tasks and tools of inquiry narrow in on particular themes or findings. My analysis demonstrates convergence by highlighting how the themes in a data source are supported when multiple tools of inquiry and building tasks of language support similar analytic
conclusions. Agreement refers to the extent to which the views or findings of other researchers align with the proposed conclusions. To address this element of validity, I consulted with members of my dissertation committee on the emergent findings and themes in my work. Coverage refers to the extent to which the data can be applied to other related data sources. I demonstrate coverage by discussing how themes carry over or are highlighted among the participants. The concept of linguistic details refers to the extent to which the analysis can be tied to the linguistic details of the discourse. I have provided evidence of linguistic details in the data in order to support the claims I make.

Being mindful of these four considerations and applying them to the data findings helped reveal the validity of the analysis. I am not suggesting, however, that throughout this research process or in my conclusions I present a final “truth.” Rather, the intent is to provide an argument and to demonstrate how language suggests particular teacher identities and the potential implications of those identities for ELs in the participants’ classes. The claims I make are derived from the analysis.

This transparency in discourse analysis is one of its strengths in demonstrating how an argument is made. The notion of research as social practice (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015) also calls attention to the need to examine the positionality of the researcher and to call attention to the context of the researcher when conducting the research so readers can understand how such research was constructed and how it emerged during a particular place and time. Thus, a facet of validity for the study relies on transparency in relation to who I am as a researcher, how I approached this study, and what personal and professional justifications I offer to support engagement in this work.
Some (in particular, traditional positivists) would decry such a stance as partial and subjective. I argue that all research is subjective, and as referenced by the concept of research as social practice, I provide a brief account of my own stance and interest in this work.

I approach this research as a former elementary school teacher and educational leader. I taught culturally and linguistically diverse students for over a decade in an urban school system. The many experiences I had teaching during those years and my time as an educational leader profoundly influenced my thinking and, over time, shed light on the many challenges and struggles that children new to this country (and new to the language of English and the language of schooling) experience. As the son of Cuban immigrants, I grew up in a household where family members told stories of Cuba, of the journey from there to the United States, and of the struggles to learn *El Ingles*. Yet it was only upon working with my students that I began to connect what I had heard growing up at home with the actual lived circumstances and educative experiences of my students in today’s current context.

During my years of teaching, conversations circulated among faculty as to the value of bilingual education, whether or not bilingual students should receive any instruction in their native language, and just who exactly was responsible for their language development and progress. I have often contemplated whether these topics of discussion or ones similar to them were a concern for the teachers who educated my own mother and father when they arrived from Cuba, neither of whom spoke a word of English and both of whom were taught in an English only classroom environment. I
realized at a certain point that the conversations taking place at work about the language of instruction and about teaching ELs were about something more than just language. They also had to do with culture and divergent ideological perspectives that positioned these students either in terms of deficit or (although less frequently) as possessing something of value. Such positioning had as much to do with the teachers’ words as it did with district mandates and policies regarding ELs. And further, how the actual practice of teaching and learning for these students was enacted in classrooms was tied to this as well.

I recognize and acknowledge that these experiences have informed my positionality and my approach to this dissertation. I do not engage in the act of research as a disinterested observer, but rather as one who is fundamentally motivated to gain an understanding of the construction of who a teacher is in relation to ELs. I acknowledge and know from first-hand experience that the term EL is used for a heterogeneous group encompassing multiple backgrounds, diverse experiences, and various cultures. I do not employ the term to diminish this culturally and linguistically rich population of its funds of knowledge, resources, worldviews, values or perspectives. Rather, I use the term to acknowledge that in P-12 settings, this diverse population is recognized as one in the process of learning English. This process of learning a second language while learning academic content is far from an easy one.

Professionally I have taught ELs and observed the challenges they face in schools, and personally I possess a familial background similar to those of my former students. I intentionally sought to gain an understanding of the professional identities of mainstream
teachers of ELs to support the academic and language learning success for these students. If teachers draw from the well of past experience, their teacher education program preparation, and the situational context in the construction of their teacher identities, then we need research on mainstream teachers of ELs given that they likely had limited experiences with ELs, lack preparation for them, and work in a professional context that may not promote an affirmative orientation to them. Given these conditions, I strive to promote linguistically responsive teaching by examining the professional identities of mainstream teachers and discerning how to support the educative experiences of EL students and teacher learning and development for them. Teachers would benefit from sustained learning opportunities on how to support ELs academically and linguistically. It does not suffice to provide teachers with a list of practices to engage in. Work must be done so that all members of the school community will maintain a shared vision and understanding of the role of teachers. Given that these are often at odds, the time is ripe for research on this topic.

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I report on findings related to three of the building tasks: relationships, politics, and identities. I selected these because throughout my analysis of the data, these building tasks emerged as most productive in gaining insight on how the participants constructed their professional identities. This is not to suggest that I ignored the other building tasks. Insight gained from these other tasks informed the three reported, given Gee’s assertion (2011b; 2011c) that these tasks operate in conjunction with each other and not in isolation. When relevant, significance, practices, connections, and signs systems and knowledge are discussed in relation to the
participants’ professional identities. After my report of the results, I discuss the findings in Chapter Seven in relation to literature, make recommendations for teacher education practice and research, and end with a final reflection on the study.
Chapter Four: The Relationships Building Task

In this chapter I discuss the participants’ discourses on relationships based on the outcomes of my analysis. Analysis of Gee’s relationships building task (2011b; 2011c) sheds light on how relationships the participants engaged in (or had engaged in) were a source for the construction of their professional identities. The relationships building task analyses how individuals (or groups) use language to build, construct, sustain, or diminish connections between themselves and others. Of these, relationships enacted within these teachers’ professional contexts emerged as central to how they understood themselves as teachers, specifically their relationships with students, with parents, and with former teachers. For the two participants in the suburban Springbrook context but not for those in the urban Underdale context, interactions and engagement with their professional peers also seemed to serve as an important element in how they identified as teachers. How participants constructed these relationships as important or unimportant calls attention to what is held as central or peripheral in their professional identities. Given that the analysis (as discussed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six) is primarily drawn from interview data, it is a partial representation of the participants’ ways of doing and being in the world as teachers. In the sections that follow I discuss the participants’ relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and former teachers as they pertain to their professional identities.

Relationships with Students

Relationships with students in general and with ELs in particular surfaced as a source for the participants’ construction of their professional identities. All of them
called attention to their interactions and relationships with students, and all sought to involve and integrate EL students in classes. The participants’ discourses nonetheless highlighted a value concerned with making ELs feel comfortable and able to participate in the classroom. Although they shared this expressed value for the inclusion of ELs in the classroom, the participants’ discourses reflected different constructions of their relationships with ELs. The Springbrook teachers, Lucille and Jessica, framed relationships with students as a response to a need to work through linguistic differences in order to facilitate ELs’ engagement in learning. For Dolores and Valentina, the Underdale teachers, relationships were a means of connecting with students, which in turn supported these students’ engagement in the classroom. In the following sections, I discuss different facets of the participants’ perspectives on their relationships with students—specifically, how they connect with students through relationships, emphasize linguistic barriers to relationships with students, build relationships by using ELs’ first languages, enact a teacher identity with ELs, and fulfill professional needs through relationships with ELs.

**Connecting with students through relationships.** For Valentina and Dolores, who taught in Underdale, relationships with ELs were predominantly constructed as an opportunity to connect with these students. Similarities they identified or referenced between themselves and ELs, including the fact that both teachers are English-Spanish bilinguals, emerged as a facet of their professional identities. For them, bilingualism was a primary way in which they connected with their EL students. The following excerpt from the first interview with Valentina illustrates this perspective. Valentina associated
demonstrating that a student was understood and accepted with feeling connected to the student.

1167. **Adrian:** So if the student/

1168. one student was ma-(.) saying a phrase in Portuguese/

1169. **Valentina:** Mm-hmm//

1170. **Adrian:** You would (.) you would reiterate it?

1171. **Valentina:** Yes//

1172. **Adrian:** And (.) um (.) and so (.) uh (.) how do you reflect on/

1173. um (.) that kind of di-(.) that teaching scenario/

1174. that instance (.) what do you…

1175. **Valentina:** I would (.) I felt connected to my students in that moment//

1176. **Adrian:** How did you feel connected to your students?

1177. **Valentina:** Because I could engage in a familiar language/

1178. their first language with them (.) even if it was just in a small phrase that/

1179. that they knew that I understood/

1180. that (.) umb (.) that it was accepted/

1181. that who they were is (.) is a good thing/

1182. and that even though we (.) we speak English or our main projects are in English/

1183. and we read stories in English/
1184. um (. ) that (. ) that their language is welcome//

In this excerpt Valentina emphasized communicating with her students in their home languages as a means of connecting with students. She feels that being able to learn and use some of her EL’s language demonstrates acceptance and welcoming of linguistic diversity in her classroom (line 1184). Through a series of noun clauses beginning with “that,” she expresses her hopes as to what using some of the student’s first language conveys to her EL students and the values that she herself possesses and seeks to enact in the classroom—“that I understood…, that it was accepted…, that who they were is a good thing…, that their language is welcome” (lines 1178-1184). Valentina’s deliberate language choices suggest she perceives that being able to make a connection with an EL student through her/his first language can help to inform the student that she/he is understood, accepted, viewed as a “good thing,” and that her own echoing of the EL student’s first language indicates that the student is “welcomed” in the classroom. She prefaces the last of these clauses with the subordinate clause “…even though we speak English, or our main projects are in English and we read stories in English…” (line 1182-1183). With this linguistic construction, Valentina acknowledges the privileged position of English in the classroom but asserts that all students’ first languages are nevertheless welcome. She believes that even a few words in the student’s primary language can convey this value to them, as expressed in the embedded clause in line 1178: “even if it was just in a small phrase.” Valentina describes a classroom environment that comprises a figured world wherein linguistic diversity is welcomed and valued. For Valentina, as well as for Dolores, linguistic diversity is not only welcomed,
but serves as a means of connecting with students, which supported a teacher Discourse wherein not only is the teacher herself welcoming and accepting, but teaches in a context that is welcoming and accepting as well.

**Emphasizing linguistic barriers to relationships with students.** While teachers in urban Underdale constructed linguistic diversity as a source of connection, Jessica and Lucille, in suburban Springbrook, constructed relationships with ELs that characterized linguistic differences as barriers that needed to be dealt with in the teaching and learning process. The following excerpt from the third interview with Lucille illustrates this view. Lucille emphasizes her own desire for her EL students to feel comfortable in the classroom and capable of participating in lessons. Yet she also indicates that her mainstream students are at an advantage in knowing English and being able to be understood by her and to understand what she is saying, a challenge that ELs in her classroom struggle with and that Lucille as a teacher also struggles with in teaching them.

390. the native speakers definitely have a leg up on them/
391. because they can speak the language/
392. and now they’re learning about the language that they know how to speak/
393. But if the challenge is/
394. really I think being understood and/
395. you know (.) sometimes you just want to say/
396. “it’s okay”/
397. but (.) you know (.) you know that they don’t understand that/
Lucille’s value in terms of making students feel comfortable and supported is hampered by linguistic differences. Her emphasis is not on what she can do (such as learning words or phrases in an EL’s first language) but rather what she cannot do. In this excerpt she positions mainstream students as having “a leg up” on ELs because they can speak and understand English. She then shifts to a focus on ELs and linguistic difference, which she constructs as a “challenge” (line 383)—a contrast to the perspectives of Dolores and Valentina, who positioned such a difference as an opportunity to connect with their students. Lucille’s construction of the experience of an EL student is that they do not understand (line 397), suggesting a classroom context where, despite her statements that language diversity is valued, basic communication is difficult. This highlights a figured world where relating a simple message such as “okay” (line 396) is a challenge.

Jessica, who taught in the same school as Lucille, highlighted her own efforts to learn some basic words or phrases in her ELs’ first languages and to use them in the classroom. This was evident during observations, when she directed attention to one of her Hebrew-speaking ELs and employed some basic vocabulary (e.g., mother, house) in relation to images on a worksheet the student was expected to work on. Despite her effort to learn these words, Jessica suggested that communication was a challenge in her relationship with ELs. The following excerpt from the third interview with Jessica reflects this theme.
because you want them to feel welcomed and to (.) you know/

feel safe in the environment//

But it's also hard to communicate when you don't know the same language//

Um (.) and when they become frustrated (.) you know/

it's hard to communicate why they're frustrated//

They can't just flat out tell you//

These examples highlight the ways in which both Lucille and Jessica constructed their relationships with ELs—that is, in terms of what they do not possess or cannot do. Jessica described ELs as “coming in without language” and Lucille referred to students who “don’t know the same language.” While Lucille’s discourse specifies that her EL students do not know English (the same language), Jessica’s discourse equates language itself with English and, following her logic, because her ELs do not know English, positions them as entering the classroom “without language.” Her choice of words suggests that even if an EL student is fluent in her or his native language, the professional identity constructed by Jessica would not acknowledge this linguistic resource as having any value in her classroom.

Instead of focusing on what these EL students do know or what they can do, as teachers Lucille and Jessica emphasized the challenges that confronted them and their EL students. This construction of their relationship with ELs deflects attention away from academic learning and even language development and places the focus on the ELs’ emotional well-being. Unlike Valentina and Dolores, who indicated some effort to learn
at least some words or short phrases in each ELs’ home language, Lucille’s previous
excerpt (p. 83) from her third interview indicates an inability to even “communicate
words of support to them.” Interestingly, the construction of her statement in second
person (line 395) rather than first person suggests a distancing of self from assuming
responsibility in her professional identity as a teacher of ELs, as well. Her discourse
emphasizes what ELs need to do to feel a sense of belonging as part of the classroom
community rather than what she needs to do as a teacher to facilitate this.

Yet despite recognizing these challenges, Lucille and Jessica both positioned the
needs of ELs as analogous to those of mainstream students, suggesting that all students
have particular needs and that, in this regard, ELs are similar to other students. In terms
of the needs of students and ELs, Lucille expressed the following in her fourth interview.

366. well I think (.) it's a (.) it's a…
367. that cohort is like any other in the classroom/
368. like if you had a child/
369. I'm not saying that they have special needs/
370. but they have special con-/
371. they have different concerns than the children who are coming in
   who are native speakers//
372. So just like I might have a student who struggles with writing and
   needs OT/
373. or a student who needs speech/
374. it's just (.) that's (.) at least in the beginning/
that's their special concern/

and I think if you look in any classroom you're going to find tons of/

like special concerns for kids/

Jessica expressed similar sentiments about ELs, positioning their language and academic needs as akin to the needs of other students. Yet it must be said that these needs were not always treated as deficit needs or the students as being deficient in something. As illustrated in the following excerpt from her third interview, Jessica compared the needs of ELs to students who are gifted and talented, for example. This suggests she sees her role as a teacher as one of recognizing the needs of each student and identifying means for supporting those needs.

Jessica: So I guess they're kind of like almost all my students/

Every student has their own different needs/

Adrian: Mm-hmm/

Jessica: You know some students are gifted and need to be challenged/

Some need (.) you know (.) a little bit more support/

ELLs have their own challenge in terms of building vocabulary and becoming familiar with the language and the routine/

You know (.) you might have students who have 504 plans or IEPs that you have to accommodate/
So just differentiating my instruction to meet their needs as well as all the other different needs of like (.) of a classroom/

especially in kindergarten//

I think kindergarten has a very (.) very wide range of needs as students//

The excerpts above from Lucille (pp. 87-88) and Jessica (pp. 88-89) illustrate the positioning of ELs in relation to mainstream students. Lucille’s excerpt includes the embedded clause, “I’m not saying they have special needs” (line 369), employed to distinguish between special needs and concerns for students, which she largely sees as the characteristic situation for EL students. In line 372 she employs the social language of teachers, referencing students as receiving OT (occupational therapy) and speech (speech therapy) as other kinds of needs or concerns. Lucille’s use of “struggles” and “needs” constructs these students as being challenged or lacking and requiring (needs) particular forms of assistance. Instead of “needs,” “concerns,” and “struggles,” Lucille refers to the “special concerns” of ELs at the end of the discourse excerpt (line 375), signaling a difference between requirements for ELs and other students. “Needs” suggest requirements that must be met, while “concerns” (even special concerns) are less central and should (instead of must) be attended to. In short, Lucille constructed ELs as having special concerns that should be attended to rather than needs that must be attended to.

The teacher Discourse Lucille constructed is thus one in which a teacher gives significance to all students as having needs or concerns, with ELs (whom she referred to as a cohort) having “a special concern.” At the end of this excerpt (line 377), Lucille
used “special concerns” to refer not only to ELs, but other students as well. Her emphasis here, then, is that all students have concerns that teachers should (but not necessarily must) attend to.

Jessica’s excerpt similarly positions her EL students as like the other students in her class. She begins by hedging her comments (“I guess…” and “they’re kind of like almost all of my students”). Like Lucille, she employs the social language of teachers, referring to students with 504 plans and individualized education plans (IEPs), and refers to the need for “accommodations.” Unlike Lucille, Jessica comments on what she needs to do as a teacher (“differentiating my instruction to meet their needs”) in reference to students classified with an IEP or 504 plan, and attaches the subsequent subordinate clause to include “other different needs of…a classroom,” referring to the other tasks that are her responsibility as a teacher. This construction suggests that Jessica foregrounds her instructional responsibilities and positions non-instructional responsibilities as an assumed aspect of her work. In both excerpts, the teachers concluded by providing statements affirming their stance that in all classrooms (according to Lucille) and in kindergarten in general (according to Jessica), there is a high number of special concerns (Lucille) and wide breadth of student needs (Jessica).

These statements illustrate the participants’ use of language to construct professional identities that are attentive to the special needs or concerns of their students. Their language suggests that in their work as teachers they recognize differences, and, for them, linguistic differences constitute a special concern or need. Their relationships with students, and with ELs in particular, are thus constructed to allow them to deal with and
work through these differences rather than make connections with their students, as was the case for Dolores and Valentina.

**Relationship building by using ELs’ first language.** Three of the participants (Jessica, Dolores and Valentina) discussed using ELs’ first language as one way of supporting ELs’ inclusion. This surfaced as a value in these teachers’ professional identities and was reflected in the enactment of their identities during classroom observations. While Lucille stated that she valued the linguistic backgrounds of her EL students, the other three participants actually demonstrated this value in their teaching by using their students’ home languages. For Jessica, Dolores, and Valentina, getting to know even a few words in ELs’ L1s was an integral part of their sense of self as teachers and was a practice that they considered necessary in order to support the inclusion of ELs in their classrooms.

As discussed above, for Dolores and Valentina, demonstrating their knowledge of even a few words in a student’s first language served to promote ELs’ inclusion in the classroom and build relationships between themselves and their students. Dolores expressed her belief that an awareness of ELs’ background knowledge of and fluency in their home language could help teachers to integrate ELs into the classroom. Yet Dolores focused only on Spanish, sharing her own linguistic background as a native speaker of Spanish with her students. In her interviews, she minimally discussed students who were speakers of other languages and, at the time of the study, she had only English and Spanish speaking students in her classes. She incorporated Spanish into her classroom activities and explained in interviews that she used Spanish to support the involvement of
ELs in her classroom. Dolores’s identity as bilingual and, more specifically, as a speaker of Spanish, informed her professional identity as a teacher and it led her to promote the use of Spanish in her classroom among her Spanish speaking bilingual students. Dolores believed that, because she was a speaker of Spanish and because her ELs were aware of this, her bilingualism assisted in ELs’ integration into and comfort level in the classroom. This language-based commonality with her ELs helped Dolores connect to her students and provided her an insider perspective on their experiences. She did not need to learn about her students’ home language; it was her home language as well. While she emphasized the benefit of being able to speak her students’ home language, she acknowledged how a shared language background can be a hindrance for ELs to the extent that they continue using Spanish because they know she is a Spanish speaker, as illustrated in the following excerpt from her third interview.

363. I think that (.) since they're comfortable and they know I understand uh (.) Spanish/
364. they're like very comfortable speaking to us in Spanish/
365. so it's hard for them to switch//
366. But then when we have visitors/
367. they go and talk to them in English like…
368. but then I try to have (.) I say/
369. "Oh (.) we're going to practice our English/
370. because you’re going to go to the big school/
371. and over there you have to speak English with the teachers/
because sometimes they don't speak any Spanish”/

So I try to get them (.) cause they're comfortable/

they already know like/

“she speaks Spanish/

I'm going to speak to you in Spanish”//

Dolores’s discourse constructs a figured world (a folk theory or cultural model that presents a simplified world view and what is taken to be normal or typical) wherein she assumes that her EL students speak to her in Spanish (rather than English) because they know she will understand them. However, she indicates that students do communicate in English when visitors enter the classroom (line 366), demonstrating their awareness of the need to use English in order to communicate with adults who do not speak their home language. Despite this point, Dolores returns to her original consideration that many of her students are more comfortable with her because they are aware she is a Spanish speaker (like them) and that she has to remind them when it is time to practice speaking in English. In line 373 Dolores pauses midway through her statement, starting to focus on what she tries to get her Spanish-speaking students to say and, after the pause, redirects her statement to focus on her students’ comfort level. At the end of the excerpt, she adopts the voice of her students (lines 375-376), articulating explicitly that, because she (Dolores) speaks Spanish, the ELs in her class tend to continue to speak in that language. This linguistic construction suggests that Dolores views a shared language background as a means of connecting with students and
supporting them to feel comfortable, but also, in her figured world, which serves as a potential source of difficulty when they need to switch into English.

Dolores’s emphasis is on constructing her relationships with ELs in terms of connecting with them and drawing on her common language background to make them comfortable and to feel included rather than using their native language to promote L1 or L2 development or to bridge a linguistic divide with ELs of language backgrounds other than Spanish. Thus, the fact that students know she speaks Spanish not only facilitates their (i.e., Spanish speaking ELs’) comfort in being in the classroom, but also in being “very comfortable” with speaking in Spanish. Dolores’s value for and incorporation of Spanish promotes Spanish speaking ELs’ capacity to speak in class, which tends to be a challenge for ELs in general as described by all four participating teachers in this study.

Dolores suggests the figured world of the classroom as a “little school” wherein there can be ease of communication, comfort, and safety, and as a place where students and teachers possess a common language in contrast to the “big school” (line 370), by which she is referring to elementary and later schools, but also is suggesting the “big” world, or the world at large, wherein such safety and comfort are not as readily manifest.

While Dolores’s value for her ELs’ language background was focused on Spanish, a language she shared in common with them, Valentina and Jessica extended this value to other languages and therefore to making connections with ELs of other language backgrounds. Jessica discussed the need to become acquainted with words in her ELs’ L1. Valentina drew from her language background as a speaker of Spanish to
support Spanish-speaking ELs socially and emotionally and, for ELs of other language backgrounds, to demonstrate some familiarity with and inclusion of their languages.

For example, Jessica provided a narrative about her work with an EL in her class at the time of the study. The student had immigrated recently from Israel and spoke only Hebrew. While Jessica could not fluently communicate in the student’s L1 (like Valentina or Dolores could with Spanish speakers), she reported that she told the student he could speak in Hebrew even though she felt he did not understand what she was saying. In the following excerpt from Jessica’s fourth interview, she relates how an EL student initially suggested to another EL not to speak in Hebrew (their shared home language) and Jessica’s subsequent response.

331. Um (.) I talk to (. ) especially my two little ones/  
332. they're communicating in Hebrew right now fluently/  
333. and I told them they can try English words and then one girl/  
334. he spoke in Hebrew and she said “English (.) English”//  
335. I said (. ) “It's okay (. ) you can still speak in Hebrew”//  
336. But again (. ) it's hard to communicate that it's okay to speak that/  
337. only because I don't think they understand what I'm saying yet/  
338. but as soon as they're able to (. ) you know (. ) have more English  
   and understand me better/  
339. I would definitely communicate that it's okay to speak both at home/  
340. and not to feel embarrassed or ashamed//
341. But it's hard to communicate that now because I don't think they would understand/

Jessica’s account suggests that she feels comfortable with her student continuing to speak in Hebrew in the classroom. She refers to her two Hebrew speaking ELs using the affectionate “my two little ones,” laying claim to them as her students (line 331). At the same time, she places responsibility for understanding or engagement on the EL student himself, as suggested in her statement that once “they’re” able to speak more English, then she (Jessica) can be better understood and be able to communicate that it is “okay” to speak English and Hebrew at home (line 338-339). Jessica assumes that her EL feels shame or embarrassment about speaking his home language (line 340). This stands in contrast to the image that she constructs of her classroom as a space wherein she consciously seeks to make all her students feel comfortable. At the end of her account, she returns to her conjecture that her EL students can’t understand her (neglecting to consider having one of the Hebrew speaking ELs translate for her to the other EL student) and again stresses that in her work with ELs, communication is a difficulty and a characteristic aspect of her relationship with these students.

Jessica’s account highlights how her professional identity as a teacher provided her with authority to permit an EL student to continue speaking in a language other than English at school. This is illustrated in line 333 where she signaled that a particular student (one girl) told the EL student to speak English. Jessica continued the account but rather than provide an indication of what she said to the girl, she instead focused on what she said to her EL student. She reported that she stressed that it was “okay” and that the
student could “still” speak Hebrew (line 335), suggesting that he had done so in the past and was continuing to do so at that present moment and that Jessica, in her professional role of teacher, was permitting it. Instead of emphasizing her relationship with the girl who told the boy “English,” and how this incident might have served as a learning opportunity for that girl, Jessica highlighted her relationship with the boy and how, as a teacher, she told him it was “okay” with her that he continues to speak in Hebrew. Similar to her colleague Lucille, Jessica reported that she did not believe the student understood her.

A potential means of supporting EL students is to learn some basic words in their first language, an approach discussed by Jessica and Valentina. In Valentina’s account of working with an EL whose native language was Arabic, she recalled having noted that the child was referred to as “lulu” by her parents. Valentina stressed drawing from the first language not solely as a coping strategy in the classroom, but to foster her own connection with the student. She described this process in her work with this student during the fourth interview.

441. um (. ) if I needed to reach out to a child who spoke (. ) that spoke Arabic /

442. um (. ) if I would ask the parents /

443. "Oh what is their nickname at home?"

444. Do you have an Arabic…”

445. And then one of my students /

446. I know um (. ) her nickname at home /
she was Arabic she goes "lulu"/
and I remember asking the mom "What does lulu mean"?
She says "It means something very precious (.) like a diamond"
Adrian: Mm-hmm/
Valentina: So sometimes in class we say "Oh good job"
And I would (.) you know (.) give her high five and be like/
"Good job lulu"/
so she would feel at/
you know (.) like that connection/
Adrian: Mm-hmm/
Valentina: That/
So yeah (.) I'm not going to say/
or you know or Habibi/
because it means like "my love"/
so things like that/
Like (.) loving terms or kind terms that (.) that the family might use or friends (.) close friends of the family/
and then we can do that/
Interchangeably even the students just to be sweet to one another/
To be kind (.) to use words from a different culture/
Valentina’s discourse constructs her identity as a teacher who seeks information from the parent (line 448) for clarification of language used by the EL student in the
classroom. Valentina incorporated a term from the student’s first language (“lulu”) as part of the social language of the classroom relevant to providing praise (signaled by lines 451-452 in indicating “good job” and providing a high five). Yet, as a teacher, Valentina does not identify her use of the term as a means of aiding understanding of content or even necessarily of student performance. The closing lines of the excerpt (464-465) foreground her focus on using such terms to convey sweetness and kindness. Bringing in words from different languages is thus a form of demonstrating sweetness and kindness in Valentina’s classroom, suggesting that in the figured world of her classroom environment, the use of such terms supports a climate that welcomes all students.

The professional identities of both Valentina and Jessica seem to be focused on what their students would “feel” as a result of their teachers’ using or approving the use of heritage languages in the classroom. Valentina’s effort to learn what “lulu” meant stemmed from an interest in getting her student to feel connected, while Jessica’s assurance to her students that they could speak Hebrew in the class stemmed from an interest in making them feel comfortable. Observations of Jessica’s classes did show her using words in Hebrew for her Israeli ELs. While Dolores used Spanish even in formal instruction, Valentina limited her use of the language to non-instructional and informal instructional interactions with her students. Thus, although each described the inclusion of heritage language in the classroom as a means of supporting relationships with ELs, the motivation to do so and the resulting ways of doing so appear to reflect different purposes.
In their descriptions of the relationships between teachers and EL students, Jessica and Lucille emphasized what they and ELs needed to work through and what was challenging. Dolores and Valentina noted challenges confronted by ELs, but their emphasis was on connections between themselves and ELs that served to build relationships with them. The identity construction of the former pair emphasized relationships built with ELs to overcome differences and work through challenges while the latter pair constructed their relationships with ELs through opportunities to use some of the ELs’ home language.

**Enacting a teacher identity with ELs.** For all the participants, relationships with students emerged as a primary way in which they enacted their professional selves. While all the participants made claims that engagement with students served to facilitate the students’ entry into the classroom community, they differed as to what informed these claims. Making connections with students and overcoming linguistic differences were the two principle orientations that the participants assumed in relation to ELs. Despite these differences in perspectives, the similarities in the enactment of the teachers’ professional identities were much more salient than the differences—not only for participants teaching within the same context, but for participants in different contexts. By and large, class sessions were structured to allow students to engage with learning materials and/or to work with their peers. For example, during the observation of the literacy lesson, when teachers were engaged in formal instruction, each participant met with the students in a whole group setting with the teacher seated before the class and students sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of the teacher. Each teacher showcased
the text that she had selected, read aloud in a clear voice and demonstrated enthusiasm for the text.

It was within the context of less formal or non-instructional moments during the observations that evidence of ways in which the participants built or engaged in relationships with individual students surfaced. All of the participants approached not just their ELs, but all students, using affirming language, provided praise, and spoke in a welcoming tone. For example, during my literacy observation, Lucille interacted with one EL student who was reading a leveled text. Lucille not only asked a series of questions about the book, but also engaged in a conversation with the student to connect the text content with the student’s home life. Afterwards, Lucille explained that, while asking questions about the text is part of her regular teaching routine, she further questioned this female student to make connections with her own background and to connect the in-class activity with her home life to support reading comprehension. She also emphasized that because it was the end of the school year, this particular student had acclimated greatly to the school and did not need as much attention as she did in the beginning. Lucille’s discourse indicated that she saw a need to attend to ELs in order to make them comfortable and work through linguistic differences so they could engage with the curriculum. This teaching moment provided an example of how she was continuing such an effort with a student who, although now in the classroom for almost a full academic year, was still an emergent speaker of English.

In a similar lesson, Dolores engaged with her students in a small group activity that required them to look at a series of plants with magnifying glasses and identify what
they saw. One student who appeared to have difficulty understanding what he was being asked to do stood at the periphery of the group. Dolores attended to this student, told him how cute she thought he was, asked him about what he did not understand, and made space at the table for him to participate. Additionally, she provided him with some directions in Spanish and used affectionate terms to support his access to the activity.

In each situation, the teacher developed her relationship with her EL student either to check that the student was engaging with the content or to facilitate access to the content for the student. In both scenarios the teachers expressed that they were conscious about what they were saying and how they were saying it to the students. Lucille’s engagement was intended to bridge language differences that might have led to an inability to comprehend the text (written in English). Dolores’s relationship building with her EL served to connect her with the student by drawing from his (and her own) first language in order to engage him with the learning task. Her focus was to give him access to the learning content regardless of his English language development. For this student in Dolores’s classroom, learning was not subject to fluency in English (as it was for the student in Lucille’s class), but could be done in the student’s home language because Dolores was a native speaker of Spanish. While Dolores was able to pull from her shared linguistic background with the EL student (a tool not available to Lucille), both teachers enacted professional identities characterized by an interest in the active involvement of the student in the classroom.

**Fulfilling professional needs through relationships with ELs.** The conscious and unconscious language choices used by each of the participants suggests they all
valued building relationships with students and attending to their emotional needs. Yet, by and large, relationships with EL students seemed to be constructed as a means to achieve the teacher’s goals for ELs in the classroom rather than to learn about EL students as individuals in order to support them more broadly. Lucille, for example, related the following during her third interview.

761. Because then you want them to participate/
762. and have conversations with their peers and be able to come up and ask me a question/

During Valentina’s third interview she explained:

153. So (. ) because I am always thinking about that (. ) I always want my students to feel comfortable and I always try to be open and warm and caring/
154. and give them time (. ) um (. ) and just observe them/
155. so that they can come out of their (. ) not necessarily their shell/
156. but that they could feel comfortable (. ) whether they are speaking in their own native language or trying to speak English/

These passages illustrate the contrast between Valentina’s and Lucille’s approaches to fulfilling their professional needs through relationships with ELs. The use of second person in Lucille’s statement could suggest that she is extending her own value to include the interviewer (myself), seeking to confirm her values for what she desires in her work with ELs by an outsider. However, it might also indicate a distancing between herself and the statement she is making. Given the abundance of references to making
students comfortable in the classroom throughout Lucille’s discourse, it is likely she was trying to “sell” her view or highlight how it was something that should not be exclusive in her classroom, but should be present in all classrooms. Valentina took a much more personal approach through her use of first person pronouns and the repeated use of the modifier “always” to stress the significance of helping her students feel comfortable and the consistency of her attention to the issues and her desires for her students (line 153). She connected students’ being comfortable in her classroom with her own approach or interactions with them as open, warm and caring (lines 154-155). Lucille began her response to my interview question with a dependent clause (“because…”) and used the conjunction “and” twice to connect her interest in student participation (albeit expressed in the second person) with the subsequent phrases in line 762 that students converse with each other and are able to approach her to ask a question. Instead of emphasizing what actions she would take to support student participation, Lucille drew attention to what she would observe her students doing (lines 762-763). While all four teachers had a desire for their students to interact with each other in class, only Valentina emphasized a need to demonstrate warmth and caring with them. Regardless of this difference, the participants all indicated an awareness that interactions and relationships with students and ELs in particular inform their professional selves as teachers.

As discussed in this section, the professional identities of all the participants were partially—albeit significantly—constructed through their relationships with their students. All the participants expressed concern about making their EL students feel comfortable and welcomed in their classrooms. All of them positioned attending to the
emotional needs or concerns of their students as a prerequisite to attending to language or academic learning. All of them expressed a positive orientation to their EL students and none of them expressed a desire to have fewer ELs in their classrooms. Yet, despite their desire for ELs to feel more incorporated into the classroom, the participants differed as to what was informing and guiding them toward this outcome. For Valentina and Dolores, building relationships with their students meant making connections with them to facilitate their comfort in the classroom. For Jessica and Lucille, building relationships with EL students helped the students be comfortable in the classrooms so the teachers could bridge the linguistic differences. While bilingualism and multiple languages were positioned as positive by these participants, they also surfaced as challenges for each of them and for their EL students. As described in the event in which Lucille informally conversed with her EL student about a book the student was reading, the intent was not so much for Lucille herself to connect with the student, but rather to use the connections made by the student to support her reading of the text. As teachers, Dolores and Valentina were seeking to connect with their EL students themselves. Jessica and Lucille wanted ELs to be involved and to participate in the classroom, but their professional identities did not include a desire to build personal connections with their EL students, as was the case for Valentina and Dolores.

As discussed in this section, relationships with students surfaced as a means through which the participants constructed their understanding of their professional selves in relation to their EL students. At the same time, their relationships with students did not occur devoid of interactions with others. Building relationships with students’
parents, and parents of EL students in particular, surfaced as another important aspect in the professional identities of the participants. The following section discusses how relationships with parents figured into the professional identities of the participants.

Relationships with Parents

In interviews, each of the participants highlighted the fact that interactions and work with the parents of their students were central parts of their work as teachers, suggesting that these relationships were important to their professional identities. While all of the participants emphasized interacting with parents in order to support students in the classroom, how these discourses were constructed and what values informed the relationships differed. Dolores focused on interacting and working with parents to better support students in the classroom within the scope of the regular school day. Jessica constructed relationships with parents as one of her responsibilities and as a means to offer access for her own students to the kinds of experiences she had as a former student in Springbrook. For Valentina, relationships with parents involved their participation in the classroom itself. For Lucille, relationships with parents extended beyond the school day and the required parent-teacher conferences or before or after school informal conversations. She perceived opportunities to engage and work with parents outside of school as an aspect of who she was as a teacher. The following excerpt from Lucille’s second interview sheds light on this.

215. but even just (.) you know (.) professionally communicating with parents/

216. um (.) you know (.) going (.) not just thinking that your job/
Lucille’s discourse suggests that, through her relationships with parents, her professional identity as a teacher extends beyond the hours of the school day to include community members and after school or evening events (lines 216-217). Her frequent use of “you know” could suggest a bid to connect with the listener (myself) as a recognition that there is more to being a teacher than teaching and that I (as a former teacher) would know this. It might also suggest some uncertainty about how to express her views on this issue and function as a filler. But her comments show that, to her, being a teacher is more than working with her students during the school day; it involves relationship building with parents and families outside school. In a later part of the interview, she discussed her planned participation at an upcoming fundraising event over the weekend where the teachers would serve ice cream to parents and students. She described it as a “feel good thing” (line 239), suggesting that this engagement with parents and families may provide emotional satisfaction for her students and their parents and for herself as well.

Thus, Lucille perceived engaging with parents and families as a way for everyone involved to “feel good” and stressed that it was part of her role as a teacher. She did not, however, discuss specific ways relationships with parents might help beyond emotional support for students, whether they were mainstream students or ELs. While she saw
relationships with parents as central to her teacher self, it was not clear that she saw them as playing very substantive roles in relation to promoting student learning.

Dolores’s perception of the importance of relationships with parents emerged from her interest in keeping parents informed about how their preschool children were performing in school. While Lucille highlighted engaging with parents and families outside of the school day, Dolores emphasized her work within the parameters of the school day and communication with parents as something that she was mandated to engage in daily. In the excerpt below from Dolores’s second interview, she constructs her relationships with parents as an obligation.

327. We have to every day//
328. We (. ) uh (. ) we have (. ) you have to be available for them/
329. and they can call us during and (. ) on the phone/
330. they can (. ) they can (. ) um (. ) see us in the morning/
331. or drop off/
332. or departure/
333. so that's (. ) we have to be available for parents//

Dolores’s emphasis is thus not so much on engaging in opportunities outside the school day to work with parents and families or to connect with parents and families in community events, but rather it is a requirement that she, as a teacher, complies with. In the excerpt, Dolores used the verb “have to” four times, indicating that, from her perspective, engagement with parents is an obligation. Furthermore, Dolores began by emphasizing her own obligation (lines 327-328) followed by embedded clauses (329-
that clarify when parents (should they choose) can reach out to her. However, she returned to her initial assertion that the relationships are obligatory by the use of “have to” again in the final line: “we have to be available for parents.” Part of this obligation includes sharing her anecdotal notes on her students with their parents. Dolores pointed out, for example, that if she observes areas in which a student may need assistance in order to develop a particular skill, she reaches out to the parents of this student and discusses how the parents can help the child at home. Such an interaction in her relationships with parents is reflective of the interactions required of her in the professional identity that is part of the professional context in which she works.

A less personal means through which Dolores engaged with parents was by writing a monthly newsletter that was sent home. Dolores discussed how she creates a monthly English-Spanish newsletter that provides information about what is happening in the classroom, what areas of focus the students will learn about, and announcements or upcoming events. Both providing feedback about her students to their parents and circulating a newsletter reflect a transmission approach to communicating with parents, providing them with information about their children but not necessarily opening up a conduit for parents to communicate with Dolores. Whereas Lucille constructed relationships with parents as an essential aspect of herself that contributed to the emotional wellbeing of her students, Dolores considered the transmission of information to parents a required component of her role as teacher.

Perhaps the sharpest contrast in the construction of purposes for engaging with parents surfaced between Jessica and Valentina. Jessica engaged with parents and
families to incorporate them into the school and local community and aid in the integration of children and families with the school—the same suburban community she herself was raised in. On the other hand, Valentina stressed that she needed to build relationships with families in order to become a better teacher.

Acknowledging that it was her responsibility to work with parents (similarly to Lucille), Jessica commented on her interactions with parents and specifically with parents of EL students. For her, the relationships she constructed with these parents and families centered on providing information on community resources and activities. Jessica indicated that she did this so that the parents and students would feel they had become part of the school and the community, most especially if they were from a foreign country. In the following excerpt from Jessica’s fourth interview, she discussed the kind of information she shares with parents in her capacity as teacher.

66. I definitely when those new students come to school I definitely give a low down to the parents//

67. I also suggest community activities like girl scouts or boy scouts just to build up that social (. ) um (. ) outside//

68. You know (. ) this (. ) I tell them about the sports team that our school (. ) that our school (. ) not our school (. ) our town offers//

69. Um (. ) I tell them about the public library that they can get a free library card to read books//

70. Um (. ) we also have a community center in town where it's like a free gym//
71. There's (..) they do plays there (..) um (..) they do a lot of sports programs there//
72. And again (..) a lot of it's free to the community so I tell them about that/
73. and I think that also enhances them feeling more welcome//
74. Them feeling more as part of a community inside school and then outside school and building those social connections and meeting other families/
75. um (..) and becoming part of the school and the community//

Jessica’s professional identity as a teacher is not only concerned with teaching in the classroom, but also to build “social connections” (line 74) to assist these families and students to become part of the school and community. She constructed her explanation by commencing with the informal “low down” (line 66), suggesting a friendly tone not only in her communication with me (the interviewer) but also potentially with parents. Her suggestions focused on extracurricular and community activities and resources. Jessica asserted that part of her role as a teacher is to inform parents about what is accessible outside of the school. She essentially provided a list of resources (lines 66-71). She added almost as an afterthought (line 72) that the fact that many of these resources are free serves as a potential selling point for parents to get themselves and their children involved. In her figured world, participation in these community activities will assist in helping families and students feel “more welcome” (line 73).

In other instances in this same interview, Jessica explained that she tells the parents of EL students about ways to become involved in the PTA, school fundraisers,
and movie nights in the school. Her discourse suggests strongly that these recommendations she provides for both in school and community programs are intended to support each family’s and student’s social integration into the community and ultimately to allow them to enjoy the same benefits and resources she experienced herself as a former student in the district and as a life-long community member. However, as well-meaning as these concerns and efforts are, Jessica’s discourse is concerned with assimilating parents into the community so they can become community members and partake, as she partook, in these activities. Her commentary lacks attention to finding ways to integrate what parents of ELs already know, their values, beliefs, customs, or practices into her own classroom or, by extension, what such cultural and linguistic resources could offer the school or wider community. Instead, it is framed as her providing the information necessary to families and students rather than Jessica learning or utilizing what those families or students bring as valuable to the classroom (for herself and her other students). As a teacher, Jessica constructs her relationship with parents and families of ELs as responsible for providing opportunities for community engagement and integration. As committed as she is to helping ELs feel part of her classroom, she fails to develop opportunities to authentically bring their cultural or linguistic backgrounds into the classroom.

Also influenced by a value for making ELs feel that they are part of the classroom community, Valentina, like the other participants, indicated that she communicated and interacted with parents daily. Much of this communication focused on informing parents about how their children participated in school that day. However, as a teacher, her
motivation to build relationships with parents, and the parents of ELs in particular, seemed to stem from a value pertaining to and belief in the importance of incorporating the students’ cultural backgrounds into the classroom and involving parents in classroom activities. While Lucille perceived communication with parents beyond the school day as a general part of her identity as a teacher, and Dolores and Jessica expressed engagement with parents as a means to provide them information, Valentina built her relationships with parents by bringing them into the classroom, actively getting to know who they were and where they were from in order to better enact her professional identity as a teacher that attends to and is responsive to who parents and families are. The following excerpt from Valentina’s first interview illustrates this.

415. So when I deal with these families/
416. they have their own customs/
417. they have their own (.) um (.) you know (.) social customs/
418. and you have to be sensitive/
419. and you have to be aware/
420. because they're getting used to adapting to this country/
421. and then you also have to get (.) um/
422. not adapted to them (.) but to accommodate them as well/
423. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm//
424. **Valentina:** to make them feel comfortable/
425. and to help their children (.) also incorporate in school/
426. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm//
427. **Valentina:** so that they can be prepared/

428. later on/

429. when they go to the (. . ) the u-( . ) upper grades//

In this excerpt Valentina emphasizes that the intent of being sensitive to and aware of the families she works with, particularly those who are new to the country, is not an effort to assimilate them into the community but rather to make them comfortable and incorporate who they are into the school. Like the other participants, Valentina values preparing students for engagement in school. Unlike the other participants, she emphasizes what the teacher needs to do (lines 417-419) rather than what the parents of the students need to do (as expressed by Jessica and Dolores). Like her colleague Dolores, who described communication with parents as something that they “have to” do (p. 108), Valentina employs this verb in relation to sensitivity and awareness. Her choice of this word conveys the sense that, for her construction of her professional identity, it is not an option but rather it is essential to incorporate such awareness. However, Dolores “has to” communicate with parents because of regulations external to her, while Valentina “has to” be “sensitive” and “aware” because that is a way to engage parents and families in adapting to their new environment and having the environment accommodate their cultures and customs. Thus, Dolores and Valentina are using this verb in very different ways, and reflect quite different identities vis-à-vis relationships with parents—one engaging in parent-teacher interactions because of an external requirement and the other because of her desire to accommodate families and children of different language and cultural backgrounds. Engagement with parents and families is an
obligation and duty for Dolores whereas for Valentina it is a moral requirement in who she is as a teacher. While both teachers recognize interactions and engagement with parents as part of their professional identities, they construct this engagement in very different ways.

Valentina’s emphasis on awareness, sensitivity and incorporation into the school was clearly expressed in an account that illustrated these and her value for parental involvement and relationship building in her classroom. Valentina explained that the mother of an Arabic-speaking student brought a children’s book written in Arabic to the class and she invited the mother to read it to the students. Valentina said that she thought the experience was beautiful, that the children enjoyed it and that she could see how happy the mother felt to be able to “share her culture and her language” (Interview #1, line 584). In addition to facilitating a sense of comfort for the mother and her child in the classroom, it seemed to aid the parent in feeling accepted and informed her that her child was in a space that was inviting and welcoming. Thus, Valentina’s purpose in her relationships with parents was not to provide information about or involve them in the school or community so they could become more like school or community members; it was to strengthen the bond between the home and school community by demonstrating that parents and students as linguistic and cultural beings are welcomed and invited to share who they are and what they know.

Valentina may construct relationships with parents in this way because of other identity categories that she claims. Although a discussion of other identities is the topic of Chapter Six, it is worth mentioning that Valentina cited her Latina background as
important to her identity because she shared it with many of the families and students in her classroom. Her own value for her cultural and linguistic background may have contributed to her value for engaging with families and students as cultural and linguistic beings. Thus, as demonstrated in the prior anecdote of a class mother reading a text in Arabic to the students, she extends this value to everyone of diverse cultures and does not confine it solely to those with cultural or language backgrounds similar to her own.

At the same time, shared cultural or language backgrounds do not appear to be a major influence for all the participants. Dolores, who is also a Latina who worked with a high number of Spanish speaking ELs in the same context as Valentina, did not comment on how her shared cultural background informed her work with parents and families. Rather, Dolores’s connection with parents and families stemmed from her own immigration experience within the U.S. For her and Jessica, relationships with parents drew from what they knew from their own experiences. Jessica drew from her experiences, participation and engagement in the particular community in which the school was situated as something she valued and sought to extend to families of ELs. She built her relationships with families with the goal of helping them share in these aspects of her background. Dolores and Valentina shared elements with their students’ families—shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a personal or family immigration experience—but Dolores focused on the immigration experience in discussing her relationships with parents while Valentina took a broader view, seeking to acknowledge and accommodate the families of ELs. Lucille simply acknowledged that work with parents was a necessary part of her job and who she was as a teacher. While
all of the participants demonstrated a value for speaking to parents, the purposes for their communication and the aims of building relationships with parents differed.

Ultimately, engagement with parents and families was undertaken to support students. But the perceptions of what ELs need differed among these four teachers. For Valentina, sensitivity to and awareness of ELs’ and their families’ adjusting to the U.S. context informed her resolve to find ways to accommodate them in her classroom, recognizing that ELs need to have their language and culture incorporated into the classroom to support their comfort in and access to classroom activities. For Jessica, ELs and their families needed awareness of community and school resources in order to participate in and ultimately assimilate in order to reap the same benefit she garnered from these. For Lucille, parents and families need to see that teachers are interested in participating in events and activities where they can interact beyond the obligatory. For Dolores, parents need to know how their child is doing in school and what areas they should be working on to support their learning. The professional identities of the participants were constructed through relationships with parents, yet these relationships served different purposes under a larger purpose concerned with supporting ELs in school.

These differences in relationships with parents highlight how each participant’s teacher identity, as enacted through engagement with parents, had differential implications for the experiences of ELs. Whereas Dolores emphasized the obligatory nature of her work with families (framing her interactions via a transmission mode in which she dispensed information on the student’s performance in school), Jessica stressed
transmitting her knowledge of the school and community resources as a necessary step in assimilation into the community. Both of these teachers’ professional identities focused on providing parents and families with information for different aims. In contrast, Valentina emphasized her need to get to know and learn from parents in order to better support her students, and Lucille emphasized social interactions beyond the scope of the school day with the families of her students. Valentina’s professional identity thus constructed engagement with parents as a means for enabling her professional self to affirm students in her classroom, whereas Lucille’s professional identity constructed relationships with parents as social opportunities both inside and outside school that were central to her understanding of herself as a teacher.

Relationships with Colleagues

Analysis of the data highlighted relationships (or lack thereof) with colleagues as another element in the participants’ construction of their professional identities. Contextual differences seemed to serve as a mediating factor in why relationships with colleagues were positioned as valuable for the suburban Springbrook teachers and treated with less importance by the urban Underdale teachers. The Underdale teachers’ discourse, on one hand, provided evidence that working and interacting with colleagues was not a regular aspect or function of their professional responsibilities and figured marginally in their professional identity construction. The teachers in the Springbrook context, on the other hand, repeatedly mentioned that working with other teachers and interacting with them (even beyond the scope of the school day) was an important part of who they were as teachers. In Springbrook, Lucille and Jessica embraced the qualities of
collaborators and team players as part of their teacher identities. In Underdale, Dolores and Valentina presented themselves as isolated professionals who not only had little interaction with their peers, but expressed minimal interest in collaborating with them. Their primary interactions with other school employees were with the paraprofessionals working in their respective classrooms. The following sections discusses relationships with paraprofessionals and relationships with other teachers.

**Relationships with paraprofessionals.** Overall, Dolores’s and Valentina’s discourse de-emphasized their relationships with other teachers, and instead focused on their work with paraprofessionals, non-certificated school employees whose chief duties are to work with students and teachers but who do not themselves possess a teaching license. While Dolores positioned her paraprofessional as someone she collaborated with, Valentina positioned herself as responsible for ensuring that her paraprofessional completed her job responsibilities. Despite using the term “collaborate,” her discourse indicates that her relationship with her paraprofessional was constructed as hierarchical. After having discussed some of her responsibilities as a teacher, Valentina provided the following commentary in her second interview.

12. Those are my (. ) my duties /
13. and also collaborating with uh (. ) my aide//
14. Making sure she knows what her responsibilities are in running my classroom//
15. Um (. ) and being basically the person (. ) the person responsible for the whole//
Further in the same interview, Valentina continued her discussion of her work with her paraprofessional.

468. Well (.) I usually work (.) uh (.) closely with my aide//

469. Uh (.) what I do is (.) the same way I prepare lesson plans for my children/

470. I prepare a lesson plan for my aide and on…

471. What I do is I create it/

472. and then on Thursday (.) uh (.) I'll give it to my aide//

473. And I'll have her read it overnight and then Friday when she comes in/

474. we'll go over it//

475. And it basically tells her when we work in centers (.) what stories or what books she could read to the children in that half of the classroom/

476. while I'm working on the other side//

477. And maybe one or two questions she can ask the children while they're engaged in play/

478. and in order to get them to think about the theme and work//

479. So (.) she knows what she has to do/

480. and she already basically has (.) um (.) her (.) her (.) what she's expected to do/

481. for the following week//
And if she has any questions (.) she can always ask me over (.) you know/

over the week and when we get back on Monday//

These examples illustrate that, despite saying that she works with her aide “closely,” Valentina takes full responsibility for all aspects of her classroom and dictates to her paraprofessional what needs to be done, suggesting that she sees her relationship with her paraprofessional similarly in some ways to her relationship with her students (lines 469-470). Valentina’s choice of words in line 473, “And I’ll have her read it overnight…,” followed by a litany of tasks (lines 475-479) so that “she knows what she has to do” (line 479), highlights the fact that, as a teacher, Valentina assumes responsibility not only for planning and preparing for her students, but for planning for her paraprofessional so that she (the paraprofessional) can work effectively with the students. At the end of these comments (lines 482-483), Valentina indicated that, should the paraprofessional have any questions, she can reach out to her over the weekend or on Monday. Whereas she constructed her relationships with parents as centered in the classroom, Valentina’s professional identity as a teacher in charge of her paraprofessional extends beyond the school day to the weekend. Yet it should not be assumed that Valentina would construct this same type of relationship with another paraprofessional. Data on her paraprofessional’s skills, competence, or prior professional experiences was not collected. Thus, it is unknown if Valentina would be less hierarchical with another paraprofessional or if the relationship she constructs is required because of the current
paraprofessional’s possible lack of expertise or experience in working within the classroom setting.

With regard to relationships with other teachers, Valentina made reference to past collaborative work with colleagues when they began their current curriculum a few years ago, but explained that they no longer continue to plan lessons with each other and now work on their own. Dolores, who also commented on few opportunities to work with other teachers in the school, described a different type of relationship with her paraprofessional, as demonstrated in the following excerpts from her second interview.

837. Um (. ) I always- (. ) I always work with my assistant/
838. and (. ) um (. ) because with this (. ) uh (. ) curriculum that we use/
839. it's like if there's two teachers all the time//
840. A lot of things in small groups/
841. when we do play planning (. ) she takes a group/
842. I take a group//
843. Of course (. ) we alternate/
844. and she works with the (. ) um (. ) with my group/
845. and she works with the group that she has/
846. And it's always like that//

Dolores subsequently described how she works with her paraprofessional.

861. And she helps also to collect data/
862. and when she (. ) from her observations/
863. let's say (. ) we have like (. ) uh (. ) an activity in math/
Thus, Dolores and Valentina employ their paraprofessionals in different ways and construct this professional relationship in accord with their own professional identities. Valentina sees herself as the professional who informs her aide about what to do. She positions herself as responsible for her paraprofessional and for making sure that she does her job. Dolores’s professional identity as a teacher involves sharing classroom teaching practices and clerical responsibilities with the paraprofessional.

Classroom observations of both teachers demonstrated that paraprofessionals engaged in work similar to the teacher (such as working with students in the learning centers). However, when the teacher was engaged in formal instruction with the whole class (such as during morning meeting), the paraprofessional (in both classrooms) sat among the students and was focused on behavior management. Thus, during small group instruction and independent play, an uninformed observer would have a difficult time determining who was the teacher and who was the paraprofessional. This division of labor was acknowledged explicitly by Dolores (as illustrated in her interview excerpts
above) while Valentina’s discourse emphasized her own identity construction as the professional and the paraprofessional as the helper.

This focus on their relationship with paraprofessionals and on having few opportunities for interactions or relationships with other teachers in the school probably reflects the context in which the teachers worked. During observations conducted in Valentina’s and Dolores’s classrooms, at no time did co-teaching occur nor did another teacher enter the classroom. This is not to say that such things never occur, but it does suggest that professional isolation may be characteristic in Underdale. Given this context with minimal communication and interaction with colleagues, it is not surprising that these two teachers described an absence of school-wide conversation, instructional co-planning, and other collaborative endeavors about attending to ELs in the school and supporting their learning. The teachers in Springbrook did not have paraprofessionals in their classes; for them, as discussed below, relationships with other teachers were salient elements of their professional identities.

**Relationships with other teachers.** In contrast to the observed absence of interaction among teachers in Underdale, during my visits to the kindergarten teachers in Springbrook, I observed multiple instances in which the participants engaged in informal conversations with other teachers or with each other. During one of my observations of Jessica, another teacher entered the classroom and began to inquire about school events. Jessica explained that she was being observed at that moment and the teacher left the room. Such an incident supports Jessica’s and Lucille’s discourses indicating that relationships with colleagues are a part of who they are as teachers. Each teacher
expressed the view that working with their professional peers is helpful not only for themselves, but for other members of the school community. Unlike the urban Underdale teachers, the suburban Springbrook teachers did not have paraprofessionals and spent much of their instructional time working alone. Despite this, their identity constructions portrayed them as team players and collaborators, in contrast to Valentina and Dolores, whose identity constructions were as isolated professionals. The following excerpts from Jessica’s second interview and Lucille’s first interview sheds light on their perspectives as part of a collegial team.

519.  **Jessica:**  Um (.) it's my (.). I'm still pretty new to teaching//
520.  It's only my fourth year teaching/
521.  um (.) but again I (.). I just observe the literacy coach/
522.  I observe math teachers/
523.  Just observing other teachers is really giving me/
524.  a lot of knowledge of how to do things//
525.  Um (.). you know (.). I observe other kindergarten teachers (.). and we work together//
526.  We collaborate/
527.  We share ideas (.). so collaborating is always helpful/
528.  um (.). so yeah//

The following is an excerpt from Lucille’s first interview. She begins by responding to my inquiry on her work with other teachers in the school.

173.  **Lucille:**  Yeah//
and I mean (. ) it's also very encouraged/

and I also think it's a great thing//

I (. ) I think (. ) I mean (. ) I've been very fortunate/

but I also really (. ) I (. ) I've had people who are also very willing to work with me//

Adrian: Mm-hmm//

Lucille: But (. ) I'd much rather work with someone who's willing/

you know (. ) to share and to/

I mean (. ) I'll share anything//

So (. ) you know (. ) I don't mind giving something that I've created/

or (. ) um (. ) you know (. ) I just think it's better/

I think it (. ) it (. ) you know (. ) the kids also feel it too/

These excerpts highlight how the two Springbrook participants value working with others despite engaging in the actual act of teaching or being with their students alone during the bulk of their instructional time. Jessica commenced her commentary by emphasizing her novice status (line 520) as a prefatory explanation for her observations of other teachers during their own practice. She followed up (lines 523-524) by emphasizing that it provides her with knowledge on “how to do things,” indicating that the observations supported her in identifying what to do in her own classroom. Jessica began to shift her emphasis in line 525, repositioning herself from the observant novice to a member of the team who works together with others. She used the pronoun “we” (lines
526-527) to signify that she was among those who collaborate and share ideas and affirms that this is always helpful (line 527). While she constructs her professional self as a teacher who is still learning (and learning from her colleagues), Jessica also constructs herself as able to collaborate and contribute to the work of her colleagues. Potentially, her teacher identity as a novice after four years of teaching may reflect the suburban context that she works in with a historically low rate of teacher turnover. Given the high rate of teacher turnover in urban school systems (Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011), Jessica may not have positioned herself (or been positioned) as a novice had she been employed in an urban district.

Lucille’s comments echo Jessica’s view that working with colleagues is “a good thing” (line 175) and something that she (Lucille) counts herself as fortunate to be able to do. Just as Jessica constructed working and collaborating with colleagues as always helpful, Lucille gave attention to how she would share anything she’s created as part of her work with her colleagues (line 181). In her understanding of the school community and in the figured world that she constructs, such an action or perspective is felt not only by other teachers, but by students as well (line 184). Her conclusion that “I just think it’s better” (line 183) conveys that working with others supports a professional environment that can offer more to members of the school community than one characterized by professional isolation.

Both Jessica and Lucille engage with their colleagues as a regular facet of their work and as a source by means of which they understand their professional selves. Their relationships with colleagues provide an opportunity to discuss issues relevant to their
teaching. Both teachers participate in a professional learning community (PLC), an ongoing professional learning opportunity to promote professional development, with their grade level colleagues which meets monthly. Technology also serves as a means through which they engage in regular dialogue and interaction with their grade level peers. Email provides a forum through which they share lesson plans, and text messages provide quick answers to questions they might have about the curriculum or upcoming instructional units. The PLC in which the teachers participate includes grade level colleagues from across the district. Although it initially began as a requirement, the participants had come to see it as a productive space to collaborate. For Lucille, having relationships with colleagues is thus not only an aspect of her professional identity that is encouraged within the school, but is also something that she personally values.

However, the suburban participants did not value relationships with auxiliary teachers as they did relationships with grade level colleagues. Auxiliary teachers, such as ESL and basic skills instructors (BSI), work with students from different classrooms but not directly with the classroom teacher. In Springbrook, the auxiliary teachers pulled students out of their regular classrooms to work with them in a separate setting. In Underdale, no auxiliary teachers worked with Dolores or Valentina and their students. Jessica and Lucille framed auxiliary teachers along lines similar to Valentina’s positioning of her paraprofessional as a helpful support. During one interview Lucille reflected on former years in her teaching. When I asked her if she taught ELs in her class at the time, she indicated that she did and that the ESL teacher gave tips to inform her work with ELs. The following is from Lucille’s third interview.
447. I remember (.) I remember talking to the ESL teacher and she would give tips/
448. because I didn’t/
449. I don’t remember really learning about English language learners in school//
450. So (.) you know (.) what should I do for her or do for him?
451. Um (.) you know (.) just getting whatever support I could//

In another interview, Lucille repeated such a positioning of ESL teachers as “a source to go to for support” (Lucille, interview # 2, lines 263-264). She indicated that ESL and other teachers who work in multiple classrooms (e.g., ESL, BSI) provide support to the students (Lucille, Interview # 2, lines 276-278). Jessica’s discourse also positioned the ESL teacher as a source of support, a colleague who could provide her with the support she needed on how to work with ELs. When I asked Jessica if she thought she would have ELs in her classroom prior to entering teaching, she indicated she did and related her interactions with the ESL teacher as a professional resource in her first interview.

430. **Adrian:** And then you started working/
431. um (.) did you (.) did you think "Oh (.) I may have" ELs?
432. **Jessica:** Like definitely//
433. **Adrian:** Okay//
434. **Jessica:** I actually researched into it because/
435. we have a (.) a a (.) big ESL/
not a big ESL population/
but there’s usually about five students per classroom/

Adrian: Mm-hmm //

Jessica: that are in the ESL program/

so I looked into that (.) and I talked to the ESL teacher/

like "What should I be doing in my classroom”?

Um (.) you know (.) to help these students out/

and so she gave me some pointers/

you know (.) our math curriculum has an ESL portion/

for differentiated instruction/

like how to work with ESL students in there/

Adrian: Mm-hmm //

Jessica: so I used that//

Perhaps because of her status as a novice, Jessica described herself as learning
from the ESL teacher as a professional resource who is knowledgeable, who can provide
“pointers” and ideas about where to gather information for ELs in Jessica’s classroom.
Jessica constructed getting help from the ESL teacher in order to know “What I should be
doing in my classroom” (line 441). While Lucille also considered the ESL and BSI
teachers as supports in her work, the emphasis was on how these teachers supported the
students directly instead of her work with ELs (“So that teacher [ESL, BSI] provides
support to children”) (Lucille, interview two, line 276). The contextual structure of the
school may have influenced how Lucille and Jessica constructed their auxiliary
colleagues. The participants explained that these teachers did not attend grade level meetings and were routinely employed for class coverage when the participants collaborated with their grade level peers. Thus, scheduling meetings and distributing tasks that would have allowed for such collaboration between the ESL and homeroom teachers were not feasible.

To be sure, Lucille and Jessica valued their relationships with grade level colleagues and saw them as collaborations with peers, viewing these relationships as important aspects of their professional identities. However, in relation to ELs, they (like Valentina and Dolores) described few conversations among their colleagues regarding how to attend to the needs of ELs in the classroom or on a school-wide level. This, according to the teachers, was not a topic of conversation in their PLC or via their online communication. Jessica reported toward the end of the study that she would value such talk if it were to occur or surface among her colleagues. She desired conversations with her peers about how to attend to ELs in the classroom.

**Relationships with Former Teachers**

All participants described their relationships with former teachers as a source that informed their professional identities. Differences in how participants conceptualized these relationships and schooling experiences determined the manner in which they drew from these relationships as an influence on their teacher identities. Relationships with former teachers seemed to serve as a template on which to build or from which to depart in the construction of their professional selves. For Jessica, drawing from the relationships she had with her former teachers served to perpetuate the image of her
former educators in herself and offer to her students the types of educative experiences she experienced. For the other three participants, relationships with former teachers seemed to influence how not to construct a professional self and how to provide different sorts of learning experiences for their students. The following sections focus on these themes.

**Perpetuating the images of former teachers.** Jessica’s discourse on her previous schooling experiences as a student and the context in which she learned was overwhelmingly positive and involved little critical insight or commentary, suggesting an ideal figured world. In reference to what her schooling experiences were like, Jessica related the following during her first interview.

16. **Jessica:** I thought all my teachers were great//
17. **Adrian:** Okay//
18. **Jessica:** And then the ones (.) who/
19. you know (.) sometimes if I didn't always agree with them/
20. I just learned not to do that as a teacher.
21. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm //
22. **Jessica:** Um (.) but yeah (.) it was pretty positive/
23. very hands on experience//

Jessica’s discourse constructs a figured world where “all” of her teachers were “great” and she was able to mitigate the potential influence of teachers she did not “agree with.” While she acknowledged that there were teachers she “didn’t always agree with,” she did not say that she saw them as bad or mediocre teachers or that she did not like
them. She indicated that, from these teachers, she learned what not to do as a teacher herself (line 20). By using the adverb “just,” Jessica diminished the degree of negativity or critique of these teachers that could be inferred from the fact that she did not “agree with” them. Jessica further de-emphasized the significance of those teachers by returning to her initial assessment that her former teachers and her experience in school was “pretty positive,” adding that an aspect of this was how very “hands on” it was. Further in the interview Jessica provided the example of her first grade teacher as a significant source in her development of appreciation for literature and as a teacher who contributed to her love of school and learning.

29. Jessica: Mrs. Debelis (. ) she was my first grade teacher/

30. Adrian: Mm-hmm //

31. Jessica: And we work together/

32. so I remember learning to read in the first grade/

33. and using (. ) like (. ) the sight word book//

34. I lost it one time (. ) and I was so upset//

35. Adrian: Mm-hmm //

36. Jessica: And she was like/

37. "It's okay"//

38. Um (. ) but yeah (. ) I thought overall it was a really great experience/

39. and it made me want to be a teacher/

40. and I wanted to give back to the community//
For Jessica, the teachers she learned from and interacted with were models for her own professional identity and the enactment of that identity. Her professional identity was rooted in the desire to establish relationships with her own students like those she had with her teachers. Aside from noting that there were some teachers she sometimes did not agree with, Jessica did not identify any challenges or shortcomings related to the teachers she learned from or the schools she attended. In her figured world, the school context and the individuals she learned from were ideal, and she sought to provide the same type of “really great experience” to the students in her classroom.

Constructing professional identities to contrast with former teachers. The other participants’ discourses about former teachers were not conveyed through such rose-colored glasses. For them, relationships with former teachers highlighted what they both did and did not want to be as teachers. Varying experiences as students influenced their construction of professional identities in ways that would better attend to their students than the ways in which their teachers attended to them.

For example, both Lucille and Valentina commented on having been students in urban Catholic schools during their upbringing. Both reflected on having teachers that engaged in rote drill and practice learning experiences (in contrast to Jessica’s “very hands on” learning experiences) largely devoid of relevance to their lives as students. Lucille suggested that the practices of her former teachers were exceedingly strict when she talked about not knowing why her teachers did what they did during her first interview.

22. So I just remember an overall impression of (. ) not really/
23. so much ever being explained why we were doing something/
24. but more (.) this is rote/
25. and this is what you have to do/
26. and I don't know if that was more just the time period that I grew up in/
27. whereas now I see there is much more a push/
28. to explain to children/
29. and show them why they're doing/
30. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm//
31. **Lucille:** x y or z//
32. But I do remember pretty strong discipline/
33. in ways that we could never even (.) I mean I wouldn't want to//
34. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm//
35. **Lucille:** And I don't think it's right (.) appropriate or fair/
36. but I (.) not with all the teachers//
37. but I do remember some disciplining techniques [that-
38. **Adrian:** Strict]//
39. **Lucille:** Strict//
40. Yeah (.) that (.) um (.) probably were even much less so than what was
done/
41. like (.) a generation before me//

Lucille’s schooling experiences—in particular, the kinds of relationships she
participated in with her teachers (largely devoid of meaning as a result of rote learning)
and the use of strict disciplinary practices—emerged as an influence regarding how not to behave or teach once she became a teacher herself. Lucille provided a series of contrasts between her former teachers and herself as a teacher. Her teachers presented activities or tasks as what “you have to do” (line 25), indicating that there was no option to not engage in it, not only for Lucille, but for the other students as well. Lucille contrasted this to the present day, emphasizing the “push” to explain to students and make meaningful what they are doing (lines 27-29). She commented on the discipline in her schooling as “pretty strong” and drew another contrast by employing “we,” to refer to herself and other teachers, saying she wouldn’t want to engage in such disciplinary practices. Although she briefly acknowledged that these practices she critiqued were not engaged in by all her teachers (line 36), she clearly emphasized the discipline (line 37). Finally, Lucille ended this response by drawing another contrast. Here, she suggested that the forms of discipline she experienced with her teachers were probably less strict then what occurred a generation before her (line 41). Thus, Lucille constructs her memories of her teachers and interactions with them in contrast to her own professional identity and the enactment of that identity in her classroom. Relationships with former teachers influenced her to construct a professional self in contrast to them.

Similar experiences with rote learning also seemed to play a part in Valentina’s professional identity construction. She framed experiences with her own teachers as positive although she too placed some emphasis on memorization and lack of attention to asking questions as negative experiences in her educational background. In the following excerpt from her first interview, Valentina referenced teachers whose practices diverged
from rote learning and were able to foster a connection between the lives of students and what was being taught in class.

16. **Valentina:** I had a very positive experience in my education//
17. um (. ) I remember between kindergarten and third grade/
18. uh (. ) the experiences that I had as a student/
19. were with teachers that seemed to teach um/
20. without asking too many questions/
21. as far as (. ) uh getting us to think/
22. and uh it was a lot more memorization//
23. But starting in third grade/
24. I'll never forget/
25. I had a TEACHER who would PUSH us to really have full comprehension/
26. and she would ask us to/
27. to ask questions while we were reading//
28. She would stop us and say/
29. do you really know what that means/
30. do you know what this word means//
31. So I have that recollection/
32. of having a teacher that was interested in our thinking//
33. And then/
34. as I got older (. ) um/
I remember specifically in sixth grade.

I had a wonderful teacher.

who really pushed us um/

...to be great readers/

...to enjoy reading um/

...even if it was just reading the back of a cereal box/

And even in high school/

...teachers that viewed teaching as dealing with the whole person/

...versus just the subject matter/

So they were interested in um/

...the things we enjoyed/

...how we enjoyed learning/

...trying to um/

...create their lesson plan in a way that they could reach out to us/

...and get us to understand the material/

...but in ways that were also enjoyable/

...whether it be through games that they would create/

...So it wasn't the old fashioned style of/

...you know teaching at the blackboard/

...and writing and copying/

...It was very interactive/

...and I think that that made it/
Valentina’s discourse contrasts teachers who demonstrated an interest in her thinking and made learning enjoyable with others who taught in ways that did not engage students in thinking. She constructs a figured world where her education was, overall, a “positive experience” (line 16). She described her kindergarten to third grade teachers (lines 17-19) as typifying the rote style of learning similar to what was described by Lucille. However, Valentina described a significant change in her school experience beginning in the third grade (line 23), when a teacher took an interest in her thinking (line 32), a theme echoed in Valentina’s work with her own students and her pondering about their experiences inside and outside of school. She also described her high school teachers positively, emphasizing a type of learning that was “very interactive” (line 55) and “very enjoyable” (line 58). Of note is the similar use of the term “push” in Valentina’s account (lines 25, 37) and the previously discussed account by Lucille (p.134). Both participants used the term “push” to express the emphasis (for Lucille, in the present context, for Valentina, in recollection of her school) to teach in a manner that stands in contrast to rote, transmission oriented teaching. Valentina’s account highlighted a teacher who demonstrated an interest in students’ thinking and their understanding of content. She emphasized this in line 25, employing the modifiers “really” and “full” to demonstrate the significance of what this teacher “PUSH”[ed] her students to have—“to really have full comprehension.” Lucille stressed clarity in explaining to students the reasons why they are engaged in different tasks while
Valentina stressed the teacher’s “push” to get to know what they are thinking. That is, whereas Valentina’s “push” highlights an interest in student thinking, Lucille’s “push” stresses clarity of purpose to students for the tasks and activities in the classroom.

Thus, while Lucille described her interactions with teachers as largely devoid of meaning throughout her years as a student, Valentina experienced this only in her early years of learning but provided examples of teachers in later years who sought to make her learning interactive and enjoyable. Further, Valentina’s narrative highlights how she understood that her teachers were seeking to get to know her as a whole person and to make learning enjoyable. This type of experience contrasts with Lucille’s experience; she described engagement with teachers and classroom activities as compliance and students as being labeled and tracked in different groups throughout their schooling years. Lucille’s own identification as naturally adept at scholastic tasks prevented her from being placed in a low ability group. She reflected, not on what it was like for her to be in one of those groups, but on what it was like for students who were in those groups, as evidenced in the following excerpt from her first interview.

45. And from the very beginning (.) we were tracked according to ability//
46. So your homeroom (.) you could be in a different home room/
47. but you (.) there was group 1 (.) group 2 and group 3/
48. and group 1 was the brightest/
49. and then 2 was middle/
50. and then 3//
51. And they (.) that’s what they were called. Group 1 (.) group 2 and group
52. And then you moved throughout the day/
53. even in 3rd grade (. ) 2nd grade (. ) with your group/
54. **Adrian:** This was all throughout elementary school/
55. and when you were a student (. ) were you aware then that there/
56. **Lucille:** And I was in group 1/
57. And I (. ) I was very aware that people hardly ever changed groups/
58. Like (. ) I don't really ever remember anybody (. ) like (. ) if you were in
group 1/
59. you were pretty much always in group 1/
60. if you were in group 3 (. ) you were pretty much always in group 3/

Lucille’s experience was, that once labeled as a certain kind of student, a student
kept that label as she or he progressed through school. Her discourse described teachers
who engaged in procedures that did not take into account who the students were, as
illustrated in the following excerpt from her first interview.

84. And I just remember (. ) I (. ) I remember very clearly/
85. like (. ) one teacher (. ) she was very big on having different kinds of
bees/
86. So we'd have math bees/
87. and I just remember standing along the edge of the room/
88. and she would just read 2+3+5 divided by this/
89. minus this/
A LOT/

And [then

**Adrian:** Mm-hmm]//

**Lucille:** for science I remember (.) in 5th grade science/

it was the same teacher that (.) she would give us mimeograph pages/

on what we were learning in science/

but we never did an experiment/

we either did that/

or we read from the book//

And I remember a lot of glossary work/

copying down definitions/

but I don't remember ever doing a science experiment//

**Adrian:** So it's (.) if (.) if I understand it correctly/

the way it sounds to me is a very [traditional

**Lucille:** EXTREMELY//]

**Adrian:** kind of (.) no real hands-on/

or exploratory learning//

**Lucille:** No//

Perhaps because of such experiences with their teachers, Lucille and Valentina were especially concerned with fashioning professional identities that made learning relevant and meaningful to the lives of their students. For Lucille, this emerged out of a desire not to replicate the educative experiences or relationships she had with her
teachers. For Valentina (like Jessica), it emerged from a desire to provide her students with experiences that were as meaningful and enjoyable as her own. They constructed their professional identities as teachers who work at making learning relevant to the lives of their students—similar to or in contrast to their own former teachers.

For Dolores, who worked with Valentina in the urban preschool, she (unlike Lucille) had firsthand experience of knowing what it was like to be positioned as deficient or to be relegated to a lower level. As a former EL student in the U.S. from the age of 12 years, Dolores did not need to wonder what it was like to feel like an outsider (something that Lucille and Valentina could only imagine) or to be positioned outside the norm. Although she did not criticize her schooling experiences or interactions with teachers to the extent Lucille did or reference a sense of boredom or irrelevance in her learning from her teachers as Valentina did, Dolores did describe feeling alone and identified herself as essentially mute while she was a student in the U.S. She sharply contrasted this experience with the types of schooling experiences she had as a student in El Salvador (experiences about which she employed a discourse similar to Jessica’s). Both Jessica and Dolores framed the community in which they learned as ideal—but for Dolores this community was in El Salvador, not the U.S. In the following excerpt from Dolores’s first interview, she described this figured world of her early years. The move to the U.S. as a young girl placed Dolores in a context where she was afraid to speak. While she recognized that her teachers in the U.S. were for the most part “good” and “nice,” this was not enough to support her in engaging in the classroom unselfconsciously with her teachers and peers. The following excerpts are from Dolores’s first interview.
Even though her teachers in the U.S. were encouraging and welcoming, Dolores still struggled with her capacity and willingness to engage in the classroom.

In summary, relationships with former teachers influenced all four teachers’ identities in different ways. Jessica sought to replicate the kinds of relationships she had
with her teachers with her own students. For the other participants, former relationships with teachers were not as much of a direct influence, but rather, emerged as a source to inform how they would construct their professional selves either in contrast (as Lucille), to extend beyond (as Dolores) or to mimic particular aspects of (as Valentina). Dolores attempted to forge different types of relationships than those she had with her teachers in the U.S. to ensure that her own students would not develop the anxiety of speaking in class that inhibited her as a student. Valentina’s and Lucille’s relationships with former teachers influenced the enactment of professional selves that sought to make learning relevant and meaningful to the lives of their students, a contrast to Lucille’s experiences as a student and Valentina’s earlier learning experiences.

As I have discussed in this chapter, relationships with students, colleagues, parents and families, and former teachers informed the participants’ professional identities—in particular, informing how they sought to promote inclusion and support learning in the classroom. The teachers drew from these in various ways and these differences influenced how the construction of self as a teacher of ELs emerged. For Valentina and Dolores, making connections with students emerged as an important quality in their professional selves. For Jessica and Lucille, linguistic differences between themselves and their EL students contributed to a teacher identity that considered how these differences could be overcome. Relationships with colleagues, specifically other teachers, failed to emerge as influential in the professional identities of Valentina and Dolores, who instead emphasized engagement with their paraprofessionals.
In contrast, Lucille and Jessica emphasized their grade level peers as meaningful and as relationships through which their professional identities were enacted.

All of the participants recognized engagement with parents as a salient aspect of being a teacher, albeit in different ways. Whereas for Valentina this suggested an opportunity to invite parents into her classroom to share and contribute who they are as linguistic and cultural beings, Jessica and Dolores emphasized the distribution of information about school and community resources and about the child’s academic progress. Lucille was the sole participant who saw her professional self in relation to her work with parents as extending beyond the scope of the school day to encompass participation in community activities. Relationships with former teachers influenced the participants as templates from which to replicate (as in the case of Jessica), to contrast (as in the case of Lucille), to extend beyond (as with Dolores) or to mimic particular aspects of (as with Valentina) in the construction of their professional selves. Relationships thus were not only influences on who the participants’ teacher identities, but facilitated sites of enactment (through engagement with students, parents, and their colleagues) within which to recognize themselves and be recognized by others as teachers of a particular kind. In the following chapter, I continue reporting on the results of the study through the analytic lens of the politics building task.
Chapter Five: The Politics Building Task

In this chapter I discuss the data in relation to Gee’s (2011b; 2011c) politics building task. Gee maintains that all discourse is political, meaning that in any given situation or text, issues of power and the distribution or denial of social goods (i.e., anything that is considered of value in a society) are always at stake. Social goods include rights, privileges, values, respect, inclusion, and appreciation. The politics building task considers how the construction of discourse facilitates or restricts access to social goods. In the context of this dissertation, the politics building task was productive as an analytic lens in highlighting what the teachers considered of value and in what ways their values were related to their distribution of social goods to their students. Analysis of the data highlighted three social goods that the participants held as significant in the construction and enactment of their professional identities: students’ feelings of comfort in the classroom, students’ acquisition of the English language, and student learning. In this chapter I examine each of these three social goods in relation to the professional identities of these four teachers and their work with ELs.

Students’ Comfort as a Social Good

The participants positioned students’ feeling comfortable as a social good in their professional identities and as a condition they sought to distribute through their practice to their students and to ELs in particular. They expressed the belief that children need to be comfortable in school in order for learning to take place. They saw feeling comfortable as a necessary condition or precursor for learning. The sources of this value for helping students feel comfortable varied across the participants. For Valentina, it
emerged from her own empathic wondering about the experiences of ELs. For Jessica, it emerged from her desire for her students to socialize and her belief that they had to be comfortable in order to do so. Lucille valued students’ feeling comfortable as important for being able to express themselves in the classroom. Dolores’s identity as a teacher who fostered comfort among her students emerged from her previous life experiences as a linguistic outsider during her schooling years in the U.S. and her insider’s understanding of the experiences of ELs in U.S. schools.

Despite these different sources for the participants’ emphases on making their students feel comfortable, there was considerable similarity in the enactment of the participants’ professional identities in relation to this social good. All of the participants worked with students in both large and small groups, engaged with students individually, spoke to students in calm and affirming tones, and praised students for behavior and for their work and efforts.

Despite differences in grade levels and school contexts, Valentina and Jessica both constructed their professional selves as teachers who seek to make students feel comfortable as a reflection of their value for attentiveness to students’ emotions rather than as a role enacted to support or engage students in particular behaviors or learning outcomes. Valentina’s discourse repeatedly centered on her interest in ELs’ feeling comfortable and invited in her class. She felt compelled to enact a classroom that was conducive to this. In our third interview I asked her to share what it was like to teach her students and ELs specifically. Her response illustrates the importance of facilitating a comfortable classroom environment as a major part of her work.
149. Um (.) I feel that a huge part of teaching children is to make them feel comfortable and to make them feel safe/

150. and I always (.) I always try to think to myself/

151. how would I feel if I was a child in the classroom that didn't speak (. ) um (. ) English and I only speak Spanish or maybe I speak Arabic?

152. What type of an environment would I need in order to feel comfortable and to be able to learn and not close up?

153. So (.) because I am always thinking about that (.) I always want my students to feel comfortable and I always try to be open and warm and caring/

154. and give them time (. ) um (.) and just observe them/

155. so that they can come out of their (.) not necessarily their shell/

156. but that they could feel comfortable (.) whether they are speaking in their own native language or trying to speak English/

This excerpt clearly shows the great importance Valentina places on ensuring that her students feel comfortable and suggests some strategies she uses to do so. In this excerpt, she took an emotional stance (“I feel…”) (line 149) and used the adjective “huge” to convey the magnitude of the importance of making students feel comfortable and safe. She related her own ongoing process of self-reflection (line 150: “I always try”) regarding how ELs feel—which she described as an empathic effort to place herself in the position of her EL students (lines 151-152): “how would I feel if I was a child in the
classroom and I only speak Spanish or maybe I speak Arabic?” She associated being uncomfortable with “closing up” (line 152). Valentina’s repetitive use of the adverb *always* in this excerpt (lines 150, 153, 154) also conveys the importance she placed on understanding how to make her ELs feel comfortable. A significant aspect of Valentina’s professional identity vis-à-vis ELs is to try to make them feel comfortable by always thinking about what it is like for students who do not speak English; by being open, warm and caring; and by providing students “time” as she observes them. She engages in these efforts so that her students will feel comfortable regardless of the language they speak. She echoed the metaphor of *closing up* she used previously (line 152) again near the end of the excerpt (line 155), saying that students can “come out” if they feel comfortable. Valentina’s discourse suggests that she seeks to make her students feel comfortable in order to attend to their emotional needs.

Similarly, Jessica identifies as a teacher who seeks to make her students feel comfortable. However, whereas Valentina constructed this aspect of her professional identity in relation to her reflection on what the experiences of the students might be like, Jessica’s discourse suggests that she was concerned with attending to students’ social needs in supporting opportunities for socialization and in turn ensuring that students do not feel alone. When I asked Jessica about ways that she supports her students in the classroom during our third interview, she focused on social interaction with other students as a means of helping ELs feel comfortable, as expressed in the following excerpt.

503. Um (.) I think socialization is very important/
especially for ELLs/

and it helps them feel comfortable/

So something that I do is (. ) um (. ) you know (. ) partner work/

you know (. ) playing math games with partners like we did today/

Reading with a partner/

Even if it's reading I say you can always tell the story using pictures/

Uh (. ) with ELLs I try to match them up also with students who may speak the same language/

so they can communicate a little bit of both English and their language they speak/

Working in small groups (. ) so groups of four or five/

Again (. ) we do a lot of math games and a lot of time there's a math (. )

um/

or centers (. ) when they're in (. ) they do listening center together (. )

word work (. ) um (. ) together in small groups/

Um (. ) they read big books in (. ) in small groups/

They put letter match games in small groups/

I think working in groups and with partners helps that socialization/

We do have snack time in kindergarten (. ) and that's the time too where the students are allowed to talk with their table mates/

um (. ) and that kind of starts to build a conversation (. ) and build a language (. ) and build a vocabulary/
Jessica’s emphasis on helping her students feel comfortable was influenced by her belief in the importance of student socialization, “especially” for ELs, as a means of assisting them to feel comfortable (lines 503-505). She described ways she facilitates student socialization in her classroom (lines 505-516) and emphasized the collaborative nature of these tasks through the repeated use of the words “partners” (lines 507, 508), “together” (twice in line 514) and “groups” (lines 515, 516 and twice in 517). She asserted that working in these ways supports socialization and ELs’ comfort level in the classroom. Toward the end of the excerpt (line 518), Jessica noted that kindergarten students have an opportunity outside of class to interact with each other during snack time and indicated that this supports the building of conversation, language, and vocabulary (presumably, in addition to helping students feel more comfortable). Jessica’s emphasis is not on ELs’ emotional needs but on supporting socialization in her classroom and how that can support ELs to feel comfortable.

While Jessica constructed enabling socialization as a means of helping students feel comfortable (and supporting language development) and Valentina emphasized her view that making students feel comfortable was a big part of her role as a teacher, neither gave attention to making students feel comfortable as a means of promoting student learning. Jessica’s colleague, Lucille, on the other hand, positioned ELs’ level of comfort in school as important for their learning and therefore saw it as part of her professional identity as a teacher to help them feel comfortable in order to support their academic development. Like Jessica, she commented on pairing students and getting them to work with one another. But for Lucille, supporting comfort in her classroom was a precursor
to “get to teaching them about reading or writing” (Lucille, interview one, line 483) and helping to ensure that they would “express themselves,” as related in the following excerpt from her third interview.

545. Um (. ) my role I think is just initially making them feel as comfortable as possible /
546. and then providing them with as many opportunities to be able to express themselves /
547. even in the beginning //
548. Um (. ) if it’s just that in they’re nodding their head yes or no /
549. but just to see that they’re understanding and just give them the chance to communicate /
550. however they communicate /
551. like if it’s through a picture or just a nod (. ) or pointing //
552. But I (. ) I then I think it’s helpful /
553. like I just remember even from my own children when they were learning how to speak /
554. that not always correcting them but saying /
555. yes I see the dog /
556. or even if they could only say “rah rah” for dog /
557. like “Yes that’s a dog” /
558. so modeling the speech for them without saying /
559. “This is how you say it” /
As this excerpt shows, Lucille emphasized what she needed to do to help her students feel comfortable so that they could engage in active learning (have opportunities to express themselves). For Lucille, no expression of understanding is too small as students can simply nod their heads, point or use pictures; in her classes students can communicate “however they communicate” (line 550). While this might be interpreted to include communication in the students’ first language, Lucille did not explicitly mention native language communication as one of the forms of expression available to her students. She did, however, consider the other forms (e.g., pictures, gestures) as “helpful” (line 552) and then connected this insight with the language learning processes of her own children (line 553). It seems that the experience with her children led her to recognize that it is not always important to correct a language learner but instead to acknowledge what is said and model how language is used without correction and to provide the individual with the appropriate needed word (such as “dog” for “ra ra”) (lines 554-558). Thus, Lucille sees a close connection between students’ level of comfort in the classroom with their learning in general and their language learning in particular (which Jessica touched upon in the excerpt above from an interview with her).

While the discourse of these participants alludes to values, beliefs and other life experiences as informing their efforts to make students (and ELs especially) feel comfortable in school, school leadership may also inform the degree of emphasis on helping students—young children, in particular—feel comfortable. In suburban Springbrook, the school principal echoed Lucille’s discourse regarding the importance of
students feeling comfortable during my interview with her, framing their feeling comfortable as a basic condition for student learning. The principal’s perspective was that the school needed to feel like an extended family so that all students could feel “safe” and “comfortable.” The principal reported that she believed this kind of climate is necessary for students (and especially for ELs) to be able to participate in school. She posited that feeling comfortable could assist in alleviating the emotional stress ELs experience when unable to understand English. The director of the Underdale preschool expressed similar sentiments—that is, that students’ feelings must be attended to, particularly because the children are so young.

While these school leaders and teachers draw from what they believe, value, and desire for themselves and for their students in relation to how they want students to feel and eventually perform in school, only Dolores’s discourse was informed by firsthand experience of being a linguistic outsider and someone who felt uncomfortable in her own schooling experiences as an EL student in the U.S. Her past experience as a student positioned her as knowing (rather than speculating) what it is like for ELs in the classroom. Dolores did not mention the need to distribute or facilitate a sense of comfort in the classroom because it promotes socialization (as did Jessica) or because it is a precursor to learning (as did Lucille) or because the teacher empathizes with her students (as did Valentina). Instead, Dolores constructed her professional identity as a teacher who wants her students to feel comfortable because of her prior life history and the connection she made between being comfortable and being able to speak in class, a point that repeatedly surfaced in her interviews and a value that she enacted throughout my
observations of her practice. During our fifth interview, I asked Dolores if she considered her bilingualism as affording insight on her work with her students. In her response she commented on her previous life experiences of being new to the U.S. as influencing her emphasis on finding different ways of making her students comfortable in class.

206. Definitely because I already know how it is to be in a (.) in a classroom/

207. or (.) um (.) being new to the country/

208. that when you don't (.) you don't understand what's going on/

209. And even if it's (.) even if it's a different language other than the ones that I'm/

210. I'm fluent in I could find stuff for them so that they can feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom/

211. And at least I have to learn the things that um (.) they probably need/

212. like go to the bathroom/

213. I will learn those phrases so that they will know/

214. "Okay (.) um (.) I'm comfortable because at least she knows that if to ask me if I'm hungry/

215. or things like that"

The passage illustrates that Dolores constructs her understanding of the need to make ELs comfortable as a result of her own life experiences. She strongly asserted ("definitely,” line 206) that because of her personal experience of having been in a
Like Lucille, Dolores voiced her desire for her students to be able to express themselves, although unlike Lucille she emphasized that they could do so in either their native language or English. Dolores consciously attended to her students’ levels of comfort by demonstrating that she was receptive to students who communicated in
English or a different language. I certainly saw this when I observed her in her classroom. During my observation of a science lesson, for example, one Spanish-speaking student was struggling to engage in the activity with his group. The children were seated at a table examining plants that had been placed in a shoe box. Dolores provided each child with a magnifying glass and encouraged them to observe and make note of what they saw. This Spanish-speaking student appeared to be confused. Dolores asked him how she could assist him. When the child did not respond, she indicated that he could whisper to her in her ear so that no one else would need to listen. He did so, and continued to assist him with the activity. During our post observation discussion, she explained that this action of hers aided the child in feeling comfortable enough to speak to her and let her know what he was feeling. Thus, in many ways, it is easy to argue that her interest in making students comfortable was connected to her own experiences of being uncomfortable in U.S schools when she was a former EL student.

All of the teachers in this study emphasized the importance of helping their students feel comfortable in their classrooms. Each drew from different sources and constructed her professional identity as enabling students to feel comfortable in different ways. Jessica emphasized the role of students’ level of comfort in her support for student socialization. Lucille and Dolores expressed their commitment to enabling students to express themselves however they desired, and Dolores also highlighted her insight acquired from being a former EL student herself. Valentina’s value for students’ feeling comfortable stemmed from her empathetic reflection on how EL students must experience school in a new language and culture. The shared value of the need to
distribute the social good of feeling comfortable in the classroom was thus described and enabled in different ways by these four teachers. Despite differing conceptions of the function of making students comfortable, each of the participants included it as a central element in the construction of professional self.

**English as a Social Good**

English, more specifically the acquisition of the English language by EL students, surfaced in the participants’ professional identities and was constructed as another important social good for ELs—a valuable resource that students would need for success in school and later life in the U.S. The participants were aware of the value of English for ELs and of the fact that English would play an important role in how (and to what degree) ELs in their classrooms would be able to successfully engage in learning activities. Although all were conscious of the fact that ELs were in the process of learning English as a second language, they constructed the distribution of English (and the acquisition of English by ELs) through their discourses as relevant and important for different reasons.

The participants framed English as important within the school environment, the community beyond the school, and, more specifically, life after P-12 schooling years. The ways in which each participant constructed her teacher identity influenced which of these contexts they emphasized in their perspectives on why ELs needed to become proficient in English. Valentina and Dolores, in Underdale, emphasized the need for English acquisition in order to gain access to future employment opportunities. Valentina framed this perspective in relation to the consequences her students would face were they
not to develop English language proficiency. Her teacher identity was constructed such that she saw it as her duty to support ELs’ English language development regardless of their L1 development. Although she provided evidence that she valued bilingualism and students’ home languages, Valentina affirmed that her primary focus was to teach her students English. The following excerpt from our second interview illustrates this. I asked Valentina to share with me her views on how she sees herself in relation to teaching English and/or an EL student’s first language. She begins by expressing her perspective on balancing L1 and English.

635. Um (.) I think there has to be a balance/
636. so I support both (.) but I do feel that it is my duty to make sure that they have an understanding of the English language/
637. and I think it is important for them/
638. um (.) to embrace their native language and to continue speaking their native language at home//
639. But (.) I do feel that it (.) it's my job to make sure that they get the English/
640. because I realize how much they will miss out/
641. or that they won't have the same opportunities as children who do have the English//

After Valentina expressed her belief that there should be a balance of English and L1 in the classroom and her support for using both languages (lines 635-636), she paused and then clearly positioned English as more central than L1. She saw it as her “duty to
make sure that they have an understanding of the English language” (line 636), thus defining her role as a teacher regarding the use and instruction of language. She claimed this “duty” as an aspect of her professional self, not just as “a duty” but as “my duty.” Despite her initial claim of support for both languages, she now established the teaching of English, not the teaching or use of students’ home languages, as central to her professional work. She then modified her stance somewhat by repeating that she supported both languages (lines 637-638). Specifically, she stated, “I think it is important for them to embrace their native language and to continue speaking their native language at home” (emphasis added). Valentina shifted the actors here from what she needed to do as a teacher to what “they” needed to do as speakers of a language other than English. She also shifted the focus from school to home: they should continue to speak their native language at home (but not necessarily in school). So, she is expressing the importance and worth of the native language and an affirmation of it, but not indicating that it is important for her as a teacher to “embrace” or “speak” any other language at school or, for that matter, to allow or encourage students to do so. Thus, Valentina constructs her professional role as acknowledging and encouraging the embrace of the native language among ELs, but makes it clear that her “duty” is to make sure that they acquire English as she positions the maintenance of the native language as important but something that should be continued within the home.

After this brief reiteration of her valuing of L1 (lines 637-638), Valentina again emphasized her “duty” in making sure students “get the English” (line 639). She explained her view by reference to the fact that, if students do not acquire English, they
will be excluded from opportunities that their mainstream peers will have. While this excerpt provides evidence that she valued bilingualism and L1, Valentina affirmed that her primary role vis-à-vis language is to help students learn English.

During her fourth interview, Valentina further affirmed this perspective, highlighting the potential implications of not becoming proficient in English for her ELs. During our conversation she again affirmed bilingualism, saying, “It’s great to be bilingual” (Valentina, interview # 4, line 554). However, she emphasized that English must be the dominant language and specified that it cannot be partial or “broken” English. She stated most explicitly, “It has to be English first and then your native language” (Valentina, interview # 4, line 559). She asserted that she did not care about political rhetoric or what anybody says, affirming that when applying for employment of any kind or applying for college (and writing the college essay itself), students must use English. EL students, from Valentina’s perspective, can and should maintain L1 within the private sphere of the home. In the school environment and in the national context, English is dominant and it is what will be needed to succeed and engage in society. Valentina constructed a teacher Discourse where value for L1 maintenance is less central to one’s professional identity than is the duty to promote English language acquisition. Her beliefs serve to influence this construction of a professional self who maintains supporting English in the classroom as a “duty.”

Valentina’s colleague, Dolores, also discussed her views on the acquisition of English for ELs in her classroom, similarly emphasizing what might or could happen to these students if they do not acquire English. Like Valentina, Dolores commented on
difficulties in filling out a job application and expressed her view that ELs who do not become proficient in English may have few job opportunities beyond the immediate context of Underdale. However, Dolores constructed her discourse as more focused on facilitating communication and language skills in either L1 or English and advocated for L1 maintenance and use in school. Thus, the professional identities of both Dolores and Valentina presented in their discourse include attention to the social concerns and consequences that ELs might experience without English language proficiency.

However, Dolores’s construction of a professional identity that is attentive to English language development does not frame English development as central to who she is professionally or what she holds as a duty in her professional role. Dolores constructs her professional identity as emphasizing the development of language itself regardless of whether it is the student’s native language or L2. For ELs for whom their first language is not well developed, she emphasized working on L1 development before attending to English, as expressed in the following excerpts from our second interview. The first excerpt highlights her belief in the importance of L1 development and fluency while the second excerpt emphasizes her support for the first language in school even before supporting English. Both excerpts are from Dolores’s second interview.

1136. Um (.) think (.) when they're fluent/

1137. and is that (.) they have already an advantage/

1138. if they be (.) they're coming fluent in their language//

1139. **Adrian:** An advantage//

1140. **Dolores:** Eventually//
Adrian: If they're coming fluent in their first language?

Dolores: First language/

Adrian: Okay/

Dolores: Because they can (. ) a lot of times/

they have no trouble learning the (. ) the English language/

they can just transfer (. ) because if they have the rich vocabulary/

they just transfer a lot of the (. ) the things/

then they don't have that much difficulties learning the second language //

But when they (. ) they lack their home language/

it's a lot more difficult for them//

Adrian: Uh-hmm//

So you (. ) so when those students then/

that have such little exposure to the first language/

do you focus on supporting that first language?

Dolores: Supporting that first language/

Adrian: Before English?

Dolores: Before English/

We have to really work with them/

giving them the language/

oh (. ) it's in/
Dolores’s first excerpt serves as the rationale for her providing the kind of L1 support she described in the second excerpt. She expressed her belief that students who enter school fluent in their first language (even if that language is not English) are at an advantage over those who are not (lines 1136-1139). She argued that this advantage means they would have “no trouble” learning English since they could transfer what they know due to their native language vocabulary (lines 1144-1148). She then contrasts students who come with strong L1 skills to those students who do not possess fluency in L1, pointing out that when they lack the home language it becomes “a lot more difficult” to learn English (lines 1149-1150). In order to support those students who are not fluent in L1, Dolores explained that she provides support by “giving them the language” they don’t yet have (line 1190).

In the second excerpt, Dolores indicates that she supports ELs’ first language development before their English development (lines 1186-1188). Use of the pronoun “we” in line 1189 refers to her collaboration with her paraprofessional (discussed in the
previous chapter). Thus, they engaged in a process of providing support in order to “give” students language. Dolores described this support in terms of using L1 to articulate to the students what they are doing. She demonstrated with examples in the social language of Spanish as an intertextual example of what she would say to an EL in her classroom, speaking in Spanish (lines 1192-1193). This illustrates how she would support students’ use of L1 and how she would “give” language to the students (line 1190). Dolores constructs the process of language acquisition of ELs as a process of building on their home language to develop in English (line 1197). Her professional identity is thus rooted in supporting L1 and fluency in L1 in school to assist in the eventual process of L2 acquisition. However, Dolores’s discourse is focused on students who share the same first language as herself. She does not comment on how she would provide similar support beyond a few words or phrases to ELs of other language backgrounds. This suggests that work with Spanish speaking ELs is central to her professional identity while working with students of other languages is not as central.

While Valentina and Dolores focused on promoting English because of the social and lifelong implications they recognized were attached to it as the dominant language in the U.S., the teachers in Springbrook were primarily concerned that ELs acquire English in order to cope with the immediate classroom context and less with social and academic concerns that may surface in the future. Jessica, for example, promoted English language development in order to be able to understand her students and get them to understand her. Such was not an immediate concern for the Underdale participants, who (with the predominantly Spanish speaking ELs) were able to draw from their identity as bilingual
English-Spanish speakers to connect with them. In the Springbrook context, Lucille and Jessica positioned English as a communicative resource that the teachers wanted ELs to acquire. In the Underdale context, English was seen as social capital that goes beyond the walls of the classroom. This perspective was not explicit among the Springbrook teachers, who emphasized the role of English for access to the immediate tasks of the classroom.

In Springbrook Jessica related her efforts to facilitate English language acquisition for her ELs. As illustrated in the excerpt below, she framed the consequences of ELs not acquiring English as an inability to participate in the immediate classroom context rather than future scholastic or career experiences (as identified by Valentina and Dolores). In this excerpt from Jessica’s second interview, I had asked her to relate what it is like to support ELs’ engagement in her classroom. She discusses the challenge they experience and how they are unable to fully participate in classroom activities.

554. That's (.) yeah (.) that's really hard/

555. For example (.) you turn and talk (.) and I would say most of my ELLs/

556. unless my ones that are (.) you know (.) have the full English language/

557. But my brand new ELLs (.) who are just learning English (.) have a really hard time doing that/

558. And it's hard for me because I can't (.) I usually prompt students who are shy or may not know how to start the conversation/

559. but for ELLs I can't even prompt it/
560. because I don’t know how to explain it to them/
561. So they kind of just (.) not sit there (.) but yeah/
562. Sit there and listen/

Jessica was conscious of the fact that her ELs are not capable of fully participating in the classroom activity of “turn and talk”—a teaching practice in which students are asked to turn to a partner and discuss a question or topic posed by the teacher. Such a practice assumes that students are capable of engaging in discussion with one another and possess the linguistic abilities to do so. Jessica’s mention of this practice as illustrative of issues relating to the English language and ELs highlights the previously discussed emphasis that she placed on socialization in her classroom. Jessica’s commentary commenced with her assertion that it is “really hard” to support ELs’ acquisition of English (line 555). She differentiated between most of her EL students and those she considered as having “the full English language” (line 557), indicating that for most ELs, engagement in turn and talk would be “really hard,” using the same adverbial phrase she initially employed to describe her challenge in teaching them. She contrasted “shy” students and students who don’t “know how to start the conversation” (line 558) with ELs, explaining that with the latter students she “can’t even prompt” them because they do not yet understand English (line 559). Her use of the adverb “even” here emphasizes her lack of ability to engage in conversation with ELs. Jessica places the responsibility for communicating with ELs on herself but acknowledges that she cannot fulfill that responsibility “because I don’t know how to explain it to them” (line 560). The consequence of this is that ELs “sit there and listen” rather than actively participate
as demonstrated through verbal output (line 562). Unable to engage in the conversational aspect of turn and talk, ELs are challenged, as is Jessica in finding means of providing support and integrating them into the activities of the classroom.

In other interviews, Jessica articulated efforts to support ELs in participating in class despite their not having full English language proficiency and her not fully knowing how to support ELs’ understanding and participation in her classroom. She indicated that she consciously monitored her talk and tried to express herself to her students by slowing her rate of speech and carefully articulating her words. During the interviews and throughout my observations of Jessica’s teaching, she made reference to monitoring her talk and demonstrated this in her interactions with her EL students. She described modeling directions as a way to support ELs as well as using printed cards with pictorial directions to indicate what the students were expected to do. Such cards illustrated the steps in the activities and had vocabulary words printed in reference to what was depicted. Jessica commented that she slowed her speech for ELs, carefully articulating one word at a time. At times, she would hold a tactile object to illustrate what she was saying; for example, in referring to a “triangle” she would hold a picture of a triangle. When providing directions for where an EL should go, she would not just state the direction (such as “Go to the computer”) but point to the area, using this nonverbal cue to support her language.

In each of my observations of Jessica’s instruction, I observed that she did in fact slow her speech and integrate visual supports during her regular instruction. For example, during the science lesson when she reviewed the parts of a plant, she labeled the
parts of the plant on chart paper as a model for the class, stating the name of the part and writing the name next to the corresponding illustration. Jessica reiterated the names of each of the parts and the colors she used as she modeled the activity. Students were asked to complete a similar chart of a plant at their seats. Jessica kept her modeled example visible for the class as a support not only for her ELs, but for all students to guide their completion of the activity. In our post-observation conversation, she explained that she felt the lesson was successful given that, as she observed, all of her students were able to engage in and complete the activity. This activity, though, did not have a portion where the students were to verbally interact with one another. Thus, she was the only language user in this lesson (perhaps based on her perspective of herself as a language model); it seems she expected the EL students to acquire language by emulating her model (her oral instruction), through which she provided comprehensible input.

The discourse provided by Jessica’s colleague Lucille reflected a similar construction regarding providing support for the acquisition of English among ELs. Lucille also commented on working with ELs to learn English so that they could understand and be understood in the classroom. However, in contrast to Jessica’s emphasis on her own responsibility for engaging in and supporting ELs’ acquisition of English, Lucille focused on ELs’ exposure to and motivation and interest in learning English as the primary factors in their ability to acquire English. She seemed to see ELs as just like any other student group with their own needs, and she saw the need for ELs to learn English as the same as other students’ needs. The following excerpt from Lucille’s
fourth interview sheds light on her construction of English acquisition among ELs and her role as teacher.

394. I think (.) initially if they don't have the language it's just exposure exposure exposure/
395. and even when it looks like maybe not…
396. maybe they're not learning exactly what you want them to learn/
397. but they're still learning just by being in…
398. I mean (.) for everyone else (.) but they're still learning just by being in the classroom/
399. and you know even just walking in the door and making it into the class that day might have been a huge thing for them/
400. because maybe they're crying at home before they come in/
401. You know (.) you don't know what's going on/

Whereas Jessica constructed herself as being uncertain or not knowing exactly what to do to support English language acquisition, Lucille emphasized exposure to English as the key factor in ELs’ ability to learn the language. She commented that if students are lacking the language, attending to it is “just” a matter of “exposure” (line 394), a view she reiterated in her comment that ELs learn “just by being in the classroom” (line 398). While Jessica emphasized what she did not know what to do in her classroom, Lucille emphasized that she did not know about ELs in terms of their lives outside of the classroom, thereby drawing attention to potential challenges in even getting to school or their emotional condition or state as related (lines 400-401). This reference
to ELs’ home lives seems to place the responsibility for their success in learning English on them rather than on her as the teacher. Thus, this passage illustrates Lucille’s lack of emphasis on her efforts to promote English language acquisition and her emphasis instead on ELs’ exposure to English as the condition in her classroom that promotes English language acquisition.

Given that English is the language of instruction in Lucille’s classroom, all students would be exposed to it by their presence. Aside from exposure, Lucille emphasized ELs’ interest in interacting and socializing with their mainstream peers, in becoming part of the classroom social network, as a motivating factor in their learning and acquisition of English. As with exposure, this means of acquiring English places responsibility on ELs rather than on Lucille herself. Later, in her fourth interview, Lucille commented that a motivator for ELs to learn English was that it facilitates social access to their peers rather than that it supports academic learning. Thus, she frames their motivation for learning English not from her instruction or how she sets up her classroom environment, but from students’ interest and motivation.

Lucille’s professional identity positions the acquisition of English as a product of ELs’ interest in being able to enter the social network of their mainstream peers rather than as a central component of who she is a teacher and what she does to support ELs in her classroom. Learning English, in her view, results from exposure, a benefit that her ELs have because of their age and their being in an English-speaking environment. But she places primary responsibility for their engagement on them and does not discuss her instructional efforts to engage them. She does not include responsibility for teaching ELs
in ways that will support their learning of English as a prominent aspect of her professional identity.

As the above discussion has shown, all of the participants positioned the acquisition of English as taking place in the classroom. They highlighted different benefits to be had from learning English and different functions of English for ELs. Life experience as a Latina and firsthand experience of not knowing English (Dolores) and family members who were not speakers of English (Valentina) gave two participants insider understanding of the experiences of ELs and the consequences beyond school of not being fluent in English. The other two participants were focused on the immediate classroom context and the need to know English in order to participate in scholastic activities (Jessica) and become part of the social network with mainstream peers (Lucille). For the former pair, the distribution of English as a social good is constructed as requisite for life inside and outside of school both now and in the future, while for the latter it emerged as an immediate concern within the scope of the classroom. Although each of the participant’s professional identities includes a value for English, they construct the distribution of it as serving different purposes. Thus, while the teacher identities included the distribution of English to EL students as central to their work, the benefit of this social good (English) was relevant to different contexts.

Learning as a Social Good

The interview data suggest that all four participating teachers constructed learning as a social good and that, through the enactment of their professional identities, they sought to promote student learning. They expressed a desire for all students to learn and
access the curriculum. Yet, how they promoted student learning, and more specifically ELs’ learning, was constructed differently. The Springbrook teachers emphasized the role of the curriculum in promoting student learning whereas the Underdale teachers emphasized student-teacher interactions. Their conceptualizations of learning and how, as teachers, they sought to distribute learning to their students influenced the construction of their professional identities.

Similarities were greatest between teachers in the same context, with differences emerging for the two different settings within which the four participants worked. For Jessica and Lucille in the Springbrook kindergarten setting, supporting student learning was primarily enacted through the routines and structures of the instructional program they implemented. They did not fashion themselves as instructional designers, but rather as responsible for implementing the curriculum used in their school. The curricular model of reading and writing workshop was cited by both participants as inherently differentiated and inclusive in a manner that facilitates participation of all students, including ELs. Neither Jessica nor Lucille had need of differentiating instruction for their students given the curricular programs they used. In the following excerpt from Jessica’s second interview, she discussed how the curriculum is differentiated and allows all students access to the taught content.

544. What's great about reader’s and writer’s workshop/
545. and even our Everyday Math program/
546. is that it's all differentiated for any type of student//
547. For ELL (.) special needs (.) children who come in with/
you know (. ) little sound or letter knowledge/

or people who (. ) children who come in as readers//

I mean it really differentiates to each child//

For example (. ) in writer’s workshop (. ) they can draw/

they can tell stories through pictures//

Um (. ) and ELL students (. ) when they come in/

they might be at that picture stage (. ) which is okay//

Some students might be able to write some words or some letters/

and same with reading//

Reader's workshop is all differentiated where some students are//

Jessica’s discourse is illustrative of how both she and Lucille constructed the learning context of their classrooms and how they believed that learning was accessible to all students because of the curriculum used. In this excerpt, Jessica emphasized her enthusiasm for the reading and writing workshop model by calling attention to “what’s great” about it, and she extends this enthusiasm to the math program, Everyday Math, as well (line 545). She specifies what she believes is “great” about these programs several times—that is, that they are differentiated (lines 546, 550, 557). Jessica emphasized the extent of differentiation through the use of “all” in “it’s all differentiated for any type of student” (line 546), emphasizing that this all-inclusive differentiation is applicable for diverse students. Jessica is thus constructing her classroom as a figured world where, because of the construction of the curriculum, all children can enter and learn.
Lucille similarly constructed the curriculum and program that she engaged in with her students. As captured in the prior excerpt from Jessica, both of these teachers emphasized access and entry to the curriculum, focused on what students can do rather than on what they cannot. Their shared view stressed how all students have particular needs that must be met in order to support learning. They emphasized how the instructional approach supports the acquisition of learning by the students, despite differing needs. They maintained that differentiated instruction was provided for all students, suggesting that tailoring instruction for ELs is no different than that for any other student. Differentiation of instruction to support linguistic differences is simply another form of the differentiation that they already engage in. Jessica and Lucille conceive of themselves neither as teachers of ELs nor as teachers of mainstream students; rather, they see themselves teachers of students who attend to their learning needs and provide opportunities (via an open, inclusive curriculum) for all to learn.

In interviews, Lucille expressed her views regarding the instructional model and curriculum (and her understanding of its theoretical underpinnings) as evidence that she was supporting not just her mainstream students’ learning, but ELs’ learning as well. Like Jessica, Lucille emphasized differentiation of instruction as a cornerstone for granting access to the curriculum. For both of these suburban teachers, the instructional program they were using provided opportunities for ELs to show what they know and to participate regardless of English language fluency and skills. This highlights the fact that learning as a social good has the capacity to be extended through the instructional model employed.
Despite the teachers’ statements suggestive of inclusion and involvement in the classroom, their discourses indicated the presence of a tension regarding how to promote ELs’ learning. Although their discourse suggested an awareness of the need to promote ELs’ learning, the examples they gave focused more on inclusion or involvement in the classroom at their current academic level in order to be part of the classroom community, rather than on promoting student learning. While these suburban teachers’ professional identities included attention to student learning, in their discourses, they placed greater significance on involvement and participation than on promoting learning or academic development beyond EL students’ current levels of accomplishment. An example of this is reflected in the following excerpt from Lucille’s third interview.

149. like going back to the readers and writers workshop training/
150. because it does embody universal design/
151. And I did talk about this a lot in the papers that I wrote for school/
152. that it just really welcomes everybody/
153. that everyone can get in and where they are/
154. So especially in the lower grades/
155. almost everyone is drawing in the beginning and they’re not really writing/
156. So coming in as an English learner/
157. the challenge that is to get them to understand what you WANT them to draw/
158. about but (.) you know (.) if you can communicate with pictures/
159. or (.) you know (.) they see what the other kids are doing/
160. usually they can look at someone else and have a buddy/
161. and that…
162. what that person’s doing can be a model for them//

In this excerpt, Lucille asserted that the curricular program welcomes everybody, referring to her students. Referencing her preservice program, Lucille asserted that the models “embody universal design” (line 150), the theoretical underpinning of the program for readers and writers workshop. Thus, Lucille positioned herself as theoretically informed as to how the models she uses function and she draws from this to support their utility. Having established her theoretical knowledge, she then asserted that all students can enter the program from their current level (“where they are”) (line 153). Like her colleague Jessica, Lucille emphasized engagement with the curriculum rather than using the curriculum as a tool for academic growth. She highlighted the challenge for ELs in the mainstream classroom not so much being their capacity to engage, but rather her challenge in getting them to know exactly what she wants them to do (line 157). Toward the end of this excerpt (lines 158-162), Lucille shifted the emphasis from her efforts to get ELs to engage and to understand what she wants them to do, focusing on the environment itself and the other students as having responsibility to assist ELs. She pointed out that ELs can observe peers and might have a buddy to work with them. While claiming that the classroom is welcoming, Lucille seems to be distancing her professional self from facilitating ELs’ entry into the classroom, relegating this to an
inherent aspect of the curriculum and a function of ELs’ own observations of their peers and working with a buddy.

Although Jessica did not distance herself from ELs in this manner, her discourse indicated that she was uncertain about the enactment of her professional self with ELs. She related that in her teaching she was drawing largely from hearsay to determine how best to support ELs’ learning and engaged in practices that made the most sense rather than drawing from a set of principles on how to support ELs in the mainstream classroom. In discussing the use of modeling to support her ELs, Jessica explained that while she implements modeling as a means of supporting ELs, she is uncertain if she is doing it correctly. By the end of this study, Jessica indicated that she would like more professional development on the learning needs of ELs. It was in this final interview that she directly claimed that much of what she does comes from hearsay. Despite mentioning that she had done research on ELs and how to support them, when I inquired as to specific studies that she had read or journals or articles she found useful, Jessica was unable to cite any, suggesting that her engagement with research on teaching ELs failed to inform her understanding of professional self.

The Underdale teachers’ construction of promoting learning emphasized drawing from and building on student interest in order to facilitate learning and academic development. For Dolores and Valentina, the capacity to provide meaningful instruction was related to having an understanding of who their students are. Dolores consistently referred to the manner in which learning was distributed as an act of taking (the content) that she gave (the instruction). She emphasized getting to know what her students’
interests are and relating these interests to the content that she wanted them to learn. In the following passage from my first interview with Dolores, she describes how she teaches literacy skills to her students. Her emphasis is on their acquisition of the content that she is presenting, and she seems to construct the distribution of learning according to a transmission model.

888.   Um (.) because I know/
889.   like (.) a lot of the kids are/
890.   have a lot of issues with (.) uh (.) with (.) in the literacy/
891.   and reading and comprehension/
892.   uh (.) I give them a (.) I like to give them the skills/
893.   that they will take it with them to the bigger grades//
894.   **Adrian:** Mm-hmm//
895.   **Dolores:** Like telling them/
896.   "Oh (.) the first when I do my message in the morning/
897.   I tell them the first letter has to be always capitalized/
898.   because it's the beginning of our sentence/
899.   and then I say/
900.   "I'm gonna put a period right here”/
901.   because that (.) that means I'm done with finishing/
902.   I've finished with my thought/
903.   and so they will take that//
As this illustrates, Dolores constructed her support for student learning in terms of giving the students the content they will need to succeed in school. In this excerpt, she first emphasized issues her students have (lines 890-891) with literacy skills (in particular reading and comprehension). She stated that she “gives them the skills” (line 892). The phrasing she employed suggests that she constructs her professional role as one that provides students with the content that they will use in later schooling. Dolores provided an example of her approach, describing how she teaches her students about placing a period at the end of a sentence, using the social language of teacher talk and modeling what she would say in her classroom to her students (lines 896 and 900).

As a teacher, Dolores positioned herself as engaged in the act of giving knowledge and information. At the same time, student interest also plays a role in how she provides the content she teaches them. She reported during interviews that she sought to learn what they like or what they know and uses that information to provide the content she seeks to address. She noted that a popular interest for many of her students was the Disney film “Frozen.” Dolores described how she would reference the film or use it in her examples (such as using characters from “Frozen” when constructing a sentence) to capture the students’ attention and draw from their interest. Thus, while she constructs what she does as a teacher reflecting the transmission model, she appears to use content that is drawn from students’ interests. Learning is a social good that Dolores gives through teaching and which students take through engagement with her and the activities in the classroom.
Valentina also commented on drawing from her students’ understandings and interests. Like Dolores, she placed significance on her efforts to know her students. In contrast, however, Valentina framed her understanding of student learning within a constructivist framework, directly referencing Vygotsky as a theoretical underpinning in her thinking about teaching and learning. She constructed student learning as a phenomenon through which various aspects of her students’ lives are connected with what takes place in the classroom. When discussing the curriculum (Tools of the Mind) themes used in her classroom to support student learning, Valentina described how they connect with student interest (e.g., laundromats), the State standards for learning, and the theoretical underpinning of the instructional program in which she teaches. In the following excerpt from her second interview, she discussed developing instruction for her students and what it consists of.

41. And what I do is (.) I create (.) um (.) weekly lesson plans that tie in together/

42. Not only what I have to accomplish that month with the theme and the vocabulary/

43. um (.) but also weekly the books that they should learn about or read/

44. And the types of games or activities/

45. Um (.) also we look at (.) uh (.) when it comes to science/

46. the weather (.) what time of the year it is (.) the season/

47. To take advantage of that and to introduce certain experiments/

48. Um (.) to tie it in with their real life (.) what they're experiencing/

49. If the weather's changing (.) if it's fall the leaves are falling/
50. Bringing leaves in to the classroom so it’s not just the environment/

51. as far as what’s happening outside/ 

52. It's also what the State mandates (.) it's what the curriculum has and THEIR interest as well/ 

53. to make it fun and exciting/ 

54. So (.) we have to really tie in a lot of things together/ 

While Jessica and Lucille focused on the structure of the curricular program and Dolores emphasized giving content to students, Valentina constructs learning (and how she supports learning as a teacher) through a process of weaving together student interest with curriculum and State standards for learning. She constructed this as a process of tying various elements together through the repeated use of the word “tie” (lines 41, 48, and 54). In line 48 she emphasized tying in school-based content with aspects of students’ lives and in line 52 she highlighted the importance of their interest with her strong vocal emphasis on the word “their.” She points out that focusing on their interests supports learning by making it “fun and exciting” before reiterating the weaving together of standards, students’ interests and curriculum (line 54).

This excerpt illustrates Valentina’s understanding of the importance of connecting themes with Standards and student interests. This was mirrored in her actual teaching. During my observation of her math instruction, Valentina engaged in a sorting activity in the house play area in her classroom. Students worked with a number of colored socks that were mismatched. During the activity, Valentina gradually introduced the concept of sorting and sought to support and build student understanding by having them match the
socks into pairs and then group similarly colored socks. She provided references to students’ lives outside of school (e.g., discussing the local laundromat in the vicinity and engaged in conversation on students’ experiences going there with family members) and made connections between this and the activity they were doing in the classroom (e.g., pretending to wash and fold clothing at a laundromat).

Such examples reflect the teachers’ efforts to draw on their understanding of who their students are in order to promote learning. While this was emphasized more by the urban than by the suburban teachers, the suburban teachers also saw a relation between knowledge or insight gleaned from the students themselves and support for student learning. Jessica (repeatedly) referenced gaining insight from the assessments she was required to give the students in her class. Lucille provided an example of a science activity in which students traced their own bodies and drew their bones in order to make the lesson meaningful and relevant to them. In contrast to the urban teachers, who tended to place more emphasis on gaining insight from the culture and language backgrounds of students to support their learning, the suburban teachers drew from what they knew of students from assessments given in school or immediately discernable connections (e.g., through tracing real life objects such as book bags or bodies) rather than information to be elicited from the students. Within the framework of teaching ELs, there was little evidence that the suburban teachers made these connections specifically to students’ backgrounds or languages to support learning in the classroom.

It may be that contextual factors served as a shaping influence as to how the teachers’ identities constructed learning. All four are required to work with the curricular
program of their school and must satisfy employment mandates. Lucille and Jessica were expected to implement reading and writing workshops wherein any student would be able to participate in the activities and exercises irrespective of being classified as an EL student, special education student or a student in need of therapeutic services. Valentina and Dolores were expected to find ways to connect students with school learning and demonstrate the relevance of the classroom tasks or activities to their lives.

Despite possessing a shared value for learning for all students, ways of attending to ELs and enacting this value varied among the participants. The distribution of this social good derived either from efforts on behalf of the teacher to get to know the students or as an outcome of the curriculum used. For Dolores, this involved providing students with the content they needed to learn by using student interest to inform how she presented the learning material. Valentina discussed a similar approach, although she framed learning as a building process students engaged in themselves. For Lucille, supporting ELs was a result of the curricular model and their interactions with mainstream peers, while Jessica, who also emphasized the universal relevance of the curricular approach, expressed ambivalence about her professional enactment of self with ELs. Ultimately, these differences served to inform the educative experiences of ELs in the participants’ classrooms. In Chapter Seven I return to a discussion of these findings in relation to the literature and the findings in Chapters Four and Six. In the next chapter, I discuss my analysis of the participants’ other identities in relation to their teacher identities using Gee’s identities building task (Gee, 2011b; 2011c).
Chapter Six: Identities Building Task

As part of my investigation into the professional identities of mainstream teachers working with ELs, I used Gee’s (2011b; 2011c) identities building task to examine how other identities of the participants informed or were related to their professional identities and the interplay among these different identities. During interviews, I asked about social identity categories (race, culture, nationality) (e.g., “Do you see any connections between your linguistic/cultural identity, or your language/cultural background and yourself as a teacher?”) and elicited the participants’ responses and interpretations of these questions in relation to being a teacher. The identity categories that emerged as most prominent were linguistic identity, cultural identity, and national identity. In this chapter, I present my analysis of these identities and explore how the participants considered each as contributing (or not contributing) to their teacher identities. Additionally, I discuss the participants’ linguistic identities and respect for linguistic diversity. Although in Chapters Four and Five there was some consideration of the language and cultural backgrounds of the participants, those results focused on these backgrounds in relation to relationships and the social goods the participants sought to distribute in their classrooms. In this chapter, my analysis of the data in relation to the identities building task sheds light on how these identities related to the participants’ professional identities. Although some previously discussed content is mentioned, the analytic framework of the identities building task draws attention to these other identities and being a teacher instead of relationships and politics.
Linguistic identities

Linguistic identities emerged as a factor that seemed to inform the professional identities of the participants, although in different ways. For the bilingual participants, Dolores and Valentina, their identities as bilingual individuals served to connect them not only with their Spanish speaking ELs, but with ELs in general. Valentina reported that being bilingual was an asset in her classroom, providing insight into what her EL students might be struggling with or experiencing (see also Chapter Four). For Dolores, being bilingual and a former EL student provided firsthand knowledge of the nature of her ELs’ experiences in school. Thus, the bilingual teachers recognized their linguistic identities as influencing their professional selves. The two monolingual teachers perceived the influence of their monolingualism on their professional selves quite differently. Jessica reported that her linguistic identity had no relation to her teacher identity, although it appeared to contribute to her uncertainty about how to attend to ELs in her classes. The discourse of Lucille, the other monolingual teacher, suggests that she drew on her experience of studying French as an undergraduate in her effort to understand the experiences of EL students. In the following sections, I discuss Jessica’s and Lucille’s identities as monolingual and native English speakers and Valentina’s and Dolores’s identities as bilingual English-Spanish speakers as influences on or “shapers” of their professional selves.

Monolingual and native English speaker identities. The Springbrook teachers, Jessica and Lucille, did not perceive any connection between their own linguistic identities as monolingual native speakers of English and their teacher identities. Jessica’s
discourse was most explicit on this; she discussed the challenge she faced in understanding ELs’ experiences because of her own minimal experience in learning another language and lack of experience being positioned as a linguistic outsider. When I inquired if she felt that being a native speaker of English contributed anything to her work as a teacher of ELs, she indicated that she did not, as evidenced in the following excerpt from her fourth interview.

120. Um (. ) not really because I only speak English/
121. and I don't have a second language so I really don't have that background knowledge me personally//
122. I just know from experience with other (. ) you know (. ) other people and just talking to others//
123. Um (. ) um (. ) so yeah (. ) I don't speak another language and I don't have experience of (. ) you know (. ) being in a situation where I'm not sure what other people are saying/
124. so I don't have that experience//
125. I just know from talking to people and knowing that this town does have a wide (. ) um (. ) big culture background but besides that I don't//

Jessica constructs her discourse with an emphasis on what she does not know and has not experienced, resulting in her inability to connect her linguistic self and her teacher self. She gives prominence to the fact that she speaks only English and, because of this, does not possess “background knowledge” about the experiences of people who speak more than one language (line 121). Jessica repeated these ideas several times,
emphasizing her monolingualism as a limitation, as conveyed by the use of the word “don’t” five times in the excerpt. Similarly highlighting her lack of direct experience, she stated twice that she “just know[s]” from other people something about the experiences of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (lines 122 and 25). More specifically, these two instances in which she referred to what she “just know[s]” call attention to the limited nature of her understanding about linguistic diversity (122) and the fact that her awareness of the growing linguistically diverse population of Springbrook is gained “only” through speaking with people familiar with her professional context (125). Despite these two sources of information, Jessica stressed that this understanding is limited (“but besides that I don’t”) (line 125), ending this excerpt as she began, with an emphasis on what she does not know.

In contrast to Jessica’s emphasis on limited experiences with linguistic diversity, Lucille reported having had ample experiences with linguistic diversity from a young age, having grown up in a large urban city with a diverse population. She said that the subway trains she would take to school were filled with advertisements written in different languages and she would listen to people speak different languages as she commuted. Although she studied French while in high school and college, Lucille positioned herself as a monolingual native speaker of English. At the same time, she drew from her limited study of French to inform her work with ELs. She acknowledged how difficult it was to learn despite her own desire to be a French speaker. Referring to her French learning experiences (three years of study in high school and one semester in college), she wondered whether her EL students even wanted to be in the United States.
The following excerpt from her fourth interview highlights Lucille’s reflections on second language learning and on whether an EL ever begins to think in the second language.

162. I only took it [French] for three years and then I took a year of Latin and I never um/
163. I don't really remember ever (.) like I don't think we ever got to the point where I read a book in French/
164. but it was a lot of labeling and grammar and it just seemed like all of the different verb tenses were hard and um (.) you know idioms/
165. you really realize when you're a fluent native speaker you have a feel for the language that is really/
166. like you just know it's right and you don't have to think about it/
167. and when you're learning another language (.) it doesn't (.) you don't have that feeling/
168. and I think it probably takes a very long time for people//
169. Like I wonder how long it takes…
170. do you ever think in the other language?
171. Or do you force yourself to think in the other language/
172. or does it one day happen that/
173. "Oh I thought in French or I thought in English"/
174. and it's not your language//
In this excerpt, Lucille describes her recollections and the realization or insight about language learning that grew out of her experience studying French, and then poses a series of questions that she asks herself about the second language learning process. From her own language learning experience, Lucille realized that native speakers possess a “feel” for the language, an automaticity in that means one does not have to consciously think about how to speak or use the language (lines 165-166). She contrasts this unconscious knowledge of what feels “right” in one’s first language with the lack of “that feeling” when one is learning another language (lines 166-167). She expresses the opinion that it probably takes a long time for individuals to learn a second language (line 168). In the remainder of this excerpt, she wonders about learning a second language and the experiences of ELs, posing several questions regarding whether one (“you”) ever begins to think in the second language, whether one needs to force oneself to do this or it happens automatically.

Thus, part of Lucille’s insight into ELs results from her having studied French, which taught her that gaining mastery of a second language takes a long time. Her professional identity is influenced by this combination of knowledge of and experience in studying French to consider and ponder the level of understanding her ELs experience in her classroom. Like Jessica, she is somewhat uncertain about what it is like to be a second language learner. Unlike Jessica (who directly states what she does not know about ELs), Lucille wonders about these students’ experiences and, based on her own language learning experiences, recognizes the tacit facility of use native speakers of a language possess. As a teacher of ELs, Lucille carries this in her professional identity by
recognizing that the automaticity with which she can express herself (and her students can express themselves) in English is something that will take a long time for her ELs to gain.

**Bilingual and English as second language identities.** As already mentioned, the two teachers in Underdale identified as bilingual English-Spanish speakers. Valentina reported having been raised in a home where both English and Spanish were spoken, while Dolores came from a home where only Spanish was spoken. Among the participants, Dolores had the most significant experience learning a second language and was the only participant for whom the second language learned was English. Whereas Lucille wondered what language learning was like for ELs, Dolores possessed an insider understanding, having been classified as an EL upon her entry to the U.S. school system. Her identity as a bilingual English and Spanish speaker informed her professional identity as a teacher who understood the experiences of ELs inside and outside of school because those experiences were similar to her own. Dolores knew ELs go through a silent phase in the acquisition of their second language because she herself went through such an experience. She understood that ELs may not want to speak English initially and, as a teacher, related her own personal experiences to those of her students. She understood that they might come from homes where the native language is the only language used (as in her childhood home), and she herself had experienced the linguistic shift that many of her students must make when they go to school. Dolores was the only participant who was able to relate to her EL students through a shared identity as a linguistic outsider. Despite her awareness of these similarities, Dolores was also cognizant of the fact that
she was much older than her students when she began attending school in the U.S. She considered this difference to be an important factor with regard to the ease with which an EL would seek to speak in English in the classroom. In the following account from her fourth interview, Dolores described this distinction through the lens of her own experiences.

101. Right cause I know like (.)
102. I came from a family that they only spoke Spanish in the house//
103. So I think I was not exposed//
104. And we watched TV in Spanish (.) radio station in Spanish (.) everything in Spanish//
105. So the only time I was exposed to uh (..) English language was when I was in school and um (.)
106. but I was older and then it was like um/
107. how do you say I was more um (.) aware of many things//
108. Like the kids will speak English (..) even if it doesn't sound correctly they'll just throw it out there//
109. But when you're a young adult you have to think about more like/
110. "Oh my god are they're going to laugh at me//
111. They're gonna make fun of my mispronunciation"//
112. And things like that so/
113. and the kids are not (.) they really don't worry about those things (.) even if it doesn't (.) even if they have like an idea of how its (.) it's said/
Dolores’s excerpt highlights similarities and differences between her own experiences and those of her EL students. She explained that her only exposure to English was at school (line 105) (which she believed was similar to the experiences of many of her ELs), yet she differentiated between herself and her ELs (line 106), indicating that because she was older than her students when she began school in the U.S, she had a greater awareness of how she would be perceived if she made grammatical or pronunciation errors (lines 110-111). That is, while Dolores recognized similarities between her background and the backgrounds of her EL students, she also pointed out differences in the social circumstances in which she attended school and learned English and those of her students. She maintained that it is fundamental to help students feel comfortable and free to communicate despite her claim that their young age would suggest a lack of self-consciousness if making errors when using English (which she contrasted with her own experiences as a former adolescent EL).

Valentina shared Dolores’s value for bilingualism and her identity as a bilingual English and Spanish speaker. Like Dolores, she positioned her bilingualism as positively contributing to her professional identity and her work with students. Valentina was aware that her bilingualism contributed to her ability to understand her ELs and allowed her to serve as a model of a bilingual individual to her monolingual students. In the following excerpt from her fourth interview, Valentina discussed how being bilingual facilitated her ability to connect with her students.
In her commentary, Valentina constructs a teacher Discourse (Gee, 2011b; 2011c) in which bilingual teachers are positioned as being at an advantage over monolingual teachers, regardless of the languages the teacher speaks (line 103). This construction, which she applies to herself, places a high value on bilingualism. This excerpt, then, suggests that Valentina’s teacher identity includes the conviction that she benefits from being bilingual. From this teacher Discourse, Valentina sees herself as having more opportunities than a monolingual teacher to connect, understand, talk, be informed, and build relationships with others in their professional roles and tasks, implying the belief that a monolingual teacher would experience a greater challenge in interacting with students (ELs specifically) than would a bilingual teacher.

**Linguistic identity and respect for linguistic diversity.** Despite the different linguistic identities that manifested themselves in their professional identities, the
discourses of all four participants conveyed a respect for linguistic diversity in their classrooms, reflected in their claims that linguistic diversity was good or contributed to the classroom environment in a positive way. The participants’ linguistic identities, discussed above, influenced how such a value for linguistic diversity surfaced. For Jessica and Lucille, linguistic differences—while positioned as positive and as an “asset” within the school community (Lucille)—was also considered a challenge to work through. Lucille, for example, indicated that this type of diversity is “always a good thing” (interview two, line 625) and that it allows students from different parts of the world and different backgrounds to grow up next to each other “thinking that that’s normal” (interview two, line 636). During her fifth interview, Jessica expressed similar sentiments about language diversity, framing the increasing language diversity in her school and community as a “melting pot,” as something “fantastic” and, because of this, as an area of greater need for professional development for teachers. Potentially, Jessica’s monolingual identity in conjunction with her limited experiences with linguistic diversity may have contributed to her awareness of this need for professional development.

327. Well (. ) I definitely think the United States is becoming big melt (. ) mixing pot/

328. which is fantastic (. ) or melting pot//

329. Um (. ) and I definitely think that ELLs is (. ) is/

330. Soon the population is going to be a lot more because people are coming from all different countries//
You know (.) families are using two languages still at home and at school/

and (..) um (..) I definitely think it's go (..) it's growing/

and I think as teachers and educators we need to (..) you know (..) continue our training and get (..) get more training on how to differentiate our lessons for ELLs/

how to communicate (..) how to model (..) how to teach (..) how to teach them//

Um (..) I think just having a manual is great/

but we kind of need more training and more professional development/

because I do think that population is growing (..) um (..) in all districts across the United States//

Not just our town//

Jessica’s discourse constructs a figured world where the population of linguistically diverse individuals is rapidly growing and, as a result, where teachers will need professional development and preparation to attend to ELs in their classrooms. Jessica’s summation reflects her intellectual understanding of the increasing linguistic diversity in the U.S. as evidenced by the repeated use of “think” throughout the excerpt (in contrast to Valentina’s references to what she “felt”). Jessica asserted that the U.S. is becoming a melting pot and provided her evaluation of this by affirming it “is fantastic” (line 328). She indicates that the increasing number of individuals entering the U.S. from other countries makes it important for teachers (including herself through the use of the
pronouns “we” and “our” in lines 333, 334, and 336) to have training in how to
differentiate lessons for ELs. Jessica suggested that this would apply to the teacher
workforce in general, rather than identifying it as a concern for monolingual teachers
alone.

Jessica extended this concern as not solely for herself and her colleagues in
Springbrook (line 338) but for teachers nationwide (line 337). Jessica’s figured world in
relation to ELs is that their increasing number is representative of national trends and,
given this demographic change, teachers (of monolingual or bilingual identities) need
preparation and development to attend to their language and learning needs. While
linguistic difference is valued within her school environment, it also seems to be
constructed as a challenge. Jessica and Lucille both voice awareness of their limitations
in communicating with and teaching ELs in their classrooms and their need to find ways
to work with these differences. Valentina and Dolores are less concerned with this, likely
because they are able to draw from their bilingual identities and background experiences
to inform their work with their ELs.

For Jessica, being monolingual and lacking personal experience with linguistic
diversity hindered her ability to understand the experiences of her students. Unlike
Lucille, who was able to draw from her former study of French, Jessica had minimal
experience studying a language other than English. Despite having reported studying
American Sign Language for one semester in college, she did not indicate that this
experience gave her insight into the experiences of ELs. While part of Lucille’s
professional identity consisted of her previous experiences with languages other than
English that gave her insight into her EL students’ second language learning experiences, Jessica’s professional identity did not include such a resource. While her teacher identity incorporated attention to students’ capacity to feel comfortable in the classroom, it did not involve voicing an empathetic disposition regarding what it is like to be an EL student in a mainstream classroom.

Valentina and Dolores assumed that there would be linguistic differences between themselves and their students and that teaching at their particular school would involve working with linguistically diverse students as part of their professional work, given the historically diverse community in which they worked. The teachers’ bilingual identities allowed them to connect with their bilingual students and, for monolingual students, to serve as models of bilingual individuals. Both Underdale teachers constructed being bilingual as providing them with insight into their students and helping them to understand what they needed in class, even if the child was not a Spanish speaker. The following passage from Valentina’s fourth interview illustrates this (and is similar to comments by Dolores as well). Valentina commences the excerpt with her response to my having asked if and how bilingualism relates to herself as a teacher.

257. **Valentina:** I think that it helps/

258. because I feel that I have a flexibility in understanding/

259. or being more aware of students who don't speak English/

260. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm/

261. **Valentina:** And (.) um (.) I think that that helps me in understanding them and helping them in their class/
262. So I definitely I . I think that um . it helps more with students who are Latin American obviously/

263. but I still think that it helps to contribute um . a good amount to those that are not native speakers of English//

264. **Adrian:** It helps you to understand ...

265. **Valentina:** Yeah . I guess to understand maybe the struggles they might have//

266. Um . because I'm able to understand the Spanish speaking students/

267. um . I understand whatever difficulties they may have//

268. I can see it and I think it makes me more in tune even if the child doesn't speak Spanish//

269. Um . to be aware of that//

270. It's more difficult . but I def- but I don't think I'm at a loss just because they're speaking um . something other than Spanish or English//

271. **Adrian:** Mm-hmm//

272. **Valentina:** I think that I'm more...

273. I . I feel like I'm more aware//

274. And . and maybe . and when I mean I aware/ 

275. I mean I think emotionally of whatever struggle they may have/ 

276. or confusion or maybe just because I know/ 

277. "Oh . do they get it?"
278. Do they not get it?
279. I hope that they feel comfortable”//

In this excerpt Valentina constructs her linguistic identity as allowing her to better attend to her students, including non-Spanish speaking ELs, for whom teaching, she asserted, is more difficult (line 270). She expressed an intellectual opinion that her bilingualism contributes to herself as a teacher through the use of the verb “think” in “I think that it helps” (line 257). Valentina affirmed that bilingualism helps her in the classroom and that it “obviously” helps more with students who are Latin American, inferred because of her own identity as a speaker of Spanish (line 262). At the same time, she believes that her bilingualism also contributes “a good amount” to her understanding of “not native speakers of English” as well. That is, being bilingual helps her “understand” the struggles Spanish-speaking students might have (line 265), and thus allows her to be “more in tune” with other ELs as well.

Despite the fact that she can apply some of the insight she derives from her knowledge of Spanish-speaking students to non-Spanish-speaking ELs, Valentina stated that “it’s more difficult” to teach non-Spanish speaking ELs (framed as a statement of fact rather than a subjective assertion) but she then stated that she does not think she is “at a loss” in teaching these students, (line 270). She reaffirmed that her bilingualism allows her to be more aware of what her EL students need, naming emotional needs as central (line 275). In line 279, she echoed her emphasis on the importance of students’ feeling comfortable (discussed in Chapter Five), saying that just as she is able to “feel”
and be aware of what they need, she also hopes that they “feel comfortable,” redirecting attention to this social good in relation to her bilingual identity.

Linguistic identity informed the professional identities of the participants in this study. The bilingual Underdale teachers were conscious of the ways in which their bilingualism informed their professional selves. The monolingual Springbrook teachers seemed to be less aware of how their monolingualism influenced their understanding of self as teachers. They emphasized the need for professional development and preparation to work with ELs, a perceived need not as readily shared by the bilingual teachers who, because of their bilingualism, posited that they already possessed an insider understanding of their ELs.

Racial, cultural, and national identities

The participants’ discourses also highlighted ways that their racial, cultural and/or national identities informed their teacher identities, giving different amounts of significance to these identity categories in relation to being a teacher. For Valentina and Dolores, their identities as Latinas emerged as supporting their ability to connect with their predominantly Latino students and Latino ELs in their classrooms. Jessica identified as American and saw this identity as giving her insider knowledge of American culture that she connected to her teacher identity. In contrast, Lucille reported that she saw no connection between herself as an American and herself as a teacher. While she wondered about the experiences of her students and ELs in particular in reference to how they understood themselves, she did not explore or reflect on who she was culturally or nationally and the professional role she enacted in her classroom.
American identities. The Springbrook participants identified as “American.” Jessica’s lifelong residence in Springbrook (a historically culturally homogenous community), in conjunction with a lack of experience with diversity in general, may have contributed to her minimal awareness of the relevance of her cultural or national identity to being a teacher. She suggested that having an identity as an American and having been raised in a home where English was spoken contributed to her knowing the “correct way” of speaking to her students. Jessica conflates being American with speaking English, as evident in the following excerpt from her fifth interview.

14. **Jessica:** Okay/

15. So basically I consider myself (.) an American and (.) um (.) you know/

16. I don't speak another language//

17. I've grown up in my house with speaking English (.). um (.). so I think in terms of being a teacher (.). how that role plays is like/

18. I know a lot of (.). you know (.). the traditions//

19. I know the language very well (.). the grammar aspects (.). spelling (.). um/

20. so I think when children come in with (.). uh (.). with ESL/

21. they don't have that background knowledge of (.). you know (.). how to pronounce words/

22. how to (.). um (.). you know (.). form correct sentences (.). you know/

23. using he and she (.). the pronouns (.). properly/

24. So I think it's definitely an advantage of being American/

25. and knowing that and knowing a lot of the customs and roles of the
Jessica constructs a teacher Discourse wherein being American and a speaker of English is advantageous (similar to the previously discussed perspective of bilingual teachers provided by Valentina), allowing her to communicate with members of the school community. After defining herself as an American (line 15), she added that she does not speak another language (line 16), preceded by the filler “you know,” which suggests that she is emphasizing to me (the listener) the “obvious” connection between being American and not speaking another language. Jessica further reinforced this by stating that she grew up speaking English and inserting the prepositional phrase “in my house” to specify that her home language was English (line 17). She constructed a temporal relationship between having learned English at home (a reference to her past and private life) and being a teacher (her present life and current identity). Thus, Jessica
was constructing her identity as an American as being derived from her upbringing, which in turn seemed to directly influence her role as a teacher.

Jessica also emphasized how being American provides her insight into the traditions of the U.S. (line 18) and the language and aspects of language (line 19) used in schools. As in lines 15-16, she conflated being American with knowledge of the English language. From Jessica’s perspective, her identity as an American (and a native speaker of English) places her at an advantage in terms of teaching ELs (lines 24-25) and positively contributes to her work with them.

However, even though Jessica frames being American as advantageous in teaching ELs, it does not allow her to connect to them. She constructs a figured world in which knowing English facilitates communication (or makes it “easier to communicate,” as expressed in line 29) with parents, supervisors and principals (line 31). Such a figured world suggests a context wherein everyone speaks English. This contrasts to the previously discussed figured world Jessica suggested when describing the U.S. as a “melting pot” with increasing linguistic diversity. While she constructs her American identity as a source from which she draws in her work with ELs as positively enabling communication with members of the school community, she paradoxically maintains that her professional and national context is one where language diversity is increasing and teachers need preparation and professional development to meet the needs of this population. Thus, Jessica constructs her professional self as being in need of preparation and professional development for teaching ELs, but at the same time, she constructs her
national self (American) as being at an advantage in her work with the adult members of the school community.

When I asked for an example of how her identity as American is enacted in the classroom, Jessica discussed a recent lesson on Memorial Day (a federal American holiday devoted to remembrance of those who have died while in serving in the armed forces) and explained that because she is American, she possessed close familiarity with this holiday as a facet of American culture. Jessica held as valuable this familiarity and her ability to describe this holiday to her ELs, many of whom she indicated were unaware of the holiday and its meaning. Like her colleague Lucille (who also taught a lesson about Memorial Day), Jessica referenced social practices such as going to parades and waving the American flag. Unlike Lucille, Jessica sought to familiarize her EL students with Memorial Day by bringing an Israeli flag to the classroom with the intent of drawing a connection between the U.S. social practice of waving of American flags with the waving of Israeli flags. She sought to help her EL students make a connection to this American cultural norm and attempted to help build a shared understanding. However, her use of the Israeli flag was intended to support the EL students’ understanding of Memorial Day—an American day of significance; Jessica did not comment on or acknowledge what pedagogical benefit mainstream students might experience if they were to examine cultural norms or traditions of other countries in conjunction with those of the U.S. Further, she did not report how waving the Israeli flag in her classroom would help her ELs understand the meaning of Memorial Day itself instead of the social practice of waving the U.S. flag on this holiday.
Whereas Jessica affirmed a connection between her national identity and teacher identity, Lucille indicated that she saw no connection between who she is as an American and being a teacher. When I inquired if she saw a connection between her cultural and/or national identity with her teacher identity, Lucille deflected the topic and discussed the influence of her family on herself as a teacher. The following excerpt from her fourth interview is her response to my inquiry about any connections between her national or cultural self and being a teacher.

5. I don't think um (.) no (.) I would say/
6. I (.). I've never really thought about it that way before but/
7. um (.). no I mean my cultural background is Northern European but I don't think/
8. um (.). like I don't come from a family of teachers//
9. Actually (.). on both my parents side my brother and I were the first to go to college/
10. so my mother is second generation American (.). no she's first generation American/
11. and my dad (.). I think, is (.). was second or third generation American//
12. **Adrian:** Uh-hmm//
13. **Lucille:** But um (.). I (.). I (.). I think actually though (.). but it's not really cultural/
14. I feel (.). um (.). like my dad was more of an influence for me with learning//
15. **Adrian:** Uh-hmm/

16. **Lucille:** You know (. ) he always always read /

17. and I just remember him always (. ) you know reading the newspaper /

18. reading (. ) subscribing to magazines (. ) always reading books (. ) um (. )

19. and you know /

20. I'm a big reader and I was a big reader as a child /

21. and it's funny my Aunt actually wrote a book about my dad's family and

22. she published it /

23. and my grandmother who died very young was also a huge reader//

24. So I find (. ) and I didn't know that /

25. like I just was a reader as a child//

Lucille indicates that her cultural identity was not a topic she had previously considered (line 6), indicating that she saw “no” connection between her background and being a teacher (line 7). Instead, she discussed her family members and her family’s educational history as influences on her value for learning. In contrast to her prior negation of any connection between her background and being a teacher, she affirmed (in line 14) that her father was an influence on her professional self. For Lucille, national and cultural backgrounds were not aspects of self that she identified as influencing her professional self. Instead, she seemed to see her family members as influential in how she saw herself professionally and as models who led to her identify as a reader. Lucille constructed her teaching self as informed by her familial self and being a teacher and teaching as a-cultural.
Latina and American identities. In contrast to Jessica and Lucille, the discourses of the Latina participants, Dolores and Valentina, constructed their cultural and national selves as informing their roles as teachers. This seemed to serve to support their abilities to connect with students. Similar to Jessica’s conflation of language with culture, Dolores constructed both as intertwined, and focused on Spanish as a facet of her cultural self and how this cultural self allowed her to connect with Latino students and Spanish speaking ELs. However, identity as a speaker of Spanish was much more prominent in her teacher identity than other aspects of Latin culture (such as traditions, customs, or norms) or her identity as El Salvadorian.

Among all the participants, Valentina was the only one who laid claim to more than one national and cultural identity. She positioned herself as fully immersed in both American culture and Latin culture, most explicitly addressing how being Latina informed her as a teacher. In the following excerpt from her fourth interview, she describes how she draws from being Latina and American in her teaching, and the benefit that this has for her students.

201. Being in a community working with children that are English language learners/
202. it’s like (.) well now it's even more important that identify as (.) as a Latina/
203. because I'm La- I'm Hispanic/
204. and I have these Hispanic children/
205. so now I feel even more um (.) I feel that it is even more important to
be able to um (.) um (.) to identify/

206. and to basically use that part of who I am in order to be able to reach out to the kids and to the parents/

207. and to help bond myself with my students/

208. and to make a closer bond also with the parents/

209. And I also feel like it is important for me to also home in on the aspects of myself that I feel are also American/

210. because I was born here and brought up here/

211. because I feel that is something that I can contribute to my students as well and help them assimilate/

212. and learn about the country that they're in and that they're growing up in/

This excerpt highlights the fact that Valentina’s professional identity incorporates both her Hispanic background and her American background, emphasizing the importance of both in her construction of her professional self. The incorporation of her Latina background into her professional self is positioned as important because of the environment in which she teaches and the number of Hispanic students in her class. She articulated that it is important not only to identify as Latina because that is who she is (line 203) and because she has Hispanic students (line 204), but also to “use that part of who I am” to “reach out” to the parents and students (line 206). Thus, for Valentina, being Latina is not an identity that she simply claims but one that she considers of importance and as necessary to enact in order to work with parents and students.
In line 209, Valentina shifts her focus to emphasize her American identity, explicitly stating that “it is also important” for her to “home in on” parts of herself that are American. She provides a rationale as to why identifying as American (and focusing on that part of herself) is important (lines 210-212) and positions her American identity as “something that [she] can contribute” to her students (lines 211-212). She saw her American identity as contributing to her ability to “help them assimilate” (line 211), clarifying that she can assist students in learning about the U.S., the country her students are “growing up in” (line 212).

Valentina constructs being Latina as important because it is the source from which she “bonds” with parents and students given their shared cultural backgrounds. She does not construct being American as something that is shared. Rather, she constructs her American self as something that helps her students to assimilate to and gain familiarity with U.S. culture. This aligns with her previously discussed perspective on language through which she considers it to be her “duty” to teach English and places that at the forefront of her work, with English taking precedence over Spanish.

Thus, for Valentina, being Latina, American, and bilingual collectively informed her professional identity. For Dolores, being Latina was of secondary importance to being bilingual, which was the primary aspect of her professional self that she drew from to promote student communication and integration into the classroom. Dolores’s discourse placed little emphasis on getting to know parents or involving parents in activities beyond those prescribed by the school. For Valentina, being Latina contributed to the connections she could make with her ELs and their parents, and contributed to her
viewing herself as a role model of someone who has integrated both a Latina and an American identity for students from different backgrounds. For Lucille, there was no connection between her professional self and her nationality or cultural background; instead she emphasized her family history and recollections of coming from a family with a value for normative literacy practices. Jessica emphasized her own American background, conflating speaking English with being American and seeing both as providing her with an insider understanding of being American that she felt contributed to her work with ELs. Valentina, like Jessica, constructed being American as “something” that could be extended to students.

In summary, national and cultural identities emerged as influencing how the participants constructed their professional selves in various ways. While Lucille emphasized that she saw no connection between this aspect of herself and being a teacher, she did draw from normative American cultural practices (such as the Memorial Day celebrations) to inform her work. Jessica, who equated being American with knowing English, emphasized how this identity would aid her in building her ELs’ familiarity with American customs and norms. For the Latina participants, cultural and national identities emerged as supports for connecting with their students. For Valentina, these identities offered an opportunity to bond with parents and families and to function as a model of a Latina and a teacher. Dolores emphasized being a speaker of Spanish more than enacting her EL Salvadorian identity in her classroom or its integration into her professional self.
The identity categories that the teachers claimed did not uniformly influence or inform their professional selves. The experiences and insights gained from membership in other identity categories may therefore be heterogeneous and specific to the individual. Thus, blanket assumptions cannot be made about who a teacher is because of a particular cultural or linguistic identity. In the following chapter, I discuss the findings from this and the other results chapters in relation to the literature on teacher identity and what the results suggest about the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs.
Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the professional identities of four mainstream teachers of ELs in northern New Jersey. The findings highlight the various ways in which the participants constructed their teacher identities in relation to Gee’s building tasks of relationships, politics, and other identity categories (Gee, 2011b; 2011c). Given that the construction of a teacher’s identity has implications for the educative experiences of students (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Britzman, 1992), the almost complete lack of research on the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs is a serious gap in the literature. This study has addressed this gap, providing an analysis of the professional identities of four early childhood teachers of ELs in mainstream classrooms. This study was guided by the following research questions: (a) What are the professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs in Northern New Jersey schools? (b) How are these identities constructed by the participants? (c) What are the influences on these teachers’ identities and how are these influences negotiated in the enactment of their professional identities? The results suggest that the teachers in this study draw from relationships with students, colleagues, parents and families, and former teachers in the construction of their professional selves. Engagement with students was central to their professional identities, while the significance of relationships with colleagues differed for the teachers at the two different research sites. Relationships with parents and families were constructed as a means to extend school and social resources to parents of ELs, as an opportunity to provide information on the student’s academic progress, as a way of integrating families’
languages and cultures into the classroom, or as a responsibility that extended beyond the school day to community events and celebrations. The participants emphasized making students comfortable in the classroom to promote socialization or academic learning, attend to students’ emotional needs, or enable communication. They constructed English language acquisition as relevant for different purposes (to function in society or to simply be able to participate in the immediate learning tasks) and academic learning of ELs as informed by school-based assessments or by ELs’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The participants understood the significance of their linguistic and cultural or national identities in different ways, perceiving these other aspects of their identities as either informing or not informing who they are as teachers.

When I began this study, I hoped to be able to articulate clearly delineated professional identities for each of the study participants. However, throughout data collection and analysis, the construct of teacher identity emerged as a complex confluence of various elements, including relationships with former teachers, colleagues, students and parents, perspectives on English language acquisition, membership in social categories (such as American or Latina), conceptualizations of student learning, and values (such as making students feel comfortable and welcomed in the classroom) as detailed through the building tasks of language. These elements emerged as influences on their professional identities and, at the same time, provided opportunities through which to construct and enact a professional self (for example, through relationships with students and parents). Thus, the elements in the professional identities of the participants could not be neatly or singularly identified as either influences on or constructions of
their identities. Further, whereas an element (e.g., linguistic identity) might function as an influence for one teacher (e.g., Valentina), this same element was held as having no influence or relevance for others (e.g., Jessica). Given the multiplicity of these elements and the various ways in which each participant constructed them in her teacher identity, the response to the first research question (what are the professional identities of the participants) cannot be answered with an all-encompassing response or label that encapsulates the totality of a teacher’s identity. Such a response reduces the complexity of the professional self, given that these identities are multiple and enacted with others in diverse contexts (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Vignoles et al., 2011; Weedon, 1987). To classify these identities with a single label (such as facilitator or comfort of students) fails to attend to the complexity of and varied constructions of professional self that these participants articulated in their discourses and suggested as their understandings of themselves as teachers.

With regard to the theoretical consideration of teacher identity discussed in Chapter One, the results of this study highlight teacher identity as a conceptual window through which the role and work of teachers can be understood. My analysis of the data calls attention not only to the ways in which this window provides insight into how teachers of ELs understand their professional selves, but also to the potential implications of these constructions for the educative experiences of ELs in their classrooms. Ultimately, the interplay among the relationships teachers engaged in; their constructions of ELs’ levels of comfort in their classrooms, academic learning, and English; and their linguistic and cultural or national identities emerged as a constellation of factors that
constitute who they are as professionals vis-à-vis EL students. Just as various celestial spheres compose particular images (or constructions) in particular locations of the night sky, the myriad relationships, values, life experiences and social categories of the participants connect in particular ways and in particular locations (contexts) to construct a professional self. To examine or identify any one of these elements in isolation from others or from their contexts would create a caricature of who a teacher is. Had data collection taken place over a more extended period of time, the results might have provided insight into teacher identity as a process and its development (or construction) in relation to a temporal sequence.

As teachers of ELs, the participants in this study seemed to construct their professional identities in alignment with their understandings of self (cultural or linguistic) in order to attend to what they sought to distribute to these students (comfort, ability in English, academic learning), as influenced and enacted through relationships with others in their professional contexts. Their discourses, however, suggest that shared elements of the teachers’ identities (such as a desire for students to feel comfortable) were constructed in different ways and served different purposes, as discussed earlier in the results chapters. Ultimately, while the participants aimed to promote common goals (such as comfort) through their efforts and initiatives, the purpose for which the participants enacted them varied, reflecting different constructions of their professional identities. Jessica, for example, emphasized the importance of making ELs feel comfortable in the classroom for promoting their ability to socialize with their mainstream peers; Lucille gave significance to ELs’ comfort as a means of promoting
student learning; Valentina positioned making ELs feel comfortable as essential for attending to their emotional needs; and Dolores framed it as a way to counter the feelings of isolation and the inability to communicate in the classroom that she experienced as a former EL. The shared value for distributing the social good of feeling comfortable in the classroom emerged from different identity constructions among the participants. Nevertheless, despite these differences in teacher identity construction, the enactment of the participants’ professional selves was strikingly similar across the four classrooms I observed.

In this chapter, I discuss the results of the study in relation to the research literature. I begin by examining the apparent contradiction in the differences in the teachers’ identity constructions, on the one hand, and the similarities in their enactment of their identities in the classroom, on the other hand. I then discuss the participants’ emphasis on facilitating a comfortable classroom environment for ELs as evidence of an affirming first step in an effort to teach these students. I discuss the linguistic and cultural or national identities of the participants in relation to the literature and consider the affordance given to particular social categories. In conclusion, I propose a series of recommendations drawn from the analysis of the data.

The Apparent Contradiction of Differing Identity Constructions and Similar Enactments

While differences emerged in the discourses of the participations regarding the construction of relationships, the distribution of the social good of feeling comfortable, English acquisition, academic learning, and cultural, linguistic, and racial identity
categories, my observations of the participants’ enactment of their professional selves through their instructional practice revealed far more commonalities than differences. All four teachers engaged in a mix of whole class and small group lessons, had students gather around and sit cross-legged while reading a text, and used verbal (such as songs and chants) and non-verbal (such as patterned claps) cues to call students’ attention or signal a transition to another activity. Each participant demonstrated enthusiasm and interest in student responses and in the content matter discussed during the observations.

In contrast to teachers discussed in the literature who struggled with enacting their professional selves when those contrasted with a teacher identity thrust upon them by the context in which they taught (Hall et al., 2013; Namgahi, 2009; Tsui, 2007; Upadhyay, 2009), the participants in this study expressed no tension between how they saw themselves as teachers and how they enacted this self in the classroom. Whereas the teachers in Namgahi (2009) emphasized a lack of control over how they wanted to teach and the participant in Upadhyay (2009) was dissatisfied in being unable to enact a pedagogy aligned with her concept of professional self, the participants in this study did not express or relate disagreement or dissatisfaction with how they saw themselves professionally in relation to their actual practice with ELs or mainstream students. While the teachers in the previously cited studies were forced to assume identities thrust upon them in their schooling contexts, the participants in this study (from two different contexts) shared more similarities than differences in their teaching practices and provided no indication of a tension or stress regarding the relationship between their enacted selves and their teacher identities. This is not to suggest that they did not report
challenging elements in their work. Rather, while acknowledging the challenges within the structural context of their schools, the participants did not express conflict between who they saw themselves as teachers and the work they actually did.

Contextual features shared by the two research locations in which the teachers taught may have influenced the similarity of professional enactment despite different constructions of professional selves. All of the participants taught in early childhood classrooms (preschool or kindergarten) in Northern New Jersey public schools. Academic work completed by students was aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics and English language arts (even in the preschool context, as the New Jersey Department of Education has implemented the CCSS for preschool aligned with the CCSS for kindergarten). Since concepts such as developmentally appropriate practice by advocacy groups such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have been widely adopted by professional organizations and informed the preparation of teachers of young children, it may be that the teaching practices of the participants reflect today’s dominant conceptualizations of early childhood education. Because these sources contribute to the creation of the instructional resources and models teachers use and implement (such as the workshop model for teaching literacy or the Everyday Math program referred to by Jessica), they function as regulatory influences on what teachers do (yet not necessarily on who teachers are). Søriede (2007) theorized that policy documents (such as national curriculum and certification requirements) inform teacher identities. Yet Søriede did not examine how these teacher identity constructions (based on documents) were enacted in
practice. The results from this study suggest that while the contextual elements of the classroom and school setting employed for student instruction influence what is done in the classroom, they do not serve to comprehensibly inform or construct who teachers understand themselves to be.

A shared enactment of self despite differences in an individual’s construction of professional self might also derive from shared contextual variables along with representations and cultural images of teachers (as depicted in media) (Sugrue, 1997) and the collective reference and memory of previous teachers (Lortie, 1974). As such, the enactment of a professional self (rather than the sense of a professional self itself) may be performative (Butler, 1990). For example, while all of the participants indicated through their responses that they had reflected on and considered the importance of providing a classroom environment that was inclusive for different reasons, they each enacted classroom inclusion through interactions and lessons with students in small group, whole class and individualized learning experiences. Each of the participants engaged in question and answer routines wherein they initiated a question, solicited responses from students, and provided evaluation based on student responses. When reading a text, each teacher held the text before the class to showcase it, panned it across the classroom, and pointed to the words as she read. Engagement in these types of normative literacy practices suggests that despite differences in how the participants constructed their professional selves, the influence of societal Discourses on what it means to be a teacher (and to be recognized as one) in conjunction with institutional norms and contextual mandates may heavily inform the enactment of the identity of teacher in classrooms.
For teachers of young children, and teachers of ELs in particular, such patterned enactments of professional self (shaped perhaps by the Discourse of early childhood educators) reflect particular supports teachers provide to students while simultaneously neglecting others. For example, given the attention in professional standards to young children’s emotional and social development (National Association of Educators of Young Children, 2012), it is not surprising that the teachers in the study expressed a concern for ELs’ comfort level in the classroom. The participants’ reflections throughout the interviews (possibly informed by a hyper-awareness of being interviewed) continuously reference ELs’ levels of comfort, and the enactment of professional self reflected student-teacher interactions aimed to support a welcoming and comfortable classroom environment. However, while the participants’ reflections on professional self during the interview process were consistent with the literature on reflection by teachers of ELs (Galindo, 2007; Giampapa, 2010), reflection in and of itself does not suffice to promote an inclination to move beyond a value for inclusion (which the participants enacted) toward insight on supporting second language acquisition and the teaching of academic content for second language learners. Potentially, this gap in the knowledge of the participants in the study reflects the current status of teacher preparation and the absence of attention to specialized approaches to teaching ELs (Graves et al., 2004; Lucas, 2011; Ray, 2009; Short & Echevarria, 1999; Valdes et al., 2005) in contrast to bilingual/ESL certified specialists whose professional identities may include attention to ways of supporting ELs linguistically and academically (Tong et al., 2010). Thus, lack of coursework, formal preparation, or professional development did not serve to inhibit a
positive disposition in the professional identity construction of the teachers, but the lack of such educative experiences may have informed the teachers’ pedagogical repertoire to attend to ELs in their classrooms.

It is likely then that mainstream teachers not only need opportunities to reflect on themselves as teachers of EL students, but also supports in the form of coursework and professional development on the particular knowledge base to promote ELs’ language and academic development in the classroom (Bunch, 2013; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Lucas et al., 2008; Turkan et al., 2013; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Such an effort may be productive for developing a teacher workforce that not only identifies as linguistically responsive, but can also identify opportunities to enact linguistically responsive practices in their classroom.

The participants in my study enacted their professional selves not only within their classrooms but also outside the classroom, for example, in interactions with colleagues and with students’ family members. Lucille’s account of volunteering at a weekend fundraiser, Jessica’s emphasis on collaborating with colleagues and participation in PLCs, and Valentina’s descriptions of working with her students’ parents are examples of contexts wherein the participants enacted their professional selves beyond the context of classroom instruction. While teachers’ instructional time with students may be regulated via the aforementioned contextual influences and as a reflection of current teacher accountability initiatives (Martin & Strom, 2015), these other contexts (not observed in this study) are domains where teachers may have the flexibility to enact their professional selves in much more varied and diverse ways. The findings of
this study suggest that the observation of the enactment of teacher identities solely within formal instructional periods is narrow and not representative of the scope of contexts and ways in which teachers enact their professional selves. Efforts to promote teacher identities attentive to ELs should not focus solely on formal instruction. Instead, a holistic examination of the spaces wherein teachers enact their professional selves needs to be considered as well as how, in these varied contexts, their enactment of self contributes to ELs’ learning and development in schools.

**Moving Beyond Comfort as a Social Good**

Given the inability to generalize from qualitative research, a limitation of this study is that the findings do not represent the population of mainstream teachers working with ELs. More specifically, I cannot extend to any other teachers the finding that these teachers positioned making ELs feel comfortable and accepted in the classroom as central to their professional selves. Nonetheless, this study fills a gap in the research literature on the professional identities of mainstream teachers working with ELs in early childhood settings and provides examples of mainstream educators who welcomed these students into their classrooms. Potentially, the promotion of a school climate inviting to all students (as reported by the participants and by the school leaders in each research setting) in the school environment may have enabled this orientation to inclusiveness and attention to students feeling comfortable in the classroom. Notwithstanding the differing rationales for making students comfortable (and ELs in particular) in school, the discourses of all the participants reflected the extension of comfort to ELs as a central component of how they recognized themselves.
While other studies of school contexts that promote linguistic inclusiveness (Wenger, et al., 2012) have shed light on such conditions as enabling professional identities that value all members of the school community, the findings of this study suggest that a major challenge for the participants was to move beyond simply trying to make students comfortable or included in the classroom towards attending to their academic and language (particularly English language) development. As with the literature on teacher identity among teachers of ELs who have received little to no professional preparation or development to teach ELs (Haworth, 2008; Varghese, 2008; Varghese & Stritikus, 2005), the teachers in this study demonstrated minimal knowledge of formal understandings of how to promote English language development and the teaching of content to ELs. Unlike the teachers in the cited studies, the teachers in this study did understand their professional responsibility as teachers of ELs to enable a comfortable classroom environment. However, beyond this value, their professional identities as teachers of ELs included doubts and uncertainty (e.g., by Jessica) and many questions (e.g., by Lucille) about how ELs learn. The other participants deflected attention from what they did not know and instead focused on ways to connect with students. For these Latina participants (Lucille and Dolores) developing caring relationships in a welcoming, comfortable classroom was central to their professional selves, reflecting the literature on Latino teachers as discussed by Villegas and Irvine (2010).

While the participants’ recognition of the importance of making ELs feel comfortable in the classroom was emphasized by the participants, it was not clear
whether they were aware of the need to move beyond making students feel comfortable to actively promote English language development and academic learning rooted in research-based practices or guiding pedagogical principles. They each presented efforts to make ELs feel comfortable as a primary element of their role in the classroom and thus as a guide to what they should do with ELs (such as pairing them with other ELs, inviting a parent to read a book in the child’s home language, providing opportunities for students to work in pairs, or allowing students to provide a response as a whisper in the teacher’s ear). Given the early childhood context and how, for participants in each setting, students were entering school for the first time, the teachers in both schools were therefore keenly aware of the need to assist the children in the transition to formal schooling.

This positive orientation to the inclusion of ELs in the classroom did not, however, translate to self-initiative to learn how to better support ELs in the classroom. While it is not clear why the participants did not seek (nor were they provided) such learning opportunities, it is evident that even a comfortable learning environment for ELs and teachers who welcome them into the classroom is not sufficient to address the language and academic needs of these students. These teachers did not recognize their need to learn how to promote the learning of these students so they could move beyond constructing professional identities attentive only to ELs’ emotional wellbeing and capacity to engage in the classroom.

Given their lack of formal knowledge of how to support academic and language development in ELs, foregrounding the value for making students comfortable may have emerged as a coping strategy precisely because it was something the participants knew
their students needed and something they could provide. As discussed, such an orientation may bear particular relevance given the early childhood contexts of this study. It may be that for early childhood educators of ELs, and teachers in general, opportunities to reflect not only upon their value system in relation to ELs is important, but also consciousness-raising in conjunction with opportunities for professional learning. Lucille’s case highlighted this most explicitly, with her upcoming transfer to teach third grade the following school year. Her discourse indicated that she would provide the same kinds of support and attention to ELs in the third grade as she was providing to her kindergarten students. Recognizing that in-service teachers emphasize the kinds of qualities they seek to enable in their construction of future teacher identities (Hammon et al., 2010) and the lack of attention to teacher knowledge of ELs in conjunction with teacher identity, this study suggests a need for future work using teacher identity as a conceptual window to examine the constructions of teacher knowledge in order to better support the development of teacher identities conscious of and amenable to the incorporation of knowledge and skills for teaching ELs.

The Complexity of Multiple Identities

The findings of this study illustrate the sociocultural perspective on identities as constructed not only through mental processes and social norms and practices, but through human action as well. The participants’ discourses illustrate the multiple ways that they drew from reflection and former life experiences (mental processes) through engagement with members of the school community (human action) through participation in the school community (social norms and practices) in order to be recognized as a
certain kind of person (Gee, 2011b; 2011c), as a teacher. At the same time, the discourses illustrate that while the participants recognized themselves as teachers, their awareness of belonging to (or identifying with) social categories (such as race, culture, and nationality) varied considerably. Constructions of linguistic, cultural, and national identities among the participants merit attention given the contributions these identities can make to the educative experiences of today’s diverse students (Villegas & Lucas, 2004; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). My findings showed that, even for participants who shared similar backgrounds, their constructions of how these identities related to their professional selves differed. It is clear that each of the participants understood herself in different ways as a cultural and linguistic being. Valentina identified strongly as both Latina and American and held these identities as integral to her teacher identity. Dolores placed greater emphasis on her linguistic identity than on being El Salvadorian, and Jessica positioned her American self as providing her with an insider understanding of American culture in her role and work as a teacher. Lucille was alone in explicitly reporting no connection between her national or cultural identities and her teacher identity. These variations in how the participants constructed multiple identities in relation to their professional selves suggest that the interplay among identities is unique to the individual teacher, even teachers of similar backgrounds. If teachers are to possess sociocultural consciousness (Villegas & Lucas, 2001) and sociolinguistic consciousness (Lucas & Villegas, 2011), then it may be productive to engage in linguistic and cultural consciousness-raising and consider the implications of how other identities interact with and influence the professional identities of teachers. The discourses of the four teachers
in this study suggest that such a consideration would be productive for teachers of diverse backgrounds, not solely those from the dominant cultural/racial background. The varied foci and differential emphasis on themselves as linguistic, cultural, and national selves call attention to constructions of these identities as informing teacher identity in different ways, even among teachers of similar social backgrounds. Further, it may not solely be identification with particular identities in and of themselves that contribute to particular orientations productive for ELs, but rather awareness of and reflection on particular identities in conjunction with life experiences understood through those identities.

For example, although the case of Dolores illustrates that teachers of diverse cultural and linguistic identities possess insight into the life experiences of diverse students’ experiences (Ajayi, 2011; Cahnmann & Varghese, 2005; Diniz de Figueirido, 2011; Galindo, 2007; Jackson, 2006; Weisman, 2001; and Wenger et al., 2012), and indicates that she draws from her background to inform her teacher identity it was the experience of having been a former EL student in conjunction with her identity as an English-Spanish bilingual that served as most central to her professional self. This gave her an insider awareness in relation to her EL students, similar to the experiences of the bicultural and bilingual participant studied by Haddix (2010). In contrast, Lucille could only wonder about ELs’ experiences. Valentina shared a cultural and linguistic background with Dolores but did not have first-hand experience of being positioned as a linguistic outsider and had not experienced the emotional consequences of being an EL in school. Thus, while she had more insight into ELs’ experiences than Lucille and Jessica,
she too relied largely on trying to put herself in the position of her EL students through reflection.

At the same time, despite not having experienced being a linguistic outsider, Valentina demonstrated a greater awareness of and value for promoting English development in her classroom and for her EL students than the other participants, including Dolores, who gave equal importance to the maintenance of her students’ home language and English acquisition. Valentina’s understanding of the value of English as a social good in the U.S. extended beyond access to education and employment. Such an understanding was not as pronounced in Dolores’s professional identity and was apparently lacking in the identities of Jessica and Lucille. Such a finding suggests that teachers’ cultural and linguistic identities should not be treated as homogeneous social categories but as heterogeneous concepts through which a great deal of variety is manifest.

My findings suggest that assumptions cannot be made as to how cultural or linguistic identities may inform teacher identities or how teacher identities are influenced by or constructed with these other identities. While reflection on one’s cultural self has been productive in elevating teachers’ consciousness about this aspect of self and how to educate students (Delano-Oriaran & Meidl, 2012; Joseph & Headings, 2010; Hammons et al., 2010), such work would not have been as immediately relevant to the monolingual teachers in this study in reference to their lack of knowledge of principles of second language acquisition and teaching academic content to ELs. Jessica’s forthrightness in acknowledging that she did not possess a formal teaching repertoire to support her ELs
and Lucille’s interrogation of how she might be able to teach them were much more pronounced in their discourses than were Valentina’s and Dolores’s similar lack of insight into teaching ELs in their discourses. Instead, the latter pair of teachers focused on ways in which they made connections with their students, in contrast to the transparency of Jessica’s and Lucille’s inquiries about how to teach ELs. While Dolores and Valentina’s identities and life experiences facilitated connections to students as linguistic and cultural beings, this shared background did not transfer to knowledge of ways to promote academic and language learning among ELs. Rather, the inclusion of their linguistic and cultural selves as central in the construction of their teacher identities may have influenced their disposition toward supporting student communication (Dolores) and building relationships with parents as partners with shared language and cultural backgrounds (Valentina). For these participants, linguistic and cultural identities enabled these productive qualities in the construction of their teacher identities, but did not transfer to insight on instructional approaches to support ELs. In contrast, the monolingual teachers more explicitly reported an awareness of a professional need to better learn how to support ELs in the classroom.

It is therefore not as clear-cut as simply assuming that teachers with languages and cultural backgrounds shared with their EL students will construct their professional identities with a “natural” insight into how to develop instructional adeptness to teach ELs. As reflected in the discourses of Dolores and Valentina, teachers of diverse backgrounds need appropriate preparation and professional development to enable them to use their linguistic and cultural knowledge to promote student learning and
development (Villegas & Davis, 2008). Similarly, teachers of language-dominant backgrounds may be more acutely aware of their lack of insight given that they cannot draw from a second or shared language background to support EL students in their classrooms. Ultimately, this indicates the problematic nature of making assumptions about the construction of teachers’ professional identities and what knowledge or skills are emphasized in these constructions based upon other identity categories that teachers may possess. Shared identity backgrounds with students do not translate into uniform or common integrations of professional selves with these background identities (Beynon et al., 2003), as this study suggests in relation to mainstream teachers of ELs. Rather, teachers’ identity categories interact with and influence the construction of who they are as teachers in different ways in conjunction with their life experiences. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, teacher identity is a constellation of elements that includes the interactions and confluences of these and other elements in particular ways to construct who a teacher is. In order to understand how teachers do or do not attend to ELs’ experiences in schools holistically (academically, linguistically, emotionally, socially), it is necessary to consider not only teachers’ identity categories but also their life experiences and how these interact to construct teacher identities.

**Conclusion**

This dissertation examined the professional identities of mainstreams teachers of ELs in urban and suburban school settings. In this section I propose a series of recommendations drawn from the findings. I first discuss ways that teacher education can promote the need for attention to the academic and language needs of ELs as central
to the professional identities of mainstream teachers. I continue with recommendations for teacher education research to further investigate teacher identities. I conclude with a final reflection on this dissertation study.

**Recommendations for Teacher Education Practice**

The recommendations I suggest for teacher education practice aim to promote a teacher workforce that includes attention to ELs as central to teachers’ identities. Given the varied ways in which the participants identified as linguistic beings and the reported lack of opportunity for professional growth and development to better understand themselves as teachers of ELs in their classrooms, I suggest that it may be productive for teacher education practice to support reflection on and recognition of the varied ways in which teacher candidates’ linguistic selves can inform their professional selves as teachers of ELs. I also suggest the need for teacher education practice to support teacher learning about ELs to occur concurrently with professional identity development for candidates as future teachers of ELs.

**Teacher reflection on linguistic identity and value for language diversity.**

The teachers in this study related to their linguistic identities and their identities as teachers of ELs in different ways. Differential constructions of how their linguistic selves influenced their professional identities emerged, with some of the participants failing to recognize how such an identity informs their professional selves. Given the value of teacher reflection on self as a cultural being (Galindo, 2007; Giampapa, 2010; Pennington & Brock, 2012) in relation to working with culturally diverse students and EL students, it would be worthwhile for teacher education programs to support teacher
candidates’ awareness and understanding of how their linguistic identities can also productively inform their professional selves as teachers of ELs. For teachers of color and of diverse language backgrounds, such an effort would promote candidates’ and in-service teachers’ ability to engage in pedagogy that draws from their perspectives and funds of knowledge as diverse individuals (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). Such a recommendation adds to the call to diversify the teacher workforce and provide these candidates and in-service teachers with opportunities to not only develop cultural responsiveness (Villegas & Lucas, 2004), but linguistic responsiveness as well.

Teacher education courses could include opportunities for reflection on self as a linguistic being and on how one’s linguistic identity can contribute to or inform one’s professional self. Such consciousness-raising could facilitate an understanding of one’s linguistic positionality and of how to draw from this understanding as a resource to better attend to EL students. Monolingual speakers of English may come to recognize the social privileges that are afforded to members of this group. Bilingual individuals may develop a similar awareness and also reflect on the connection between their own experiences as speakers of two languages and those of their EL students. Additionally, reflection on linguistic identity could provide all candidates opportunities to consider how practices, policies, and school climate marginalizes or is responsive to ELs.

**Teacher learning and identity development as teachers of ELs.** The findings of this study add to the call for professional preparation and learning to teach ELs among all teachers (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas, 2011). This study illustrates how, despite maintaining professional identities that welcomed ELs into the classroom, the
participants lacked knowledge of research-based practices to promote second language acquisition, differentiate instruction for ELs, and scaffold lessons not only to integrate ELs into classroom activities, but also to promote academic and language development (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Attending to linguistically diverse students in teacher education courses and professional development would not only promote the knowledge and skills teachers need to teach ELs, but also provide opportunities for candidates to begin to identify as teachers of ELs.

Coursework and field experiences with ELs would aid preservice teachers in the development of professional identities as teachers of ELs. For in-service teachers, professional development on teaching ELs would call attention to ELs as a central aspect of their teacher identities. Ultimately, teacher educators must work with their candidates (and in-service teachers in graduate programs) to consciously attend to how they understand their professional selves and in what ways professional identity constructions promote the academic and language development of ELs. Opportunities to learn about, engage in, and reflect on not simply being a teacher of a specific content area or a teacher of young children, but also being a teacher of ELs could promote the development of a teacher workforce that values and identifies itself as attentive to the academic and language development of EL students.

**Recommendations for Teacher Education Research**

The findings of this study suggest that research on teacher identity among teachers of ELs can provide insight into the way teachers understand their professional selves and the implications this has for the educative experiences of their students. A
limitation of this study was that it investigated teacher identity over the course of only one semester. Future research on teacher identity could examine the construction of teacher identity over a longer period of time to provide insight on how teachers construct their professional selves over time. Researchers could consider how one’s professional self is constructed (and reconstructed) as teacher candidates engage in preservice learning, transition into being novice educators, and become veteran educators in later years of practice.

This study also suggests that research should investigate teacher identity in non-instructional contexts. I observed the participants only within the context of formal instruction. Although I observed each participant teaching different content areas (math, language arts, science, and social studies), by and large the enactment of the teachers’ professional identities was much more similar than different across all the participants. Routines, procedures, discussion methods, classroom norms and rules were conducted in a similar fashion. Yet, the discourses provided by the participants suggest that their enactment of professional self with others (parents and colleagues) differed. As discussed in chapter four, the participants constructed relationships with members of the school community as serving different purposes.

Given the emphasis on the enactment of professional self through engagement with these other members of the school community, research is needed to examine how teacher identity is constructed in non-instructional contexts. Examining teachers’ enactments of their teacher identities in the contexts of grade level meetings, PLCs, faculty meetings, and engagement with parents would offer insight regarding ways that
teachers’ professional identities attend to ELs outside of formal instruction and how this insight can be used to better promote the development of professional identities through which teachers utilize these relationships and spaces of enactment to promote ELs’ academic and language development. Such work would provide an understanding of how teachers collectively construct the needs and interest of ELs. Further, given that the findings of this study are limited to teachers of young children in the Northeastern United States, it would be productive to examine how professional identities of mainstream teachers of ELs are constructed among teachers in rural contexts and in other parts of the U.S. More research is needed to examine how teachers in different contexts construct their professional identities and how (or if) these identities support academic and language development of ELs. Such work would contribute to an understanding of how the composition of various elements in differing geographic, grade, and school contexts are related to the construction of teachers’ identities and the implications for the educative experiences of students.

The final recommendation is for greater methodological variation in teacher identity research. This dissertation study contributes to the knowledge base on teacher identity and, specifically, mainstream early childhood teacher identities. While analysis of teachers’ discourses is a productive means of investigating teacher identity, the findings of this study are not generalizable to the larger population of teachers of ELs. In order to gain insight on how teacher identities are constructed and on the composition of elements that may productively contribute to teacher identities attentive to ELs, more quantitative and mixed method research is needed. Such studies could shed light on
elements that influence teacher identity not only among teachers of young children, but adolescents and young adults as well. This research could also extend to higher education faculty and how they identify as teachers of linguistically diverse students and as teacher educators who prepare future mainstream teachers of ELs. Such studies could examine contextual variables to determine whether they influence the construction of teacher identity in statistically significant ways—for example, whether there are significant correlations between the enactment of particular practices that support ELs and elements of teachers’ identities.

**A Final Reflection**

Throughout my teaching career I have worked with teachers from diverse backgrounds and in all phases of the professional continuum. During the early years of my practice, I had the opportunity to observe a colleague during a shared reading lesson. I sat in the rear of the classroom and watched as she presented a big book to the students who were seated cross-legged around her. She presented the text with enthusiasm and previewed the narrative by turning the pages, calling attention to details in the illustrations, and guiding the students through a pre-reading conversation. As she began reading the text itself, she came across the name of the main character, Jorge. She paused, and rather than read “Jorge”, she said “George.” I recall being struck by this amendment to the text and failed to understand its rationale. Although the students (young children) may have not recognized this move on their teacher’s part, I could not help but wonder if such an action was symptomatic of a denial of linguistic and cultural diversity in American classrooms.
This incident stuck with me as I continued in my career as a teacher. My teaching experiences in an urban context and my own socio-cultural background and identity supported a reflective disposition wherein I questioned who I was/am as teacher and what purpose my teaching serves. Given my work with culturally and linguistically diverse students, I frequently posed questions in relation to them and their educative experiences. I cannot help but wonder in what ways other teachers understand themselves and how this understanding contributes to what they do in the classroom and within the school community. I wondered what the renaming of Jorge as George suggests about a teacher and a teacher’s role when she/he diminishes the representation of diversity in instructional activities. Who is such an individual in relation to her or his professional self, and in what ways does such a construction attend to or ignore the learning experiences and inclusion of students in the classroom?

In contrast to such a flagrant disregard for cultural and linguistic diversity, the participants in this study were teachers who, despite not possessing formal insight on how best to attend to ELs and promote language and academic achievement, nevertheless were conscious of the need to include these students within the classroom community and actively sought means to make them feel comfortable there. It seems reasonable to assume that professional identities that include such values may be much more receptive to the adoption of pedagogical practices that affirm ELs than the teacher who apparently could not bring herself to read a story about Jorge. Yet a single action such the one taken by that educator should not be used to classify or label her in any one way. Who a teacher is should not be reduced to an isolated act or practice, but instead be considered
as a constellation of elements within a particular context that surface in various spaces of enactment. Ultimately, should the educational community seek to promote a teaching workforce that identifies as linguistically responsive, efforts need to be directed not solely towards teachers themselves, but to all members of the education community. Potentially, if policy makers, teacher educators, school leaders and other stakeholders engage in a shared vision of supporting the affirming inclusion of ELs in all classrooms, the construction of teacher identities that include the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of linguistically responsive teachers may become the norm rather than the exception.
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