

IN CONSIDERATION OF MICROPOLITICS: EARLY CAREER TEACHERS'
EXPERIENCES IN TEACHER COMMUNITIES

by

MADISON GANNON

(Under the Direction of Sara Kajder)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents case studies of early career teachers' experiences within their teacher communities. Given that nearly half of all teachers decide to leave the profession within their first five years, this inquiry examines the ways in which early career teachers are mentored and supported into their specific contexts. And so, the cases explore the early career teachers' interactions with colleagues, how they positioned themselves within their department and grade level teams, and also their understanding of the significance of external forces on their teacher community. The cross-case analysis is presented using micropolitical constructs of professional needs and micropolitical literacy to determine the ways in which early career teachers read and navigate their schools and teacher communities. The findings demonstrate how formal and informal mentors play a critical role in early career teachers' induction and their professional needs. Organizational needs can indicate early career teachers' feeling of if and how they see themselves fitting into their community. Cultural-ideological needs, or the beliefs and normative behaviors within the teacher community, can also indicate compatibility if early career teachers hold different perspectives on how the teachers within their community should engage with one another or do not align with one another's beliefs. Material needs are important for early career

teachers because they help clarify their beliefs regarding planning and instruction and also function as a mechanism for reading the teaching styles and practices of their colleagues. Personal needs are wrapped up in early career teachers' politics of identity, and, specifically, how moments of affirmation, vulnerability, and visibility can support or hinder early career teachers' feeling connected to their teacher community. All of these professional needs are situated within the professional relationships that early career teachers have with their colleagues. This work closes by naming implications for teacher preparation programs, school-based induction programs, and mentors and colleagues in pursuit of a more robust mentoring and induction process for early career teachers that will encourage teachers to stay in the profession. Overall, this dissertation suggests the need to consider micropolitics in how we train, support, and sustain teachers.

INDEX WORDS: Case study, Early career teacher, Induction, Mentoring, Micropolitics, Teacher community

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Sean, whose continuous encouragement held me up through the doctoral program and motherhood and to William and Henry whose little lives joined me during this journey and brought me immense joy.

In loving memory of GG, whose unmatched love and kindness I think of daily.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My First Meeting as a Teacher

“We don’t teach with novels here, we aren’t allowed.”

In my first grade-level planning meeting as a middle school English language arts teacher, my department chair and evaluating assistant principal shared this district mandate with me as we reviewed the curriculum map for the year. In this meeting, there was no room for me to voice my opinion or share my ideas on what and how we should teach. Given my training and my commitment to cultivate life-long readers, I was unsure how to respond. I was caught off guard to find my mentors had apparently accepted a district mandate which undercut our professional practice in highly problematic ways. On the car ride home from work that day, I called my mom, a 25 year-veteran teacher at the time, to retell her that I learned that my English department didn’t allow teachers to teach with full novels. Her response, “Do the other teachers put up with that?”

You see, my mom’s experience as a veteran teacher led her to be confident in teaching the way she felt was right, even if that meant dismissing the expectations placed on her and her teaching team. I did not feel the same as a first-year teacher. In fact, after the initial shock wore off, I begrudgingly followed orders. It wasn’t until the end of my third year of teaching that I had finally convinced my department and administration to allow us to teach a novel. When I rolled the cart with toppled stacks of “The Outsiders”—the chosen text from the limited selection in our

book room—into my third period class, students stopped in their tracks and responded with excitement, “we get to read a book?”

This experience has fueled my interest in researching the experiences of early career teachers. My teacher community’s established beliefs, normative behaviors, and shared goals are tightly woven into that message above, all of which I was unprepared to unpack as a first-year teacher. The no book policy led me to regularly experience tension during grade-level and department meetings around appropriate English language arts curriculum, what we were preparing students for, and whether teachers could be trusted to make decisions. Further, these were conversations that I, as an early career teacher, had to “earn” a place in shaping all while following the lead of colleagues whose mentorship was shaped by their own experiences, needs, curricula, and commitments. I was not just learning curricular expectations; I was learning hidden boundaries and expectations around what it meant for me to teach within this context.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher Shortage

My experience was problematic, but it is not just unique to my path through this particular school. In fact, the confusion and deprofessionalization that early career teachers experience when working in schools is a contributing factor to their departure from the field. We know that the teacher shortage problem is not a new phenomenon, yet, since the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve witnessed a new wave of media attention on teacher burnout and turnover. Let’s look at some numbers. The National Education Association (NEA) conducted a survey in 2022 that found 55 percent of educators were thinking about leaving the profession earlier than they had anticipated (Walker, 2022). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a net loss of

600,000 teachers between January 2020 and February 2022, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating the already difficult working conditions (Walker, 2022).

Ultimately, these numbers demonstrate what we already know, we do not have enough teachers. In response, the NEA suggested ways to combat teacher shortage and burnout including but not limited to increasing salaries, giving student mental health supports, hiring more teachers and staff, and decreasing the amount of paperwork (Walker, 2022). However, these solutions overlook the fact that people are less likely to enter the profession or remain in the field given systemic and context-specific conditions within schools which are leading to vacancies which, trained, certified teachers avoid. In a systematic review of teacher shortages, Nguyen et al. (2022)¹ reported the state of Georgia– the location of this study– to have 3,112 teacher positions that were unable to be filled in the year 2020. As no changes have been made across the state in regards to teacher compensation or professional support, those numbers are likely to increase. That said, a Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) member survey cited five reasons that teachers stayed following the 2021-22 school year with one of the reasons being supportive colleagues and having a positive work environment (Flamini & Wang, 2024). Podolsky and colleagues (2016) also reported that teachers’ “connectedness to team” and having opportunity to collaborate are strong indicators for staying in the field (para. 13). This suggests that teachers’ experiences with their colleagues matter and, as this study will begin to complicate, the micropolitical landscape of their schools matter.

¹ Nguyen et al. (2022) explain the difficulty in using data to determine and explain teacher shortages due to lack of data. I experienced similar difficulty in obtaining data on teacher retention and shortages for the 2023-24 academic school year.

Early Career Teachers Entering (and Leaving) the Profession

The predominant pathway into the teaching profession is through teacher certification undergraduate and graduate programs. From 2008-09 to 2020-21, teacher preparation programs in the state of Georgia experienced a 36.7 percent decline in enrollment and an eight percent decrease from the 2019-20 to 2020-21 school year (Will, 2023). Once enrolled in teacher education programs, few gain authentic experiences interacting with colleagues and navigating the micropolitical landscape of their placement schools due to limited clinical practice placements and experiences. The traditional requirement is a single semester of student teaching, an immersive semester in which the teacher takes on increasing teacher responsibilities under the guidance of a mentor teacher. Unless their mentor teacher is required to provide opportunities to interact with colleagues in the building during the student teaching semester, preservice teachers may not get the chance to attend larger community, let alone be invited to contribute or actively participate rather than simply observe. Even in programs which offer year-long placements, the construction of the first semester (typically in the fall) limits the amount of time preservice teachers spend at the placement site, preventing their attendance in department and grade level meetings. In other words, preservice teachers are given little opportunity in both reading and engaging in their practicum school contexts as micropolitical contexts because they are typically bound to the mentor teacher's classroom with that mentor, or a university supervisor, serving as a filter which limits their exposure to the larger school culture and micropolitical structures.

Following program completion, the newly certified teacher enters their first teaching position without the supports of a mentor teacher, a university supervisor, and the protections that student teaching affords. They are left with feelings of isolation (Lortie, 1975) and “practice shock” (Kelchtermans, 2019; Veenman, 1984) much like I did in my first year. This occurs even

in contexts which tout robust induction programs and new teacher mentoring that include things orientation, instructional coaching, emotional support, community membership, and supportive administrators (Keese et al., 2023).

Again, the numbers demand that we attend to teacher attrition, especially in early career teachers. In 2018, Ingersoll and his colleagues reported that 44 percent of public and private teachers left teaching within their first five years. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that in the 2021-22 school year, public school teachers within their first three years of teaching were the category of teachers least likely to stay teaching in their same school the following year (NCES, 2024). They reported 80 percent of early career teachers stayed at their school, while 13 percent moved to another school, and seven percent left teaching altogether (NCES, 2023). Similar to my own experience, these numbers suggest that 20 percent of early career teachers find themselves in a work environment that is either not adequately supporting their induction into the profession which is misaligned with their training and beliefs about teaching.

There is a rich literature base which describes early career teachers learning to work within the organizational needs of schools considering things like societal needs as well as school culture and micropolitics (Aspfors & Bondas, 2013; Casparsan & Raan, 2014; Curry et al., 2008; Kelchtermans, 2019). From this, we know that the teaching environment is important, but the number of early career teachers leaving the field urges us to take a closer look at how early career teachers read and navigate what is happening inside of their school spaces. This study offers the cases of two early career teachers, Colleen and Kelsey, as they navigate their schools, consider their position inside of their schools, and work to read and navigate the professional communities in which they worked and taught.

Background and Rationale

Despite decades of research on early career teachers that looks at their “practice shock,” teacher retention, induction programs and mentoring, and even learning to teach in a micropolitical environment (Kelchtermans, 2019, p. 84), I found that my own experience and that of the preservice and early career teachers I work with still document struggles within teacher community contexts. As an early career teacher myself, one of my main frustrations in my first year of teaching was the expectations placed on my grade-level team and my colleagues’ responses to those expectations. I found myself in a teacher community that did not question school directives when we knew that they did not follow the best teaching practice. I also found it exhausting dealing with the department drama. In other words, despite my extensive training as a preservice teacher, I was not prepared to engage with the other teachers in my school, especially not in a way that allowed me to shift the beliefs or practices of my community. Similarly, a participant in the pilot study for this dissertation reported that she felt prepared to handle the students and all the planning involved in teaching, but was never taught how to “deal with the adults” in her building (Gannon, 2023). In summary, research, statistics, and personal experience suggests early career teachers’ experiences with their colleagues and work environment are worthy of further examination if we want to reimagine the way we support early career teachers’ induction into the profession and, as such, increase the likelihood that they stay in the profession. This study aims to do just that.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine early career teachers’ experiences within their teacher communities in order to imagine how we might better support early career teachers’ induction. This inquiry specifically looks at how two early career high school teachers position

themselves in their grade-level teaching teams and in their ELA departments as well as the ways in which they make sense of the external demands placed on their teacher communities. Given the number of studies that have taken up early career teachers experiences in their school's organization system (Achinstein, 2006; Aspfors & Bondas, 2013; Caspersen & Raan; Curry et al., 2008; Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002a,b; Kelchtermans & Vanassche, 2017), this study is not exploring a new phenomenon per se. Rather, it adds to the existing literature by offering two year-long, nascent accounts of early career teachers learning how to teach while also learning to read their school contexts in the post-COVID-19 climate of education.

Study Design and Research Questions

Using case study methodology (Merriam, 1988), this dissertation presents cases of two high school early career teachers in their English language arts (ELA) teacher communities. The following questions guided this inquiry:

1. How do early career teachers interpret their experiences in their teacher community?
2. How do early career teachers perceive their position in their teacher community?

The cases are constructed from interviews and reflective writing from each early career teacher along with observations of department and grade level meetings, secondary interviews with their colleagues and artifacts received, discussed or created in department and/or grade level meetings. Data was collected across the 2023-24 academic school year. Assertions about early career teachers' experiences in their teacher communities are built from these two cases and presented through the lens of micropolitical theory to demonstrate ways in which early career teachers engage in reading their teacher communities as an organizational system and determine if and how their professional needs align to that system.

Definition of Terms

Before we dive in, let's define some of the key terms used throughout this study. First, I use the term **early career teacher** (ECT for the remainder of the work) rather than novice teacher because of the way it moves away from the deficit-framing of these individuals as lacking experience or knowledge and instead it recognizes their potential as networkers and change agents in their schools (Kelchtermans, 2019). To maintain this framing, I have substituted the term novice for early career when referencing other research unless the term novice is used in a direct quote. Some of the research within chapter two defines early career to capture the first five years of teaching. While they are still used in the literature review, I align with the NCES data and consider teachers in their first three years of teaching to be early in their career. As a result, timespan guides the perimeters of the recruitment.

I use the term **teacher community** to describe a group of teachers that come to reflect on their instructional practice, collaborate on curriculum, problem solve to improve student learning, and provide emotional and professional support to one another. Teacher communities often share either the same content and grade level or the same group of students. In other words, I would classify a 10th grade ELA teaching team as a teaching community just as I would a group of 6th grade teachers with different content specialties who all share the same set of 6th graders. Depending on the practice of a specific content area department, it could also function as a teacher community. With the focus of this inquiry being on ECTs and their experiences, I also consider teachers in the school that work regularly with the ECTs' teacher communities (i.e., instructional coaches, ESOL teachers, and Special Education teachers) to be relevant to this study because they too work with the ECTs and their colleagues towards the specific goals I defined above.

Micropolitical theory is used as an analytical lens to make sense of the cases. Chapter two will dive into micropolitics more thoroughly, but to define it succinctly here, I understand school micropolitics to involve school personnel's use of power, influence, and motivation to achieve their desired school environment. In other words, teachers pursue their professional needs within the organization system of their school and that pursuit impacts those around them, including ECTs.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter has presented a broad overview of what drives this research as well as defined some key terms used within the study. Chapter two will describe existing literature on ECTs' experiences and teacher communities. It will also further detail key understandings within micropolitical theory that are used as analytical constructs throughout this work. Chapter three grounds this work in case study methodology, reviewing key tenants of the methodology and goes into detail regarding the methods taken across the study. Chapters four and five offer the individual cases of the ECTs, both of which detail key actors and events within the cases which are organized to reflect the first few stages of analysis. Next, chapter six puts these cases in conversation with one another while using micropolitical theoretical concepts to offer and discuss assertions on ECTs' experiences in teacher communities grounded in the cross-case analysis. Finally, chapter seven includes implications for those in the field training, mentoring, and interacting with ECTs while also describing some benefits, limitations, and next steps for research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the need to examine ECTs' experiences in their schools and teacher communities using micropolitical theory. To do so, this chapter first reviews key tenets of micropolitical theory and then complicates some micropolitical conceptual frameworks that have been used previously to better understand ECTs' experiences. From there, this chapter will use a micropolitical lens to review literature related to how ECTs are socialized into their teacher communities, followed by how ECTs are inducted and mentored in the field, and finally how these experiences interplay with what their purpose is and who they believe they are as teachers—their teacher identity.

Micropolitical Theory

Micropolitical theory began to be applied to education organizations in the mid-1970s (Blase, 1991). A micropolitical perspective of an organization breaks away from more traditional organization theories that “highlight clear and shared values and goals, formal power arrangements” (Achinstein, 2002, p. 423). Instead, educational researchers began to use micropolitical theories to consider individuals' experiences, behavior, and purpose within school organizations (Achinstein, 2002; Blase, 1991). Before exploring micropolitics further, let's first situate the idea of politics more generally. According to Johnson (2001) politics can be defined

as the decisions humans make regarding the allocation of valued resources which are informed by varied interests and partisan values and are therefore “conflict-ridden” (p.119). Politics can also be viewed through three processes: 1) management of disorder, 2) allocation of valued resources among people, and 3) actions to resolve conflicting values regarding those resources (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). Micropolitics, then, refers to the specific activities and strategies that individuals in organizations use to allocate scarce and valued resources (Johnson, 2001) and to pursue optimal working conditions which Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) refer to as professional interests. As such, micropolitics deals with issues of power, conflict, competition, cooperation, and emotion of individuals within organizations (Blase, 1991).

Micropolitics aims to understand the people and their actions within a school as that is what makes up the organizational system. Ball (1994) argues, “micropolitics is about relationships rather than structures, knowledge rather than information, skills rather than positions, verbal interaction rather than minutes and memos” (p. 3822, as cited in Kelchtermans & Vanassche, 2017). And so, micropolitics in educational contexts recognizes the individual teachers, administrators, support staffs’ role in communities by acknowledging individuals’ meaning-making and actions taken in service of their own interests that interplays with the school’s organizational system. Researchers have explored various educational stakeholders’ micropolitical roles and experiences including that of administrators (Lindle, 1994; Uline et al., 2003), parents (Blase, 1991), school faculty (Achinstein, 2002), mentors (Achinstein, 2006), teachers (Keranen & Encinas Prudencio, 2014), preservice teachers (Ehrich& Millwater, 2011) and ECTs (Curry et al., 2008; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b). This study will add to literature capturing ECTs’ micropolitical experiences.

Blase (1991) emphasizes that teachers leverage their formal and informal power to achieve particular goals and are often motivated to “influence and/or protect” their school” (p. 11). So, not only do teachers come to their teacher communities with different levels of experience and training, these differences manifest in different ways of participating in those communities. For example, veteran teachers may not look at their department or grade-level PLC as spaces for continued learning because they are confident in their current practice or do not feel change is needed. Some teachers, like those in leadership who are charged with implementing new school initiatives or upholding particular curriculum expectations, may approach their teacher community as a space to get their colleagues on board with those expectations. Other teachers may look to their teacher community as a place to save time by collaborating, sharing materials, and supporting one another while others may see it as a waste of time if their personal goals for their teaching practice do not align with the other teachers. Meanwhile, ECTs must read their colleagues’ goals for and actions within their teacher community and determine how and if they can fit within the existing community—all of which is deeply micropolitical.

Micropolitics and ECTs

Kelchtermans and Vanassche (2017) explain that research on micropolitics with preservice and ECTs primarily sits within three major themes. The first involves the negotiation tactics teachers used when being socialized into their schools like when Ehrich and Millwater (2011) found preservice teachers using conflictual and consensual strategies for collaborating with their mentor teachers. The second considers preservice and ECTs professional interests like in Kelchtermans and Ballet’s (2002b) work which will be elaborated on next. Finally, the last examines the communication involved in micropolitics as when Curry et al. (2008) found first-

year teacher inquiry groups to be an effective site for teachers to socially develop their micropolitical literacy.

Some useful theoretical perspectives guiding this study come out of Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002a, 2002b) work which argues for the importance of ECTs developing micropolitical literacies in order to successfully navigate the socio-political expectations related to their practice. Working with teachers who had surpassed their early years in the field, the researchers also conceptualized professional interests or the "desirable or necessary working conditions" that were at stake for ECTs given the micropolitical landscape of their schools (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b, p. 108). These interests act as a framework "through which [ECTs] observe, give meaning to and react to experiences, situations and conditions in the teaching job" (Kelchtermans, 2019, p. 88). The ECTs professional interests were grouped into five categories.

The first was their self-interests which focused on their professional identity including their affirmation, vulnerability, and visibility. In line with the literature that suggests the importance of ECTs cultivating a teacher identity (Alsup, 2006), Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) also argue that "when one's identity as a teacher, one's professional self-esteem or one's task perception are threatened by the professional context, then personal needs emerge" (p. 110). Essentially, ECTs develop "self-interests" that aim to protect their identities as emerging professionals. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) talk about ECTs "proactively" seeking opportunities to prove themselves as professionals and to be recognized as such by influential members in their community (p. 111). Identifying this pursuit as a "politics of identity," (Kelchtermans, 1996) the researchers explain that wanting a strong perception of oneself as a

teacher both in the eyes of oneself and others is part of an optimal working environment (p. 111). Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002b) professional needs offer clarity around the specific forms of awareness and actions teachers might take while reading and writing themselves into their teacher community. This process reflects similar processes captured in the literature—that will be discussed in more detail later—like the theoretical construct of “borderland discourse” that Alsop (2006) argued as a necessary process for teachers to see themselves as teachers.

The second was their material interests which referred to having access to teaching materials, spaces and resources in the building, and time to meet with colleagues. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) argue that ECTs' view their teaching materials as an opportunity to show off their “professional competence” which suggests that those materials work into a “micropolitical agenda of self-presentation” (p. 112-113). The authors also contend that teaching materials have micropolitical importance in that they “carry with them as a symbolical load a normative idea about good teaching and, as such, are meaningful artefacts that either converge or conflict with the dominant school culture” (p. 113).

The third category—the organizational interests—considered their search for a position in a school. Next, cultural-ideological interests referred to the schools' norms, values, and beliefs “that get acknowledged in the school as legitimate and binding elements of the school culture” (p. 114). Finally, the fifth category, the social professional interests, focused on interpersonal relationships within the school, which Kelchtermans and Ballet explained as very important to ECTs.

Kelchtermans and Ballet's professional interest framework was helpful to an extent when trying to make sense of the cases and data in this study. However, the cases here will illustrate that the term "interests" falls short in conveying how micropolitics impact not only ECTs' ability to achieve their optimal work environment, but also their psychological well-being as they come to understand who they can be as teachers given their school's context. As such, this study employs the same conceptual categories as Kelchtermans and Ballet's framework (organizational, cultural-ideological, material, personal, and social-professional) but labels them as "needs" when analyzing the experiences of the ECTs in this study. Changing the term in this way allows us to convey the deep emotional toll micropolitics has on teachers. Indeed, it is one dilemma for ECTs or any teacher for that matter to not have their optimal working environment, but it is a whole different problem for ECTs to not have their needs met because it has consequences for if they see themselves as being fit for the profession and/or their school. Questions of whose professional needs get met is deeply micropolitical and matter for how we socialize ECTs into the profession.

To clarify, professional needs describe the ways in which ECTs clarify their own needs which are understood in relation to their understanding of the micropolitics of their school. Using their micropolitical literacy, ECTs may read their school's organizational characteristics like noting which teachers have power to make decisions and from there they decide if they agree with those who have power and if they feel like they can fit within their grade-level or department hierarchy. Similarly, as ECTs spend more time in their schools, they understand which of their professional material needs are being met like the resources they are given and

also how their daily schedule allows for time for planning and meeting with mentors and colleagues.

Another micropolitical concept used as an analytical tool in this study is micropolitical literacy. ECTs' micropolitical literacy refers to their ability to read and respond to their school's micropolitical context given their professional needs (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a). Micropolitical literacy involves three major aspects of micropolitical literacies: 1) knowledge, 2) operational, and 3) experiential. The knowledge aspect of micropolitical literacy entailed the teacher being able to read their situation including issues of power and interests. The operational aspect involved the actions and strategies teachers take in pursuit of their optimal working condition. Finally, the experiential aspect referred to whether or not the teacher was satisfied with their micropolitical literacy which often can be portrayed through intense emotions. As ECTs engage micropolitical literacy practices they are able to think more critically about the power of administration (Davis, 2020; Early & Shagoury, 2010; Scherff & Hahs-Vaughn, 2008; Skerrett et al., 2018), parents (Davis, 2020; Knotts, 2016; Scherff et al., 2006; Scherff, 2008; Sutton, 2009), media (Early & Shagoury, 2010), federal policies (Scherff et al., 2006), corporate reform (Knotts, 2016), and standards and accountability mandates (Connors & Bengston, 2020; Davis, 2020; Hungerford-Kresser & Vetter, 2017; Sutton, 2009).

Teacher Communities

Educational researchers have long been interested in the idea of teachers working in communities to combat the frequently cited isolated nature of teaching (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; Lortie, 1975) and to understand how to promote collaboration among teachers to increase

professional learning and student learning (Grossman et al., 2001). Research on teacher communities use community of practice, teacher learning communities, and professional learning communities synonymously to describe communities with shared goals of improving teaching and student learning. Grossman and her colleagues (2001) posited that teacher communities must concern themselves with developing their professional practice that impacts student learning and also continue teachers' intellectual development in their subject matter content. In a later comprehensive review of research and reform around teacher professional learning communities, Westheimer (2008) identified six goals these communities strive for:

(1) improve teacher practice so students will learn; (2) make ideas matter to both teachers and students by creating a culture of intellectual inquiry; (3) develop teacher learning about leadership and school management; (4) promote teacher learning among ECT teachers; (5) reduce alienation as a precondition for teacher learning; and (6) pursue social justice and democracy. (p. 759)

Notice how one of the six goals listed pays specific attention to the growth of ECTs, which should, in part, involve understanding and meeting their professional needs. Unfortunately, research has shown that this is not always the case. In fact, many ECTs want teacher communities that include more mentoring and support (McCann et al., 2005; Sutton, 2009) and a more effective collaborative space to talk curriculum and learn from one another (Davis, 2020; Scherff, 2008). Some ECTs lack any formal induction and mentoring and relied on getting sporadic advice from department chairs or teachers next door (Knotts, 2016; Scherff & Hahs-Vaughn, 2008) while others receive advice from colleagues to not do anything that could make waves with administration or parents (Sutton, 2009). ECTs want more direction about their

instruction from colleagues and instead find common planning times as a space that focus on discussing student behaviors and managing crises (Sutton, 2009). Or they find that once they proven themselves to be efficient in early observations, they were essentially left alone (McCann et al., 2005; Scherff et al., 2006; Sutton, 2009). More harsh collegial environments also exist; in one study, an English department is described as “unkind and hateful” by multiple members in the school (Scherff, 2008, p. 1326) and in another, the teacher’s colleagues reportedly mocked her input in planning meetings (Sutton, 2009). Scherff’s (2008) work described a critical shift in ECTs’ experience moving from teacher preparation to first year teaching. She explained how one teacher rarely interacted with her assigned mentor, which was even more difficult after experiencing the benefits of a collaborative community within her teacher education cohort, commenting that “knowing how valuable and enriching those conversations were, to be missing them now, was even more detrimental” (Scherff, 2008, p. 1327). It should be noted that not all of the ECTs’ experiences in their teacher communities cited in the literature were inherently negative. In fact, some ECTs’ did experience a teacher community that functioned to deepen the strategies and theories that guided the teachers’ practice (Bickmore, 2013).

Before moving further into the micropolitics, clarification on how this inquiry conceptualizes ECTs’ teacher communities is needed. I understand a teacher community as a group of teachers that share time and space in order to collaborate on curriculum, reflect on instructional practice and student performance, and provide personal and professional social emotional support. In many cases, a teacher’s community is composed of teachers who teach the same content area or grade-level (i.e., department and grade-level teams). However, teachers may see other faculty members as part of their community due to proximity in the building or

personal compatibility. For instance, ECTs may view their assigned mentor as a key player in their teacher community. Ultimately, a teacher's community is uniquely influenced by the organizational features of the school and building and also the teachers' investment in and compatibility with the colleagues in which they are expected to work. In other words, just because an administrator places three 9th grade ELA teachers on a teaching team, does not mean that each of those teachers individually will turn to one another and the community space to collaborate and reap benefits. Instead, there is an annual re-evaluation and re-commitment to working within one's "assigned" teacher community. Given the unique position and needs of ECTs, a closer look at their experiences and perceptions of their teacher communities is warranted.

Micropolitical Nature of Teacher Communities

What the literature on ECTs' experiences in their teacher communities demonstrates is that teacher communities are in fact micropolitical spaces where members, especially ECTs, have to determine what is the common practices of its members including the hierarchies of power, and from there refine their own professional needs given who they work with. Siskin (2014) argues that secondary departments specifically are "micro-political arenas where critical 'material endowments' of funding, time, and space are 'defended' and distributed (p. 113). Departments also play a role in how ECTs' professional needs are met because they play a role in how resources are accumulated and allocated. In addition, Siskin describes that different departments within schools may have more advantages over others and can "pass along" the resources they are given equitably among members or inequitably and create internal hierarchies. Departments give its members social rewards like "support, sympathy, suggestions and humor," but also have

the ability to give or withhold more tangible rewards like the ability to teach certain courses or students, what time of day those courses are taught, where their rooms are located, and the materials they receive (p. 114). The distribution of these more tangible resources are micro-political decisions that can leave the newest members, ECTs, with the least wanted resources.

Since departments and teacher communities are inherently micropolitical, interacting with colleagues is a political act that requires forms of teacher diplomacy such as having control of self, being friendly, and offering support which contrasts negative and sometimes necessary forms more related to preserving oneself or causing confrontation (Blase, 1987). When teacher communities, and those that lead them, are equitable, supportive, friendly, and facilitative, then the members felt an increased cohesion that “seemed to be linked to increases in support (e.g., sharing materials, cooperative problem solving), socializing, and trust” (Blase, 1987, p. 296). On the other hand, the micropolitical nature of teacher communities will inevitably result in conflict from unclear or overlapping types of authority (Blase, 1991), negotiation of scarce and valued resources (Johnson, 2001; Marshall & Scribner, 1991), and also differences in shared needs, experience, and obligation for and to the community (Ball, 2011).

Teacher Communities and Conflict

Studies have cited a variety of conflicts teachers navigate within their communities ranging from colleagues disrupting their class time (Achinstein, 2002; Craig et al., 2014) to misalignment or tensions in members’ pedagogical traditions that undergird teachers’ decisions around student learning (Bickmore et al., 2005; Schiera, 2021; Smagorinsky, 2015; Williamson & Warrington, 2019). Teachers can have conflicting expectations for how to engage with one

another ranging from collaborative preferences to keeping to themselves (Schaap et al., 2019). Conflict can occur during changes in the community whether it regarded changes in personnel that complicate leadership roles (Gunn & King, 2003; Malen & Vincent Cochran, 2015) and perceptions of practice (Flores, 2007) or the introduction of new policies or mandates (Craig et al., 2014; Malen & Vincent Cochran, 2015). Tension around the purpose and practice of a teacher community can be felt even more so when changes in who are members in that community occur.

As ECTs join a community, there is potential for the ECTs to disrupt the teacher community's current process by asking the more experienced teachers to reconsider their teaching practices causing a "disjuncture in their professional identity" when they want to be both an expert but are also presented with "new and unfamiliar pedagoges" (Brody & Hadar, 2015, p. 262). This could occur because ECTs value pedagogical approaches taught when learning to teach that conflict with the teachers' practices in their new community (Bickmore et al., 2005; Schiera, 2021; Williamson & Warrington, 2019). For instance, Flores (2007) explored the conflict between two sets of teachers teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in high-need schools: early-career teachers guided by social justice teaching practices versus their veteran colleagues who were guided by more traditional pedagogies. Some of the conflicts between the "newcomers" and "old-timers" that Flores (2007) described occurred when less experienced teachers took on leadership roles by joining unions in order to participate in policy decision making or when they voiced critical questions around district assessments mandates. Flores argues that these inexperienced, yet successful teachers, were relying on their personal experience and theoretical underpinnings of their preparation programs to pursue social justice

teaching while their colleagues were perhaps jaded by their experience in underprivileged schools which kept “them from recognizing what they could offer to or learn from one another” (p. 400).

Nonetheless, micropolitical theorists believe that conflict is an essential component of community (Achinstein, 2002, Blase, 1995) because the social structures of the communities in schools inevitably result in “ongoing tensions and rivalries, conflicts and realignments” (Ball, 2011, p. 213). Given this, Achinstein (2002) argues that by studying conflict, we are better positioned to understand how communities “form, cope, and are sustained overtime” (p. 422). In fact, the idealistic emphasis of teacher communities as contexts for collaboration (Scribner et al., 2002) fails to recognize the complex mix of beliefs and intentions that teachers bring to their work (Grossman et al., 2001) because in reality teachers are more likely to avoid conflict as opposed to facing it (Malen & Vincent Cochran, 2015) despite its inevitability and potential for learning and growth. Therefore, conflict and tension should not be solely viewed as a positive or negative phenomena (Achinstein, 2002) and can be helpful for mentoring ECTs on how to productively participate in their context through creating specific structures that welcome dialogue around conflicts (Uline et al., 2003) while also avoiding power hierarchies between veterans and ECTs (Eschar-Netz & Vedder-Weiss, 2021).

Research on teacher communities, then, should seek to understand how “strains and tensions that stem from diverse sources of power, rival interests, and intractable conflicts within and around schools” affects school’s ability to navigate “educational and social issues” (Marshall & Scribner, 1991, p. 352). In other words, by considering schools and teacher communities as spaces where teachers’ professional needs can conflict with one another, then we can better

understand how to address the persistent problems the members in those spaces face. Therefore, in this study, I see ECTs' experiences in their teacher communities particularly regarding conflicting interests as a useful place to identify how to support ECTs' experiences during induction.

Teacher Communities and Policy

Another indicator of the micropolitical nature of teacher communities is how they have been found to be influential in how teachers take up internal and external policy mandates. Multiple studies discuss disruptions to teachers' communities that occurred because of a new policy, mandate, or reform that influenced how teachers were expected to do their job or how their teacher community was expected to operate (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2016; Coburn & Stein, 2006; Craig et al., 2014; Malen & Vincent-Cochran, 2015). Essentially, teachers have to consider how internal and external policies impact their own professional needs while also navigating how their colleagues are negotiating these policies, both of which require micropolitical decision making (i.e., micropolitical literacy). Teachers have to negotiate what is possible for themselves and their teacher community given their existing practice and beliefs (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Hungerford-Kresser & Vetter, 2017). Unsurprisingly, Malen and Vincent Cochran (2015) warned of how larger federal policies may limit localized power or "site actors" like in the case of accountability measures asking principals and teachers to meet particular requirements that limit their ability to make decisions about practice.

The Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching reports the impact that specific subject departments in high schools have the ability to influence individual

member's experiences with implementing policy even more than the larger school community (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). In fact, this report argues that professional teacher communities have the ability to “constrain or facilitate” policy reform in part because these communities are the contexts in which teachers learn and grow their practice (p. 18). Knowing this, we, as a field, must also reckon with the ways in which departments and grade level teacher communities influence ECTs' understanding of who they can be as teachers in their specific school context, especially because of the way this can shift within different contexts (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). For example, Connors and Bengtson (2020) described two ECTs' experience with conflict between how they wanted to teach and how they felt pressured to match the school's vision of teaching portrayed through prescribed curriculum and assessments related to Common Core State Standards. One of the teachers expressed how the school's mandates conflicted with how she would approach planning for student learning (i.e., pacing) and the materials she believed to be best for her students (i.e., text choice). If ECTs do not engage in micropolitical literacies practice and therefore do not realize the extent of which their teacher community molds their day-to-day teaching experiences and their larger sense of self as teacher, then we run the risk of ECTs leaving the field because they may feel their purpose and desire for teaching as not compatible to the profession at large, not just their specific context.

Induction and Mentoring

As demonstrated so far, teacher communities that ECTs step into are responsible for quite a bit of the ECTs' induction into the profession. In fact, getting advice through mentorship from colleagues in the same field across multiple different teacher community spaces (e.g., planning time and external teacher networks) has been proven to be effective in reducing teaching

turnover (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). And so, this section examines literature on induction and mentoring through a micropolitical lens.

In my own experience, I participated in a two-day orientation required of all new teachers (ECT and veteran) entering my school district and monthly professional developments for new teachers (again, ECT and veteran) to my school run by my instructional coach. I experienced a common form of induction for ECTs in that it was an organized program to help socialize me, an ECT teacher, into the professional context (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999). However, schools typically rely on mentoring programs of varying degrees as the main component of induction support for new teachers (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) with the mentors acting as “local guides” to their school (micropolitical) context (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). As such, the terms induction and mentoring are often convoluted in our field (Bullough, 2012). A few quantitative meta-analyses (Glazerman et al., 2010, Keese et al., 2023) found that there is not a significant difference between teachers with induction programs and mentoring-only programs. Nonetheless, these analyses report that mentoring and induction programs have a significant but small positive effect on teacher retention, teacher measures (i.e., self-efficacy, satisfaction, instructional effectiveness, and evaluation scores), and student outcomes (Keese et al., 2023).

While induction programs of some sort are very common, Isenberg et al. (2009) criticize the overuse of informal teacher induction and advocates for “intensive, comprehensive, structured, and sequentially delivered [programs] in response to teachers’ emerging pedagogical needs” (p. xxi). Isenberg et al.’s national report on the impacts of comprehensive teacher induction echoes Feiman-Nemser et al.’s (1999) advice to view beginning teachers as learners

from a decade prior. Feiman-Nemser and colleagues warn of designing “programs that reduce stress and address problems and concerns without necessarily promoting teacher development” (p. 9), which as the beginning of this chapter illustrates, includes their micropolitical literacy. So, the following sections highlight induction and mentoring research pertaining to how these structures support the experiences of ECTs and their professional development in systematic and sustained ways.

Induction Programs

With mentoring being the primary method in an induction program for acclimating ECTs to the field, we will look at the research specifically next. First, let’s preview other forms of support in the induction process that scholars have also considered. Scherff & Hahs-Vaughn (2008) report sixty-three percent of the ECTs in their survey participated in some form of teacher induction program. Some school districts host orientation programs geared to introducing newcomers of any experience level to the who, what, and why of their new school, while other induction programs are characterized as “systematic and sustained assistance specifically to beginning teachers for at least one school year” (Huling-Austin, 1990, p. 536).

Another valuable component of induction programs for ECTs is to provide them with opportunities for informal observations of other teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Wang et al., 2008). In fact, Wang and colleagues’ (2008) review of teacher induction bolsters the need for ECTs to have opportunities to observe teachers and be observed by colleagues, not only because they expressed this need for themselves, but also because “observations helped [ECTs] reflect on their own teaching and how students learn” (p. 138). If not, an individualistic school culture

perpetuated by teachers not being allowed to observe others' teaching paired with the physical layout of the school hampers teachers' abilities to connect in common spaces like teacher's lounges (Farrell, 2003). Therefore, administrators are influential to ECTs' experiences because they can either perpetuate isolation and or build stable faculty relationships by helping ECTs feel "committed and connected to their school settings and successful working with their student populations" (Early & Shagoury, 2010, p. 1053).

Professional development offerings that serve more experienced colleagues can also be considered a form of induction to the profession as these offerings reinforce practices and philosophies that school or district personnel value and want their faculty to pursue, which further characterizes induction programs as micropolitical contexts. In fact, Skerrett et al.'s (2018) analysis of professional development programs related to social justice pedagogies for three ECTs in their first three years of teaching offers insight for those hoping to provide additional support to ECTs beyond mentoring. They describe six generative experiences that can guide other induction programs beyond simply surviving the first year: 1) teachers identify areas of growth related to curriculum, teaching, and learning, 2) grounding content in evidence-based research and experts' practice and modeling in that content area, 3) valuing teachers' professional knowledge and expertise while also situating them as learners, 4) having the experience be sustained over time with complexity and ambition increasing as it continued, 5) teachers establishing both personal and professional relationships with colleagues as a site for collaboration, and 6) ensuring institutional supports that "enhanced teachers' senses of political power and protection, legitimacy, and agency" (p. 130). Where each of these experiences have

implications on ECTs' professional needs, the latter two involve engaging in micropolitical literacy practices.

Mentoring

As chapters four and five will illustrate, ECTs experience both formal and informal forms of mentoring. An informal form of mentoring could involve an experienced teacher dropping by a ECTs' classroom to check-in and offer support when needed, while formal mentoring could be through regularly scheduled meetings for ECTs to get assistance from an experienced colleague through sharing "information, coaching, technical training and moral and emotional support" (Kelchtermans, 2019, p. 85). Regardless, formal mentors and colleagues of ECTs continue the role of mentors of student teachers by offering guidance related to time management, grading practices, classroom procedures, curricula and instruction, and student behavior. Research suggests that mentors should volunteer for the role (Langdon et al., 2014), be adequately compensated (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a), and attend professional development on how to mentor (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Langdon et al., 2014)

As "classroom discipline" is often a "perceived problem area" for ECTs (Veenman, 1984, p. 153), mentors can help ECTs reframe their understanding of a classroom and interrogate the micropolitical implications of commonly used phrases like classroom management, disruptive behavior, and discipline. They can urge ECTs to shift seeing a classroom as being a place for organization with their role to maintain that order (i.e. managerial frame) to a human relations frame that "see the class as a caring family and the teacher as collaborator" or a political frame

that “ highlights the classroom as a democratic community with the teacher as facilitator” (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004, p. 720).

Mentors are charged with “helping novices find ways to express who they are in their work” and “helping novices develop a practice that is responsive to the community and reflects what we know about children and learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b, p. 20). The act of mentoring is micropolitical because this “bridge between the new and the more established teachers at the school” takes into consideration the mentor’s professional needs along with the existing behaviors and power hierarchies in the teacher community while socializing ECTs into their school context (Farrell, 2003). As a result, mentors engage in their own “political literacies” in order to understand the external forces interacting with their practice and to help ECTs in reading their school’s micropolitical dynamics (Achinstein, 2006).

Despite the benefits of mentoring relationships, some studies account for the failure of mentors in adequately supporting ECTs’ induction into the field (Farrell, 2003; Scherff & Hahs-Vaugh, 2008). We must question if and how mentors play a gate-keeping role through assessing and making judgements on contract renewal; essentially asking the question if mentors should assist or assess (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999). Bullough (1989) warned of the negative impact of mentoring being intertwined with evaluation and rating systems as the ladder is tied to rating performance to make decisions around staffing, instead of focusing on developing the teachers’ practice which is a concern only heightened by the connection between teacher evaluation and accountability in the last three decades (Connors & Bengtson, 2020).

Mentoring and Teacher Communities

Overall, the body of research regarding induction and mentoring argues for initiatives that are “multifaceted” such as “mentoring, interdisciplinary team membership, administrative support, professional development, onboarding orientation, and grade level or content area team membership” (Keese et al., 2023). ECTs’ teacher communities and their micropolitics, then, are a critical piece to how they are mentored into the profession. For example, Kardos et al. (2001) contend that integrated professional cultures where a mix of ECTs and their veteran colleagues regularly engage in discussions around instruction and student supports best serve the ECTs while also benefiting the veteran teachers compared to contexts with primarily new teachers (i.e., ECT-oriented) or those that emphasize the expertise of the veterans while dismissing ECT teacher perspectives (i.e., veteran-oriented). As a more recent example of collaborative co-mentoring, Bickmore (2013) described the benefits of a professional development program that involved induction and mentoring for ECTs as well as opportunities for veteran teachers to strengthen their practice during a summer seminar and follow-up sessions. Similarly, Eschar-Netz and Vedder-Weiss (2021) framed co-planning as helpful professional development for both ECT and veteran teachers. These forms of sustained and multifaceted mentorship echo Smith and Ingersoll’s (2004) findings that connected strong mentorship and teacher retention.

Teacher Identity and Professional Needs

Since this inquiry is interested in how ECTs’ position themselves in their teacher communities, exploration for how ECTs’ understand their professional needs and develop their teacher identity is necessary. When thinking about ECTs’ teacher identity development, it is

helpful first to know how their self-perception as a teacher starts during their teacher preparation. Preservice teachers' understanding of teacher identity are influenced by childhood and familial experience (Chong et al., 2011), society's simplified depictions of teachers (Mitchell & Weber, 1999), and their initial teacher training experiences (Flores & Day, 2006). So, the complex process of teacher identity development requires preservice and therefore ECTs to infuse these understandings of self, or what Alsup (2006) referred to as "situated identities" into their growing understanding of who and what a teacher is, which is further complicated by society's portrayal of teachers in media and pop culture. In other words, preservice teachers' "institutional biographies" or their collective understanding of school structures and curriculum shaped their developing professional identity (Britzman, 1986). Indeed, their understanding of the profession guided by years of observing what teachers do without having to consider the why behind teachers' decisions sometimes leads preservice teachers to not fully understand the complex nature of teaching—a shortcoming involved in the phenomena Lortie (1975) named "the apprenticeship of observation." Furthermore, Alsup (2006) argues that a preservice teachers' willingness to engage in "borderland discourse" which involves "an enhanced consciousness, a meta-awareness of thought and action that can incorporate the personal as well as the professional, and multifaceted, contextual, and sometimes contradictory ideologies and situated identities" is an effective indicator of a teachers' decision to become a teacher (p. 125).

As Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002a) micropolitical framework from above suggests, teachers experience emotions in response to having to navigate their school's micropolitical landscape, which I believe can result in conflicting emotions about oneself as a teacher. An example of this comes from Correa and his colleagues' (2014) description of two case studies of

student teachers in teacher communities, one of which felt conflict between her personal identity that wanted to express emotion towards a student and her perceived teacher identity in the community void of emotion. When a student experienced a confrontation with another student in the school yard, the student teacher wanted to show her affection and comfort her but quickly decided against it after viewing the other teachers not reacting emotionally to the situation. Still in the periphery of the community, the student teacher looked to her clinical supervisor to make sense of her context, but to also imagine her ideal community in the future. The authors explained,

The critical incidents narrated by the student teachers has permitted us to situate the process of identity building, as well as to describe the type of teacher they want to become by exploring the dilemmas they face, their difficulties in the school, their fears and their frustrations regarding other members of the Community of Practice. (p. 459)

In the case of the student teacher in this study, her vulnerable position as the outsider of the community required her to negotiate parts of her identity to fit within the practices of the other teachers. Her decision to respond to her student in the way she did was filtered through her professional needs particularly regarding the way she wanted to be seen (i.e., visibility) in her teacher community.

Concerns around teacher identity continue as these teachers transition into their first year and begin to experience the “reality shock” involved in their induction year, leading them to question not only if they can master the skills of teaching but also if they can see themselves as teachers (Veenman, 1984). In fact, Correa and his colleagues (2015) describe that ECTs voice

some of their professional needs through their concerns regarding their agency, their developing teacher identity, and recognition from colleagues. And so, the literature describes how ECTs' experiences with their colleagues not only influence their ability to fit into their teacher community, but it also illustrates how interactions with colleagues influence ECTs' developing teacher identities and professional needs. In other words, teachers' identities and needs are socially constructed through the cultural and institutional norms of their school contexts (Bullough, 2005; Flores & Day, 2006), contexts that are inherently micropolitical.

Towards a Micropolitical Understanding of ECTs' Experiences in Teacher Communities

In summary, this chapter explored micropolitical theory and positioned it as a necessary lens for understanding ECTs' experiences in teacher communities, their support from induction programs and mentors, and their identity development. The next chapter describes my methodological approaches to studying ECTs' experiences, but the literature and theory reviewed here will be used in later chapters to situate my findings and to build assertions on ECTs' experiences.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study explores the experiences of ECTs in their interactions with colleagues and their experiences in their teacher communities. To do so, this study leveraged a case study approach to conduct a “systematic, critical inquiry” into ECTs’ experiences in their teacher communities (Simons, 2009, p. 18). While there are multiple definitions and approaches to case study methodology (Simons, 2009; Yazan, 2015), this study draws Merriam’s (1988) understanding of case studies because of her approach for exploring questions of educational practice (Merriam, 1988) and on Simons (2009) practical description of case study methodology. Merriam (1988) argues that educational case study research is a means for understanding, informing, and improving practice (p. 6). As such, this study works to better understand ECTs’ perspectives of their experiences in teacher communities in order to better support ECTs induction into the profession and, hopefully, identify areas that would support them staying in the profession long term.

What are Case Studies?

Merriam (1988) defines case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. Case studies are particularist, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources” (p. 16). This study aligns to Merriam’s characteristics of case studies in that it focuses on a particular aspect of ECTs’ experiences—their teacher communities and collegial relationships. It also provides “thick description” (Merriam, 1988, p. 28) of ECTs’ interactions with colleagues particularly

through “illustrat[ing] the complexities” of ECTs’ mentorship and working with colleagues as well as the “influence of personalities” (i.e., colleagues) on ECTs’ experiences (Olson, 1982, as cited in Merriam, 1988). While many in our field can think back to their own experiences with colleagues in their early years, this study is heuristic in nature in that it extends the readers’ understanding of the ways in which ECTs experience mentorship from colleagues and engage with their teacher community. Merriam (1988) explains that case study knowledge relates to the reader's experiences because of its “vivid, concrete, and sensory” nature (p. 15). So, while case study knowledge is deeply related to the context of the cases, it also relies on reader interpretation which is rooted in their own experiences and understanding. With that being said, this study, then, relies on inductive reasoning with the data being grounded in the context of each case and leading to assertions that promote new understanding of ECTs’ experiences in their teacher communities.

In addition to defining the characteristics of case studies detailed above, Merriam (1988) also distinguishes between three different types of case studies: 1) descriptive, 2) interpretative, and 3) evaluative. Descriptive cases aim to provide a “detailed account of the phenomenon” (p. 27). Rather than building from working hypotheses or theories, these studies end up becoming a starting point for building new theories. Interpretive case studies, on the other hand, leverage the rich description of descriptive case studies to “illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions” (p. 28). Finally, the last type of case study, evaluative case studies, also involve judgment. These case studies may evaluate a particular intervention within a particular educational context. It should be noted that case studies do not only have to be one type, rather, Merriam explains that case studies can be a combination of the three. Nonetheless, this study

primarily sits within an interpretive case study approach because it illustrates ECTs' experiences in teacher communities using theoretical concepts from micropolitical theory.

Defining and Bounding the Case

Prior to selecting a case, researchers must first identify the research problem (Merriam, 1988). Chapter one articulated this in more detail, but here, I will situate the problem within Merriam's case study methodological approach. She argues that research problems suitable for case study research grow out of problems of practice and "emanate from the everyday world" (p. 43). Merriam describes types of problems like action problems where there does not seem to be a direct course of action for solving a problem or value problems where there are "undesirable consequences" in a given context (p. 42). Problems can be conceptual in nature as we see within the context of this study with literature suggesting mentoring as a highly effective way for inducting ECTs (Keese et al., 2023), yet literature also talks of ECTs wanting more mentorship and support from their teacher communities (McCann et al., 2005; Sutton, 2009). So, problems can come out of literature—like we see here— but, also in practical situations or personal experiences. As described in Chapter one, as an ECT, I struggled with navigating the expectations of colleagues in my teacher community and after talking with other ECTs, they too voiced concern with how to deal with the adults in the building (Gannon, 2023). So, I became interested in ECTs' experiences with their colleagues in their teacher community and how those experiences influence the ways they see themselves in the profession and the community. From there, I turned to defining and binding the case.

Given my interest in ECTs' experiences with colleagues and mentors, I placed my focus on the ECTs perspectives of their interactions with these actors. As such, I placed boundaries around the ECTs' experiences in their teacher communities and the colleagues that make up their

teacher community and mentoring (both formal and informal) roles. Rather than presenting a generalization of all ECTs' experiences, these case studies present two unique experiences bound by both time and space (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) but interpret those experiences using micropolitical theory in hopes to better understand how ECT navigate their colleagues and schools in ways that can further shape how we train and mentor ECTs.

Selecting the Case: Participant Information

Relying on the network of ECTs that had graduated from the English Education BSED program at my institution, I considered ECTs who would be first, second, or third year teachers in the 2023-24 academic school year as potential cases. While the ECTs' content area focus did not necessarily need to be English Language Arts, I was interested in how their experiences in their teacher communities may relate to their instructional practice as an ELA teacher and therefore my work as an ELA teacher educator². I also took into consideration their school's proximity and their school district's IRB requirements. This study already had University of Georgia's IRB approval, but I needed to also receive the district's IRB approval for parts of the data collection discussed in more detail below. After identifying potential participants, I emailed the ECTs the University's IRB approved recruitment email to explain the study and to gauge potential interest. Four ECTs responded with their willingness to participate. I chose to continue with the three of the four potential cases, eliminating one because the ECT worked at a private school as the only 7th grade ELA teacher, and therefore did not work in community with colleagues regularly. After the remaining ECTs consented to participate (see Appendix A), I

² Colleen and Kelsey's experiences in their teacher communities related to ELA specific instructional content is present in small pieces in the individual cases in chapters four and five, however, it is outside of the scope of the research questions used here and therefore is not a focus in the analysis.

applied for their respective districts' IRBs. Tables 1 and 2, below, details the time frame of when district IRB approval was received for each participant. Additional colleagues from the ECT's context also consented to those participating in interviews and observations using a different consent form (see Appendix B).

I began data collection with all three participants, but one participant needed to stop her participation in the study due to personal health reasons. So, this inquiry offers two case studies: one of a first year ELA teacher, who we will call Colleen³, and another of a second year ELA teacher, who we will call Kelsey. We will get to know Colleen and Kelsey in much more detail in chapters four and five, but I've provided contextualizing information for these cases here in Tables 1 and 2. The two cases provided the foundation for a comparative case analysis, which is presented in chapter six (Palmberger & Gingrich, 2013).

Table 1

Colleen's Case Information

Personal Information	
Demographics	Mixed race, female
Professional Information	
Teaching year	1st
Grade level(s) taught	9th and 10th grade ELA
School Information	
School name	Warren County High School
District context	Fringe rural

³ Pseudonyms are used for participant's name, their colleagues, as well as their school and school district throughout the study.

District IRB approval	10/19/23
Population size	1,833
School demographics ⁴	66% White, 16.6% Hispanic, 9.6% Black, 3.8% Asian, 3.7% Two or more races, 0.3% American Indian
Teacher Community Information	
Core teacher community(s) in case	9th & 10th grade PLC
Additional colleagues/actors in case	11th grade veteran teachers, ESOL teacher, SPED teacher, assigned mentor

Table 2

Kelsey's Case Information

Personal Information	
Demographics	White ⁵ , female
Professional Information	
Teaching year	2nd
Grade level taught	11th grade ELA
School Information	
School name	Meadow Glen High School
District context	Fringe town
District IRB approval	10/10/23
Population size	1,833

⁴ Source: U.S. News and World Report, <https://www.usnews.com/education>

⁵ I've chosen to capitalize White as a racial identity marker in line with scholars thinking that not doing so is problematic because it avoids naming Whiteness as a racial identity (Ewing, 2020; Nguyễn & Pendleton, 2020).

School demographics	51.4% White, 23.4% Hispanic, 15.5% Black, 5.2% Asian, 4.3% Two or more Races, 0.2% American Indian
Teacher Community Information	
Core teacher community in case	11th grade PLC
Additional colleagues/actors in case	ELA Department Head, Literacy Coach, Principal

Validity, Reliability and the Researcher

How internal validity is assessed within case study research has evolved over time. Merriam (1988) emphasizes the role of the researcher is to portray what “*seems true*” rather than what “*is true*” (p. 167, italics in original text). In addition, Simons (2009) recognizes that some position the subjectivity of the researcher to be a limitation of case studies, however, she argues that “it is not seen as a problem but rather, appropriately monitored and disciplined, as essential in understanding and interpreting the case” (p. 24).

As such, my role as the researcher, including the perceptions I hold, is a critical piece of this study. Therefore, I want to acknowledge the perspectives and experiences I brought to the study. I had worked with both participants in prior teaching and supervisory roles during their teacher education studies and therefore, had my own perceptions of who they were during coursework and across practicum and student teaching placements. I also served as a teaching assistant in an online MEd course that Colleen was enrolled in as a student at the time of the study. As far as my experiences with Colleen and Kelsey’s schools, I had not worked with any teachers or student teachers at Warren County High School, but I had worked with other student teachers at Meadow Glen High School. Therefore, I was somewhat familiar with some of Kelsey’s colleagues and the inner workings of the ELA department. Thinking with Simmon’s

(2009) recommendation, then, I used memos to write and reflect on how my knowledge of the participants and their contexts was potentially showing up in the questions I asked and how I was making sense of the data.

Given my experiences with the participants, my own experiences as an ECT, and my interest and decision to think with micropolitical theory within each of these cases, I must emphasize that the findings in this study are shaped by my epistemological and ontological ways of seeing and being in the world. As such, another researcher studying the same cases would likely produce different reports than what is found here. In other words, I sought “dependability” within the case studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 172) rather than reliability. I worked towards having dependable findings by being clear how theory was shaping my analysis, triangulating the data through multiple sources, and being detailed and explicit with my methods (Merriam, 1988). Similarly, I was not seeking external validity (i.e., generalizability) rather, I was aiming for what Cronbach (1975) calls a “working hypothesis” (as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 174). Working hypotheses are grounded in the context of the case and aim to “offer the individual educator some guidance in making choices—the results of which can be monitored and evaluated in order to make better future decisions” (Merriam, 1988, p. 175). Nonetheless, in addition to situating the researcher within the research, Merriam (1988) advises additional attempts at validity, some of which I did in this study including the triangulation of data through multiple sources, collection of data across time, and member checking (each described in more detail below).

Methods

Next, I’ll describe my methods for this study’s research design including data collection methods and analysis. Merriam (1988) argues that interviews, observation, and using

documentary materials are the qualitative methods most appropriate for case study research. In line with Merriam's recommendation, this study leveraged case study methodology by writing and analyzing cases of two ECTs from interviews, self-reflections, observations, and artifact collection that focused on their experiences within their teacher communities. The data was then organized into case records (Patton, 1980) which are descriptive accounts that "[pull] together and [organize] the voluminous case data into a comprehensive primary resource package" (p. 313). From there, I conducted an intensive analysis (Merriam, 1988) of the case records and used the concepts of micropolitical literacies and professional needs (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a, 2002b) from micropolitical theory as analytical constructs to present the assertions built from these cases (Stake, 1995). The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do early career teachers interpret their experiences in their teacher community?
2. How do early career teachers perceive their position in their teacher community?

Data Collection and Management

The study's data corpus includes participant interviews, participant reflective journaling, teacher community observations, secondary interviews with participants' colleagues, and artifacts from participants' teacher communities across the 2023-24 academic school year. Table 3 is a synthesis of the datum within the participants' cases (see Appendix C for an expanded version). The following paragraphs capture the purpose and function behind each form of datum collected for these cases.

With this study's unit of analysis being ECTs' experiences and meaning making in and because of their teacher communities, the primary form of data collection were participant semi-structured interviews connected to the research questions. The interviews were held approximately every month or two months across the study with each lasting approximately one

hour. This time frame allowed multiple opportunities for participants to engage with their colleagues between interviews and also captured instructional plans across multiple units in the school year. I constructed interview protocols (see Appendix D for an example) for each interview that were guided by the evolving research questions and responsive to previous interviews, participant reflective journaling, and community observations. The protocols were not used in a restrictive way, rather they guided my questions while also attending to the participants' responses during the interview itself. The interviews were primarily held over zoom, with one interview with each participant located in their classrooms (which is noted in Table 3).

Participants also engaged in reflective journaling responsive to events in their teacher communities and various prompts that I sent across the year. These prompts were built out of my recursive analysis (discussed in more detail below) of the data as it was being collected and asked participants to expand on topics they had shared in the past or additional questions that became more pertinent as the data collection continued. Appendix E captures example prompts sent for reflective journals. Participants were encouraged to journal in whatever modality was most helpful to them (e.g., written journal, online shared document, email). While Kelsey initially shared written responses via an online shared document, she quickly opted to share her reflections in the form of voice memos via her personal cellular device and text messaging. Colleen shared her reflections using voice memos across the full length of the study. With these cases being bound to the ECT rather than the larger teacher community, I wanted multiple methods for capturing their personal perspectives on their experiences, how they position themselves, and how they signify the policies interacting with their experiences. As such, the reflective memos served each research question. This informal form of reflection captured the

more in the moment reactions to impactful moments with colleagues and informed me on events and ideas important to the participants which became critical incidents (Mills et al., 2010) for me to explore further in later interviews.

I also observed participants' teacher community meetings, which for both Colleen and Kelsey were their grade-level teams. Observations worked in service of each of the research questions. First, they allowed me to contextualize and see firsthand some of the experiences that the participants described in other datum—the aim of the first research question (Merriam, 1988). Second, they allowed me to think with the second research question and observe how the participants actively positioned themselves within the teacher community meetings.

One-time semi-structured interviews were also conducted with select colleagues of the participants. The colleagues were chosen based on the participants' recommendations and their willingness to agree to an interview. These interviews also followed interview protocols (see Appendix F) based on the evolving research questions and my conversations with the primary participant (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted via zoom. Much like the observations, the additional interviews with participants' colleagues afforded additional context and perspectives related to ECTs' experiences and positions within their teacher community and also demonstrated how ECTs' signify the importance of policies interacting with their teacher community.

Finally, I also collected artifacts of the participants' teacher communities. Artifacts included things like meeting agendas, district communication regarding teacher communities, and examples of instructional units. The purpose of collecting community artifacts was to examine the ways in which community procedures and beliefs were materialized. It also allowed me to see if and how the communities interacted with external policies.

Table 3*Synthesis of Data*

Colleen	
Interview(s)	5 total interviews November 2023- May 2024 4 zoom, 1 in person 3 hours and 49 minutes
Reflection(s)	8 reflections 53 minutes
Observation(s)	1 observation 26 minutes
Secondary Interview(s)	Ms. McCoy, April 2024, 52 minutes Ms. Weaver, April 2024, 22 minutes
Additional Datum	Teacher Community Planning Time expectations 9th and 10th grade PLC Agenda
Kelsey	
Interview(s)	4 total interviews October 2023- April 2024 3 zoom, 1 in person 2 hours 47 minutes
Reflection(s)	8 reflection 3 written, 5 audio recorded 10 paragraphs, 42 minutes
Observation(s)	3 observations 2 hours 50 minutes
Secondary Interview(s)	Leslie Tate, April 2024, 54 minutes
Additional Datum	District Instructional Framework District Strategic Plan

Data Analysis

As Merriam suggests, data analysis was reflexive, ongoing, and iterative making data collection and analysis simultaneous. Immediately after each interview, I used a computer-based speech to text program to create an initial transcription. Within a week of each interview, I relistened to the interview, cleaned up the transcript, and wrote analytical memos to summarize each interview. Transcriptions were saved to my personal computer and within the data analysis software ATLAS.ti and then MAXQDA⁶. I used the same process for the participants' self-reflections. During observations, field notes were handwritten noting the topics of conversation, the people in attendance, and short quotes or exchanges between colleagues. After leaving the field and within 24 hours, I transferred the field notes into a Microsoft Word document that was structured to capture the layout of the room, key ideas and events, prominent quotes or dialogue in chronological order as well as my questions, thoughts, and responses to what I had observed. These structured field note documents were saved to my personal computer and to the data analysis software MAXQDA. See Appendix G for a sample of the structured field notes.

The memos on the early pieces of data supported me in "casing the joint" in that I noted the make-up of the participants' teacher communities, attending to dynamics of space, time, and people while also identifying questions to further explore with the participants (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 19). At the end of the first semester of the 2023-24 academic year, I set out to "get on the case" by situating the cases in the literature on ECTs and micropolitical theory, revisiting the research questions based on what I saw in the data, and making plans for future data collection (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 43). This process involved engaging in an initial

⁶ As analysis continued, I opted to use MAXQDA as the primary analysis software because of its' creative coding function that allowed me to visually see how codes relate to one another and the theoretical frameworks.

cycle of inductive coding using open and holistic coding that laid “preparatory groundwork” for later coding cycles by getting a sense of what was happening in each case as a whole (Saldaña, 2016, p. 166) through noting prominent experiences and actors (Stake, 1995). It also involved writing additional analytic memos that documented “critical incidents” pertaining to my inquiry and identified possible themes resonating across the data collected so far within each individual case (Mills et al., 2010). These memos, then, helped me shape interview protocols for the participants as well as identify key actors to invite for secondary interviews. In addition, these later memos also had a theoretical aspect in that I used the memos to process how I was making sense of the data given micropolitical theory. From there, I spent the second semester completing data collection and writing analytical and theoretical memos as described above.

Once data collection was complete, I read the entire data set for Colleen’s case and used the computer based qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to code my data using attribute, simultaneous, structural, description, and concept coding (Saldaña, 2016). I read Colleen’s data, focusing on her experiences within her teacher community or with other adults rather than her overall experience as a first year teacher. For example, Colleen’s retellings of her interactions with students during class time were not included in the analysis unless that interaction involved colleagues. Next, I engaged in a constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014) while reading the entirety of Kelsey’s data modifying and adding identified within the primary cycle of coding as well as the coding from Colleen’s case (Tracy, 2020). When reading each case in its entirety, I first read the participants’ interviews and reflections, as the ECTs’ perspective was the focus of this study. Next, I read the structured field notes of the observations, secondary interviews, and additional artifacts in order to triangulate the data (Merriam, 1988). At this stage in the coding, I had 55 codes (See Appendix H).

Following the second cycle of coding, I wrote case records (Merriam, 1988) about prominent actors and events in each of Colleen and Kelsey's cases as part of the analysis process that helped me capture prominent themes within each case. These case records that included profiles of colleagues and mentors, descriptions of key events and ideas related to the participants' positions in their communities, and narratives of experiences related to external testing expectations were sent to the participants for member checking (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). I sent the case records via email and explained that this was an opportunity for them to make amendments or give additional perspectives. I invited them to make comments in the Microsoft Word document or respond in the email while emphasizing that member checking was not required but welcomed. I only received a response from Colleen that expressed she had no requests for any changes to be made. These case records largely contributed to the descriptions and analysis within the case reports in chapters four and five. In other words, the case records served as broken down segments of data that were then organized in a way that allowed me to convey patterns and propositions within each case and functioned as a form of "writing as interpretation" (Simons, 2009, p. 142).

Finally, I returned to the data once again for a third cycle of coding, this time looking across the cases using the concepts of micropolitical literacies and professional needs from micropolitical theory as an analytical tool to build assertions across cases. I organized the codes within the categories of material needs, organizational needs, cultural-ideological needs, personal needs, and social-professional needs also noting when codes connected or extended the three aspects of micropolitical literacy (i.e., knowledge, operational, and experiential), demonstrated in Appendix J). In order to organize the codes within these analytical frames, I also engaged in axial coding or the process of collapsing codes into broader categories and created subcodes

within those broader categories (Saldaña, 2016). For example, the codes “comparing to colleagues, reading colleagues’ teaching styles and practices, noting differences in teaching practices, and reading colleagues’ needs and circumstances were combined to a larger code of observations of colleagues. Simons (2009) distinguishes between theory-led and theory-generated case study with theory-led as “exploring, or even exemplifying, a case through a particular theoretical perspective” (p. 21). In chapter six, I use this final round of coding to explore Colleen and Kelsey’s professional needs given their micropolitical context in order to make assertions about ECTs’ experiences and positions in their teacher communities as well as the role of external expectations of testing on an ECTs’ experience. This cross-case analysis, then, offers “more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” by looking at the role of micropolitics within the context of multiple cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172).

Writing the Cases

Case studies can be written through many methods including formal, portrayal, conclusion-led, interpretative, story-telling, and other artistic forms (Simons, 2009). Chapters four and five are written using the portrayal method with the focus of engaging the audience with “the veracity and experience of the case through the organization or juxtaposition of data” (p. 149). As such, there is limited direct interpretation in those chapters with the exception of how people and vignettes are organized. From there, I engage in a more direct interpretation of the cases in chapter six, relying on the third cycle of theoretical coding to organize the discussion across cases using categories from Kelchtermans and Ballet’s (2002b) micropolitical professional needs. Chapter six is also where I make assertions about ECTs’ experiences in teacher communities based on the cases. Now, let's turn to Colleen’s case.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CASE OF A FIRST YEAR TEACHER

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize Colleen's experience at Warren High School⁷ by introducing to you prominent players present across her school year and by unpacking her perceptions of her experiences. My goal, first and foremost, is for you to understand Colleen— how she works in and around her school and her ELA teacher community and some of what she was confronted with as a first year ELA teacher. Therefore, Colleen's case is used here to represent an ECT's experiences with colleagues and in their school community. The case is bound to Colleen and her perceptions of her experiences and begins to explore the following questions:

1. How do early career teachers interpret their experiences in their teacher community?
2. How do early career teachers perceive their position in their teacher communities?

The organization of this chapter intentionally aligns my observations to the above research questions and describes some larger trends across Colleen's experience, hence some analysis is present. However, the chapter is meant to set up further analysis in chapter six and to make meaning beyond her case later on. As you walk alongside Colleen, you will notice how her first

⁷ As with the people in the cases, pseudonyms are also used for Colleen's school and school district throughout the case.

year of teaching was dense with colleague's influence, involved frequent (re)positioning of herself up against colleagues, and required unceasing attention to testing both in conversations with colleagues' and in her own teaching. With that, I introduce to you, Colleen.

Colleen and I Prior to the Study

In my interactions with Colleen prior to the study (described in chapter three), I came to know Colleen as a bubbly student with an ever-present smile. She was eager to participate in class discussions and her talk would grow faster and louder when she was passionate about the topic of conversation. In videos of her student teaching experiences, she was slightly more reserved, yet pops of her personality were still present. Not to my surprise, she immediately expressed interest and excitement at participating in this study. She continued to present herself similarly in our conversations across the school year, yet I did come to know a different side of Colleen as she described her presence at Warren High School.

Colleen at Warren High School

For the 2023-24 school year, Colleen was a 9th and 10th grade ELA teacher at Warren High School located in a growing rural suburb of a large southeastern city. The school's student population was just under 2,000 with around 66% identifying as white, 17% as Hispanic, 10% as Black, 4% as Asian, 4% as two or more races, and less than 1% as American Indian. Approximately 27% of the student population received free or reduced lunch. Warren High School's graduation rate was just above 90%. It was one of two high schools in Middleton School District and was within an hour's drive of a large southeastern research institution where

Colleen graduated with her bachelor's in education and was enrolled during the time of this study in a Master of Education program.

Warren High School's building was recently built within the last five or so years right down the road from the high school it was replacing. The old building was still being used in the district for many of the high school's elective courses. The new building had an expansive staircase linking the two stories; Colleen's classroom was nestled on the bottom floor to the right of the staircase amidst a handful of classrooms—only a few being ELA— and some student spaces with flexible seating.

Warren High School followed a block schedule, meaning students took four courses the first semester and four new courses the second semester. Therefore, Colleen taught a new set of students each of the fall and spring semesters. First semester, Colleen's schedule was as follows: 1) first period: 10th grade ESOL, 2) second period: 9th grade on-level, 3) third period: planning, and 4) fourth period: 9th grade co-taught. During this semester, the 9th and 10th grade teachers met on Mondays after school because not all of them had a 3rd period planning. During the second semester, Colleen taught 10th grade on-level for the first three periods of the day and had fourth period planning. The 9th and 10th grade teaching team switched to meeting Thursday afternoons due to teachers' coaching schedules; the team met less frequently in the second semester compared to the first.

Mentoring

When Colleen first got her roster of students at the beginning of the year, she did not understand the extent of accommodations her students required. Her roster included many ELL

students and one student who was completely visually impaired. It was not until she met some families at Open House, two days before school started, that she realized many of her ELL students did not speak any English. Colleen went to an ESOL teacher, Ms. McCoy, for help, thinking she was the only teacher in the building to have students that didn't speak any English. Ms. McCoy comforted and reassured her that many teachers in the building had similar circumstances. Then, Ms. McCoy sent translating resources to all faculty as a way of showing support. Despite having a different ESOL teacher in her classroom— one that was new and mainly only helped with classroom management— Colleen continued to go to Ms. McCoy across the year for guidance. Colleen reflected, “The other ELL teacher who's not in my room, she was teacher of the year last year. I do ask her for help when it comes to those students because she has been in her position for a while, and she knows what to do. She knows all of them and she knows how to handle some of that. So, I do go to her a lot.”

Next, I will introduce more of the colleagues and faculty that were present in Colleen experiences at Warren High School. As you meet them, consider the sheer number of colleagues that have the capability of mentoring an ECT regardless of their official mentoring status, their training to be a mentor, and their accessibility and time commitment to supporting an ECT. Also, consider the potential impact of colleagues' influence on an ECT's experiences in a school and therefore how that ECT sees themselves fitting into the school community— all while learning the full scope of a teacher's responsibilities.

Meet the Mentors

As mentioned above, multiple colleagues⁸ were present across Colleen's memos, interviews, and community observations. Some were explicitly named by Colleen as someone who she looks up to as a mentor and others were named frequently enough to explore their role in Colleen's induction into the profession—each are briefly introduced here.

Ms. Shelton

Colleen was assigned a mentor teacher in her building, Ms. Shelton. Ms. Shelton taught culinary and rarely crossed paths with Colleen in day-to-day school life. They did share the same planning period the first semester, but had different planning periods the second semester. Ms. Shelton also attended some of the first-year teacher meetings held at the school due to her assigned role. Early in the school year, Ms. Shelton explained administrations' priority of students passing classes regardless of their number of completed assignments and the school's major management initiatives like hall passes. The two did not have regular scheduled one-on-one meetings, but Ms. Shelton did check-in on Colleen occasionally, mostly during the first semester. Colleen remembered that as a mentor Ms. Shelton "felt like a burden" when she would stop by to check on Colleen, only to find that she didn't need much support or have any questions.

⁸ Not all of her colleagues that will be mentioned in her case are profiled here, just the ones that had consistent mentoring or influential interactions across the year. Additionally, the pseudonyms used represent how Colleen named her colleagues, so if she referred to a teacher as "Ms./Mr." or "Dr.," then that is what is used here. However, there were few instances described later on where Colleen used her colleagues' first names, and so those pseudonyms represent as such. This helps the readers understand Colleen's perceived relationships with her colleagues and her position in the school.

Ms. McCoy

While Ms. McCoy was introduced in the episode above, additional contextual information is needed to understand her role as a mentor in Colleen's year. Not only was Ms. McCoy an ESOL teacher, but she also was a recent teacher of the year for Warren High School— an accolade that stood out to Colleen— and the district's co-induction lead, meaning she supported induction year teachers in the district and held monthly meetings for teachers new to Warren High School.

Ms. Weaver

At the beginning of the school year, Colleen was supposed to have a co-teacher for her 9th grade co-taught classes that would support students with IEPs. For personal reasons, that co-teacher was not present to help Colleen for the first few weeks of school. Shortly after, the special education department adjusted schedules and a new co-teacher, Ms. Weaver, stepped into that role. Ms. Weaver explained that she approached co-teaching as being a “very active member in the class.” Ms. Weaver mentored Colleen with classroom management strategies, giving her ideas to try out in her teaching. She was frequently available for Colleen's questions during the school's advisement period because they were in the same hallway.

Ms. Weaver had 15 years of teaching experience and almost a decade of service to the district. She also was Warren High School's Teacher of the Year for that academic year— something that stood out to Colleen as it did for Ms. McCoy. Colleen explained that Ms. Weaver “play[ed] a huge role in [their] teaching community because she [was] quite literally teacher of the year. She [was] always positive, she's the best.”

Ms. Drew

Ms. Drew was a fellow ELA teacher who taught AP Language and 10th grade on-level during Colleen's first semester. Colleen's lesson planning and focus primarily sat with her 9th grade classes (2) because curriculum was less developed for this course. She was able to do this because Ms. Drew supported Colleen by sharing all her 10th grade materials, which Colleen relied on heavily throughout the semester.

Ms. George

Ms. George taught American Literature, an 11th grade course, at Warren High School. She was a floater teacher, meaning that she didn't have her own classroom, but her office was across the hall from Colleen's classroom. Further, during 3rd period in the first semester, Ms. George taught in Colleen's classroom and Colleen would stay in Ms. George's office for her planning. That planning time prompted Colleen and Ms. George to often eat lunch together because lunch fell in 3rd period. Colleen shared that this was a time where she could decompress from her 2nd period which was a frequent stressor during the first semester. Notably, Ms. George saw Colleen cry one day during planning; this was a side of Colleen that the majority of her colleagues never saw.

Ms. Fletcher

When Colleen met with the 9th and 10th grade professional learning communities, the meetings were primarily run by the 10th grade lead, Ms. Fletcher. They met on Monday afternoons after school because not everyone who taught those grade levels shared the same planning time. This shifted to Thursdays in the second semester because Ms. Fletcher also had

coaching responsibilities. Ms. Fletcher did not have a 10th grade class the first semester, but did have some the second semester, which positioned Colleen to share her experiences with her first semester 10th grade class when the 10th grade team met later in the year. Colleen did not rely on Ms. Fisher for extensive mentorship but took in her guidance around testing—a frequent topic of PLC meetings—and appreciated that Ms. Fisher asked for input on the 10th grade curriculum as the year progressed.

Dr. Mullins

Dr. Mullins taught 11th grade in Colleen’s department. The 11th grade ELA course is the sole high school English course evaluated by a state mandated “End of Course” (EOC) Exam. While Colleen never named Dr. Mullins as a mentor, his classroom was located nearby in a little nook at the end of the hallway where there were not many other English teachers. So, proximally and in terms of department, it made sense that they had a few impactful interactions that Colleen spoke about. Colleen reflected on feeling intimidated by Dr. Mullins and referred to him as one of the “big dogs” in the school and the “OG veteran type.” She explained that Dr. Mullins was the teacher who successfully advocated to the administration that the department should have a shared planning if they expected them to coordinate curriculum. Ultimately, she reasoned that if he taught 11th grade American Literature, then he must be a great teacher. Colleen would go to Dr. Mullins if she needed “help with how to push [her] 10th graders forward.”

Multitude of Mentoring

Now that you have met Colleen’s colleagues and have begun to understand her professional relationship with each, I will describe the ways that Colleen named the impact of

professional interactions on her experience. In other words, I will observe the ways Colleen's interactions with other teachers clarified, reinforced, or complicated her own understanding of classroom management and effective teaching styles.

A frequent opportunity to interact with other teachers was present in the monthly New Teacher Meetings, which was an established space for teachers new to Warren High School to be mentored by the school induction team, led by Ms. McCoy. These New Teacher Meetings worked alongside the quarterly district-wide induction meetings for first year teachers in the profession to make the induction program for the district.

Ms. McCoy strategically planned Warren High School's New Teacher Meetings so that in the beginning they included necessary logistics like how to use their badge, information on Infinite Campus (the school's online gradebook), and when a counselor or administrator might need to be called into a classroom. Later on, she created space for the teachers to talk about student behavior and how to improve their instruction. "In the beginning it's logistics. Then it's like, "Oh my gosh, these kids are making me crazy". . . "What do I do for the kids who aren't listening?" "How do I make my lessons more authentic?" "How do I engage these kids?". . . "Oh, I'm really tired. I'm just so frustrated," recalled Ms. McCoy. Colleen found these meetings to provide a huge boost of confidence because she was able to compare her experiences to other teachers—

I think just in general, this meeting helped, helped me realize once again that I am not alone and, in the grand scheme of things, I am actually doing pretty well. So, I need to stop being so hard on myself. I need to remember this on those really tough days.

Colleen's interactions with other teachers in the building provide more nuance to how colleagues mentored multiple facets of Colleen's growing understanding of what it means to teach ELA at Warren High School.

Classroom Management

Colleen had access to multiple supports on classroom management strategies and student behavior expectations. Colleen did occasionally initiate interactions with Ms. Shelton, her assigned mentor, when issues arose in her classroom like students using phones during class time. They also reflected together on larger school problems like students misbehaving during trips to the bathroom. Notably, Colleen also retold interactions around student behavior with two additional colleagues, Ms. Weaver and Dr. Mullins.

After joining Colleen's classes, Ms. Weaver recommended that Colleen establish a classroom incentive, Fun Friday, for each class period to earn a few minutes of free time on Fridays for good behavior. She explained to Colleen to write "FUN FRIDAY" on the board and to remove or add letters across the week based on students' behavior. Colleen was willing to try out Ms. Weaver's recommendations, appreciating that Ms. Weaver emphasized that Colleen needed to find what works for her and that she should try out multiple management strategies and ideas. Colleen ended up using Fun Friday throughout the rest of the school year and found it to be an important time for building connections with students—she and her students often used this time to play games like Red Light, Green Light and Red Rover.

Ms. Weaver's consistent presence in Colleen's 9th grade classes as a co-teacher and availability during advisement, led to a strong mentor-mentee relationship where Colleen felt she

could ask her anything. Collen explained, “It’s just easier for me to go talk to her now because she was with me for a whole semester. So, she knows how I like to discipline and my seating charts because I don’t have anybody in any of my classes with me this semester.”

Responding to unwanted behavior. In the middle of the first semester, Colleen had a difficult day dealing with a student’s behavior during second period, her most challenging class of the semester. Colleen had to walk out of her room, visibly upset, in order to gain composure before returning to teaching. Dr. Mullins and another 11th grade teacher approached her the next morning and shared their surprise to what happened the previous day. They explained that they didn’t really “bother” Colleen because she appeared to always have it together. They encouraged Colleen to not get emotional in front of her students and said that she could send students to their classrooms instead; Colleen appreciated how they supported her through that experience.

Seeing others teach. Colleen regularly interacted with one other first year ELA teacher, Kimberly. Kimberly’s mentor asked Colleen to observe Kimberly’s classroom, with the goal of providing supporting, “because [Kimberly] had been struggling with the kids.” Colleen reflected,

“I don’t know if this is bad to say but that gave me a huge huge huge confidence boost because I know first year teachers struggle. That’s just inevitable and I am so hard on myself. But, I think I am actually doing an amazing job for a first year teacher and I needed to be reminded of that. I don’t need to compare myself to someone who is 45 years old and has been working for 20 years and has taught whatever lesson they are teaching 10 times. I am teaching everything for the first time, I am creating new lessons for the first time.”

Colleen noted Kimberly's continued struggle with classroom management again at the end of the school year to contrast her own strength in building classroom community. Where Colleen was trained to prioritize relationships with students, she realized that Kimberly did not and, therefore, had frequent problems with student behavior. "It really is a prime example of ... how your year can go when you don't prioritize [classroom community]. When you don't, you're not able to build those connections with them versus like when you are able to. Because it was really hard for her to connect." By being able to see another teacher's classroom experience, Colleen was able to put her own moments of struggle into perspective.

One fall new teacher meeting. One meeting in late October, Colleen walked into the school's conference room for the new teacher meeting to find four goodie bags filled with the new teachers' favorite things (which they had listed on a form over the summer). According to Colleen, the two new teachers were Colleen and Kimberly, and two other teachers new to the building, but had some teaching experience and were older than Colleen and Kimberly. Ms. McCoy, Colleen's mentor and Kimberly's mentor—the school induction team—joined the new teachers around the conference table. Each new teacher expressed their struggles while the others listened and offered suggestions. As Colleen listened, she realized that the behavior problems that she was struggling with were "nothing compared to what these other three teachers [were] dealing with." Colleen explained that she left the meeting feeling proud of the relationships she had cultivated with her students because she believed her deliberate prioritization of relationships with students was what allowed her to have less classroom management problems than the other new teachers in her building. Colleen explained her feelings as "I am not alone and in the grand scheme of things I am actually doing pretty well." These meetings offered Colleen emotional

support rather than explicit advice around classroom management. Colleen's self-comparison to other new-to-the-school teachers and, more notably, Kimberly was discursively leveraged to affirm her relationship building practices with students while also affirming that this is hard work that all teachers work on.

Glimpses at Colleagues' Teaching and Materials

Similar to the impact of hearing the new teachers' difficult experiences with student behavior, Colleen's instructional practices were developing alongside her exposure to her experienced colleagues' materials and stories of their teaching. Unlike during student teaching, Colleen rarely had opportunities to see her colleagues teach beyond her visit to Kimberly's classroom described above, despite Colleen's request and the professional literature's consistent emphasis on its utility to and impact on ECTs' growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Wang et al., 2008). Instead, Colleen's understanding of her more experienced colleagues' practices was a result of how they spoke about their teaching during meetings and the materials and lessons they shared. The following descriptions further illustrate how an ECT can be informally mentored through colleagues' actions and experience, not necessarily explicit advice.

Colleen was able to talk with the 9th and 10th grade ELA teachers periodically across the school year about what they were teaching, giving Colleen a glimpse at their instructional approaches. However, it should be noted that these meetings revolved primarily around testing, which will be discussed in more detail later. Colleen's colleagues often shared materials with her which further led her to be supported in her planning, but also in developing her understanding of which teachers could be potential informal mentors given their alignment with her own instructional beliefs. For example, as mentioned when introducing the mentors above, Ms. Drew

shared her entire 10th grade curriculum with the 10th grade team for the first semester even though she did not have 10th graders that semester. Colleen, overwhelmed with her 9th grade classes, heavily relied on Ms. Drew's materials. Yet, Ms. Drew's informal mentorship extended beyond sharing materials because Colleen felt comfortable going to her and asking questions and getting help. Colleen reflected, "[Ms. Drew] just seem[s] very chill and very relaxed. If I ran up to her room five minutes before the bell rang, she would still just help me."

Perceived differences in teaching styles or practices. As Colleen worked with her ELA colleagues more, she noticed differences in their teaching styles and practices which led to additional hesitation for turning to particular colleagues for developing daily lessons. Colleen began to understand her own instruction practice as valuing collaboration, whereas from her perspective, her colleagues placed less emphasis on that. She also preferred her materials to visually appealing and felt that the materials her colleagues shared were not aesthetically what she wanted. Colleen explained, "I have to have my stuff look the way that I want it to look like very specific, with my documents and my slides, like everything, like I can't handle it, looking at things I don't like." Due to the 9th and 10th grade teachers not having a shared planning period, when they would meet or wanted to talk through lessons, they would have to stay after school to do so. Colleen preferred to leave the school building and work on things at home.

At the beginning of her second semester, Colleen shared that when she had questions about planning, she would email her mentor teacher from student teaching, Terry. Colleen expressed comfort and assurance when asking Terry questions because,

she understands me and a lot of my inspiration teacher-wise comes from her. I watched her teach. I loved her teaching style. I loved the stuff that she created. That is the exact same way I am now, so, honestly, I just like to go to her.

Colleen described her and Terry’s co-planning as her “playing around with things” and “struggling with some things” and then asking Terry for help— a process she was trying to duplicate with her ELA colleagues. Colleen positions herself as more alike to Terry whereas these comparisons are rarely made to her ELA colleagues at Warren High School—discursively positioning herself as distinct from her grade level teaching communities. Her comparison of her current school to the school from student teaching demonstrates Colleen’s growing ability to read her school community. In fact, Colleen explained that “talking [was] not the vibe” at Warren High School compared to the school where she student taught—

Everybody had the same lunch. So that's where we would meet for our department meetings. That was nice, like having to see everybody like every single day and talk to them. I was really shocked. I wouldn't talk last year as I was a student teacher, but now I get that it let me know how everybody was really like and get to know everybody more.

It is important to notice how these observations demonstrate Colleen’s agency in deciding who she felt comfortable taking advice from and to the extent to which their advice influenced her practice (i.e., curriculum development and teaching styles). Also, notice her decision to consult her mentor teacher from student teaching suggests an effort to keep her vulnerabilities outside of her current school space. Colleen’s case exemplifies the way ECTs are charged not only with learning to teach students but also learning the who’s and what’s of their school. We will engage in further analysis of the role of colleagues as mentors in chapter six. For now, we

turn to Colleen’s perceptions of her position in the Warren High School’s ELA department and the school at large.

Position in Community

As the year progressed, Colleen expressed a more nuanced interpretation around her decisions to participate in her ELA teacher community and her school. As you learn about some of her experiences in her teacher communities, notice how she positioned herself as apart from the ELA department not only regarding the experiences of seeing or hearing of colleagues’ teaching styles and practices described above, but also as a result of reading and responding to departmental norms. You will also notice how Colleen positioned herself as apart from teachers in the building generally by calling attention to her age and visibility in the school. The description of a few key episodes across the year and Colleen’s meaning-making of those episodes captures how Colleen perceived her position in her school community

Reading and Responding to the ELA Community

Across the school year, Colleen expressed her preference to not “really say much” and to “just kind of like to take it all in” during ELA community meetings. Part of this preference was Colleen’s personality and mentality “to do it [her]self” and ultimately liking “to be left alone.” Colleen expressed that she did not see herself building friendships with colleagues or staying at this school long term because she wanted to move back home. She explained, “I just know that I’m not going to be here for that long. I’m not moving out to where this school is because I live like 50 minutes away right now. That makes me feel bad to say, but it just feels like this is a temporary place for me because I don’t have a home here. I don’t feel connected to this city in

any type of way.” Ultimately, Colleen reasoned that was what “stops [her] from... not getting as involved with [her] school as [she] probably should.”

Outside of these personal preferences, another piece of her resistance to being involved in the community was her feeling like she was less knowledgeable than her colleagues’ regarding the curriculum and students’ abilities and that she didn’t “really have much say.” When describing her opportunities to co-plan lessons for her 9th and 10th grade ELA classes with colleagues, Colleen expressed her hesitancy early in the year because she did not feel confident talking through ideas as she was just learning the curriculum for the first time. She explained, “Every time we try to [plan], we’ll talk through it. And honestly, I just need to go be alone for a little bit and wrap my brain around it. Then once I do that, I’ll be able to plan things through.” Colleen felt less confident to share her ideas because her “ideas were all over the place and never finished because [she] was never ready for any type of lessons.” In the second semester, Colleen expressed feeling more comfortable bringing in “an opinion or idea to the table” because she taught the content in her first semester. Since Colleen was one of the only teachers to teach 10th grade on-level second semester, the lead 10th grade teacher, Ms. Fletcher, asked her advice on the curriculum. “I feel like I have more of a space to have an input during our meetings,” Colleen reflected. She also felt that in the second semester it was easier to anticipate problems and students’ needs across units.

Even with the added experience, during the second semester, Colleen often opted to ask questions when the meeting was over or would send any materials that she adapted from the first semester via email. The 10th grade ELA teachers did start a shared document for lesson ideas, but no one consistently added to it. Instead, Colleen followed her colleagues’ practice in just

emailing out ideas and materials. Notably, in the second semester, Colleen created a new summative assessment project inspired by Shark Tank to replace an argumentative essay. Colleen shared the materials with Kimberly, the other first year ELA teacher, but did not send it to her other colleagues in advance. “I didn't really want any other teacher to do it until I worked out the kinks,” Colleen explained. In other words, despite her growing comfort with the 10th grade ELA teachers, Colleen opted to keep her work-in-progress ideas outside of the community. Essentially, Colleen was constantly negotiating her own preferences on how to participate in the ELA community while also reading and responding to ELA communities’ norms.

9th and 10th grade ELA Teacher Community Norms

Colleen’s time with her ELA colleagues primarily involved discussion of district testing expectations and implementation. There were no specific requirements around the 9th and 10th grade team teaching co-planning and teaching the same lessons, rather it was expected that they all teach the same skills and texts that aligned to the district-wide unit tests. In fact, at the end of the year when Colleen found out she would only have 9th grade classes for her second year of teaching, she met with the two other 9th grade teachers, Ryan and Brett to talk about the next year—Colleen uniquely referred to these teachers by their first name which I believe was because they were close to her age as she mentioned them being younger than the other members of the department. It should be noted that Colleen had been in meetings with Ryan and Brett during the 2023-24 school year, but having only 9th grade classes in the first semester and not having the same planning time as the 9th grade team, Colleen saw the 10th grade teachers more often. So, this meeting was an uncommon opportunity for Colleen to collaborate on the 9th grade curriculum.

The trio talked through each unit, determining a theme that would capture the essence of each unit. They reimagined their short story unit to include more multimodal texts and agreed that the *Romeo and Juliet* unit would largely be the same as it has been. Ryan and Brett held different perspectives on the research and rhetoric unit that historically included reading *The Odyssey* and so they discussed the possibility of segmenting the unit into *The Odyssey* and a passion project. Colleen learned through talking through the unit and their hopes for the following school year that the three of them shared the same vision for the content and so, Colleen felt “more comfortable speaking up.” Also in this conversation, Colleen gained some historical context of how the ELA teachers had worked together in the past. Ryan and Brett shared that when they got to the school a couple of years prior, there was no collaboration on the curriculum whatsoever. Colleen recalled them saying, “There was no collaboration... We got here and realized none of the teachers talked to each other. No one knew what anybody was teaching in any of the classes. It was just kind of ridiculous.”

As mentioned above, Colleen did feel a growing confidence to talk with the 10th grade teachers. Colleen explained that because she was the only 10th grade teacher reteaching the content that semester she was “more confident every time [she talked or brought] in an opinion or idea to the table” and had “more space to have input during [their] meetings.” However, she rarely collaborated and discussed units and daily plans in the way she did with the future 9th grade team at the end of her first year.

Distancing from Departmental Drama

Outside of understanding that the ELA teacher community was not necessarily a space that expected collaboration, which Colleen admittedly preferred, Colleen also expressed

disinterest in being involved with hearsay about other teachers. In the middle of the first semester, an 11th grade teacher, Dr. Mullins had a one-on-one conversation with Colleen, where he expressed that some teachers were aligned with department goals and others “don’t do their best at their jobs.” Colleen repeated the same sentiment in a voice memo in January—

I feel like everyone has a different type of opinion of, I don’t even know. I feel like it's unspoken, like I don’t even know about it yet. I feel like some of them don’t do their jobs and I don’t know. And I don’t really care to know is the whole thing either. I really just enjoy kind of staying [laughter] in my own little place down here at the end of the hallway. And I know that sounds bad probably, but like genuinely, I just kind of worry about me and my students and what we’ve got going on and whether or not I am doing my job with them. If I need help, I will reach out, and if I don’t I am probably not going to, you know? I don’t know, that probably sounds rude. I’m sorry. It’s not that I won’t reach out, it’s just that I don’t care to get into all that other stuff about other teachers. I kinda just like to focus on me and my room and my kids.

Dr. Mullin’s conversation, further explored below, is one example in Colleen’s case where her own perception of departmental beliefs is directly influenced by a colleague

Positioning within the School’s Teacher Community

Colleen repeatedly described her age as a characteristic that positioned herself as “other” to the teachers in the building, therefore positioning herself as an “outsider” to the ELA teacher community. Despite this outsider status, Colleen experienced a rise in popularity on her Teachertok, on the social-media platform, TikTok, that led to more visibility, and perhaps,

connection to the teachers in the building. This section explores Colleen's discursive positioning of herself regarding her age and the visibility resulting from online fame.

Age

Across the school year, Colleen described the gap between her youth as a factor influencing her discomfort when interacting with the ELA teachers and other teachers in the building. Referring to the other ELA teachers as adults, Colleen admitted that she felt more like a child around them.

I'm not an awkward person, but around adults and authority, I do feel that way. I know that I am an adult just like them, but I just do not feel that way. It feels like they know way more than me. They've been here for a lot longer than me. None of them are mean to me. They don't push me away or act like they know more than me, it's just all in my brain. And it makes me feel like I am a child, like I am a student because genuinely, at the end of the day, I am closer in age to my students than nearly all of the teachers here.

Colleen's closeness to her students' ages paired with seeing them more often created more of a connection to students rather than colleagues, which is also indicated by how Colleen referred to the few younger colleagues by their first name but continued to call her veteran colleagues by their last names across the year. Colleen felt that teachers noticed the difference, too. For instance, when Colleen would make jokes with students in the hallway or reminisce on Red light, Green light during a Fun Friday, she felt "teachers would look at [her]" because she was not acting "awkward or scared," which is how Colleen felt she acted in meetings with colleagues. Even when she did interact with colleagues who she noted as younger, she positioned herself as

different because, unlike her colleagues, she was knowledgeable and connected to students when explaining the meaning behind students' language or describing a popular teen tv show, Euphoria.

There were specific events related to appearance during the school year that highlighted to Colleen a difference in age to that of her colleagues. At the beginning of the second semester, Colleen attended a basketball game to receive a teacher appreciation award that one of her freshman students nominated her for. Colleen described her feelings as she was sitting in the stands, "I just feel so weird seeing all these teachers here. Like some of them, it was fine. I said, 'Hey.' But, especially not wearing my badge and being at school, but not, I don't know, I felt like I looked really young." She also remembered feeling the looks of parents and feeling like she "looked younger" and explained that they did not "realize [she] was a teacher until [she] had to walk out on the court" because "I don't have my badge on in that space."

Colleen also described how an older colleague in the department, Dr. Hughes, would both compliment and comment on Colleen's wardrobe—imagine clunky bedazzled earrings, a charm necklace, and a colorful oversized sweater. Dr. Hughes said, in what Colleen felt was judgement, she would never wear the flared jeans with a fray at the bottom that Colleen was wearing. Dr. Hughes did not show up outside of commenting on Colleen's clothing in our conversations, but she did it more than once. One day in January, Colleen opted to wear black leggings and a sweater to combat the heavy rain and flooding their area had experienced that week. Colleen recounted that Dr. Hughes, who was in black skinny jeans, commented, "I feel like what I have on is just more professional than those leggings. The students love to wear those big shirts and leggings." Colleen's response, "Yeah well, it was just like raining." According to Colleen, this

interaction did not bother her “because [Dr. Hughes] is probably like 50 something. . . she just really probably doesn't understand what's going on.” In fact, Colleen characterized Dr. Hughes’ outspoken behavior as being normal for her— “I think everybody in our whole department just kind of knows that she just will say things sometimes.” Both events where Colleen is either self-aware of her appearance looking more like the students or colleagues connect Colleen’s appearance to that of the students are evidence of discursive positioning of Colleen at a distance from her colleagues.

Ultimately, Colleen did wish that she would find a teacher in the building closer to her age to talk to because in Colleen’s first year teaching, it was her students who really only saw those pieces of her life. Colleen admitted, “It would be nice to also talk someone my age about what I like doing, what I don't like doing, how my weekend was, all those types of things because my kids know all of those things. They ask me all those things. I tell them all of those things. But it'd be nice to have an adult in here as well.”

Teachertok

During the spring, one of the videos in Colleen’s Teachertok went viral with around four million views and seven hundred likes when we spoke in April. This led to Colleen gaining twenty thousand followers and an additional income from the platform. The video followed a trend on TikTok where teachers shared comical things their students had said to them. Colleen’s personality in this online space was in stark contrast to how she interacted with the teachers in her building, but was more reminiscent with how her out-going, funny self came out to her students and within her teacher preparation program. Colleen described the videos as being geared towards other teachers and hit on topics like “Tips for things [she] wish [she] knew as a

first year teacher, How to use like classroom screen, Teacher outfits of the day, How to utilize Google Forms to like build connections with kids, and How to decorate your room without spending any money.” Despite the videos being geared towards teachers, students at Warren High School had also started to see them—multiple students even told Colleen that the video was on their “for you” page. As her popularity on TikTok grew, Colleen became nervous about if she was going to get in trouble with administration and for how this would impact how she was seen by students and other teachers at school.

She turned to Ms. McCoy and her mentor, Ms. Shelton for advice because she could not decide if should “ask for forgiveness or ask for permission.” Ms. McCoy expressed that she felt Colleen would be fine as long as the videos were appropriate. Ms. Shelton’s close friend also happened to have a viral online account focused on teacher fashion. While that teacher’s content was made at home and Colleen’s content was often made after school sitting at her teacher desk, Ms. Shelton figured Colleen would be fine if she was not “targeting students either.”

Colleen really felt comfortable “in her nook at the end of the hallway,” so her viral video brought on a level of local visibility she was not used to. Friends who were teachers at other schools started reaching out saying that they and their students had seen her video. At the end of the year, teachers in Colleen’s school started initiating conversation about her teachertok. One teacher said, “Thanks for how much you love the kids. I see your Tiktok videos all the time” and another teacher asked her about her username. After the school year finished, Colleen had not discussed her Teachertok account with administration, but had around 60,000 followers and had made a couple of thousand dollars. She planned on continuing making content, despite her reluctance to increase her visibility among teachers at Warren High School.

Colleen's Re-Positioning Moving Forward

The observations of Colleen's case regarding her self-positioning in her teacher community presented so far provide evidence of how colleagues' advice and actions have influenced her understanding of what it means to teach ELA at Warren High School. This is not to say that Colleen's experiences with colleagues were inherently negative. In fact, Colleen repeatedly expressed satisfaction with her colleagues in the school and her experience overall. Yet, she still envisioned herself moving back to her hometown to teach after the following year.

However, her sense of her longevity in the department shifted after a conversation with Dr. Mullins in the last few days of school. Colleen had recently received her teaching assignment for her second year which was all 9th grade on-level and co-taught courses. When Colleen went to ask Dr. Mullins a question, he also shared that her teaching assignment was strategic and that he had a plan for her at the school. He wanted her to loop with the incoming class from 9th grade to 10th grade. He explained that the End of Course State exam would be moving down to 10th that year, but he would be retiring. He wanted her to take his spot. Colleen remembered this interaction with Dr. Mullins,

'Someone's got to take my spot teach the EOC class.' He was like, 'we want it to be you.' ... He was like, 'the county will leave you alone. They're not going to bother you. Teach whatever you want to teach as long as you're putting up like the test scores, like putting up the results.' ... He's like, 'we've done this a million times, every single lesson is laid out for you. It'll be a cakewalk.' He was like. 'we've seen the other teachers, we don't, the other new teachers.'" He's like, 'we don't, no. We want you to do that.'

Flattered, Colleen shared that she may want to stay at the school longer than she anticipated and be able to watch some of her students graduate and teach the EOC course. This interaction is significant because up until this point in the year, Colleen had not necessarily seen herself committed to participating in the ELA department or the school community.

To summarize, Colleen's recursively read her teacher communities' norms when determining when and how she wanted to comply with those norms. In doing so, she positioned herself as apart from or at times a part of her ELA teacher community and the faculty overall. Those decisions were informed by her personal goal to maintain limited visibility and prioritize her students and her teaching rather than engage in department tension. We will further analyze the significance of Colleen's need to position herself in this way in chapter six, but for now, we turn to observations of the role of district and state testing on Colleen's experience as a first-year ELA teacher.

Testing

District tests were a frequent topic of conversation for the ELA department at Warren High School—one indication of the department's values. The observations here primarily rely on Colleen's understanding and interpretation of the tests with specific attention to how these were discussed during teacher community meetings. The following sections provide description of significant events and contextual information detailing the three types of tests⁹ Colleen administered across the 2023-24 academic school year: STAR tests, DOT tests, and Writerly,

⁹ Test names are pseudonyms to maintain school and district anonymity.

thus exploring Colleen's understanding of the significance of these tests' in her teacher community and her own teaching.

STAR Tests

Colleen's district had a new testing platform for the STAR tests for all subject areas, which were the district level unit exams that Colleen was required to give her 9th and 10th graders after every unit. The STAR tests were skills and standards focused and the scores were added to students' gradebook with a curve based on teachers' discretion. In the first semester, Colleen said her 9th graders took four STAR tests and her 10th graders took five. While Colleen's district did have a district plan (i.e. pacing guide), her 9th and 10th grade teaching teams primarily looked at the STAR tests for instructional guidance. So, while not every 10th grader in Colleen's district would read the same text like *The House on Mango Street* as the 10th graders at Warren High School did, they all would take the same district STAR test at the end of the unit to assess skills aligned to state ELA standards. Colleen knew of three teachers from her school who were on the testing team that helped create the STAR tests for the district—Ms. Fletcher, Ms. George, and Ryan.

Colleen explained that her students hated these summative tests in part because they heavily affected their grades as they were required to go in the gradebook. They did not take them seriously and likened them to the DOT tests described below. Colleen ended up showing her 9th graders just how much the STAR tests impacted their grades by showing them on the online gradebook. She recounted a conversation with a student, "Come over here and watch what happens when you make this grade and it drops their grade like 20 points." In the first semester, she also did end up reading the excerpt to her 9th graders that they had to answer analysis-based

multiple choice questions, but had them read the reading comprehension one on their own. In the second semester, Colleen was more intentional about preparing her students for the STAR tests. She said she would preview the tests and make sure her students had practiced the skills. She also felt that she was better able to anticipate where her students would struggle and would make recommendations by saying, “Everybody, right when you open up your computer, go to question number three and that’s gonna be the first one you answer and you should not answer it until like, the 10 minutes pass probably, or five to 10 minutes pass” or she would give a paper copy of a text in the test so her students could annotate it before answering questions.

Ultimately Colleen admitted, “We’ve not had much success with [STAR tests] and [they] just involve a lot of remediation. So, these STAR tests, it’s not just one day; it takes up at least three days. One day to prepare for it, one day to take it, and one day for remediation.” As such, the students’ performance, how STAR tests were administered, and how to remediate were frequent agenda items for Colleen and her colleagues. The following offers two case records that describe the large role that STAR tests played beyond Colleen’s classroom and in Colleen’s ELA department meetings and her grade-level teaching teams.

Department STAR Disagreement

During one department meeting towards the middle of the fall semester, the administrator over the ELA department asked for the department’s opinions on the required testing (i.e., STAR, DOTS, and Writerly) and if the department would like to remove one. Colleen explained that the tests were time consuming, noting that in November her students tested every week for three weeks straight. From her observation, the 9th and 10th grade teachers and possibly even the 12th grade teachers all would have agreed to get rid of the STAR tests. “Everyone hates the

STAR unit tests. The students find them really difficult. We don't make them, we just have to assign them. The kids can't understand the vocabulary, their own very low, low levels, especially the freshmen," explained Colleen. What followed was "a little bit of a tizzy" and "tensions got a little bit high" as the 11th grade teachers fully disagreed. The 11th grade teachers were responsible for the state End of Course (EOC) Exam that asked multiple choice questions similar to those in the STAR tests, so they felt the STAR tests helped students prepare for the EOC. During the meeting, Colleen said that the 11th grade teachers "called out" the 9th and 10th grade teachers, saying that they needed to do more multiple-choice questions for practice and that they should ask students to "pull evidence from text more often because they're seeing in 11th grade that the kids can't read. They can't answer questions based off of the text. They can't do multiple choice questions." Colleen said she did not speak up during this meeting because she did not want to be involved.

The next day, Dr. Mullins visited Colleen's classroom to debrief the conversation in which he was relieved that Colleen had graduated from the same institution as some of the other teachers in the department and that he knew they understood his goal for the department. Colleen summarized the visit as "classic teachers talking about each other" and explained Dr. Mullins point of view as some teachers did not "want to do the best at their job" and they teachers need to buy-in to the things being implemented at the school so that students would learn more and they can attract better and more teachers who "are willing to push students." Colleen admitted that Dr. Mullins can be "kind of intimidating," but she appreciated how he made her feel wanted in the department. In fact, he had shared that Colleen was the only new hire that he and other ELA colleagues had expressed approval for during the hiring interviews.

STAR Talk

Colleen learned about the testing requirements through department and grade-level meetings, sometimes in ways that felt like the last minute to Colleen. In a meeting in early November, Colleen found out that they would need to give three more STAR tests to her 10th grade students before December 20th. Realizing how many instructional days she would lose in order to prepare, give, and remediate each STAR test, Colleen felt the STAR tests caused anxiety for her and her students. She reported that most of her students scored a 20 percent on the first STAR test of the year and even when she saw progress on a reading comprehension-based STAR test given in the middle of the semester still around 86% of her students still had not mastered the reading comprehension skills.

Colleen came to understand that her 9th and 10th grade teacher meetings primarily revolved around upcoming STAR tests. They would discuss each other's pacing and when they were giving the test to their classes, how the tests would be included in the gradebook, and how they would implement remediation when needed including who would be available for after-school tutoring. They did sometimes look at "how [their students] did on STAR, like after the STAR test, like after the end of the unit" which Colleen found to be a helpful gauge and to "be like, okay, so this is how everybody's doing, like, across the board of the school." Despite being required to administer the STAR tests, each teacher could decide how they would input their student's scores in the gradebook. Colleen noted that they were not told this at first, but once they found out, the team did talk through possible ways of inputting scores in the gradebook.

Even with the continuous discussion of STAR tests in her grade level-teams, Colleen admitted that they did "not influence how I build [curriculum] that much to be completely

honest.” She would note which skills would be on the STAR test and would be sure to hit those during the unit. Occasionally towards the end of units, she would ask the 10th grade teaching lead, Ms. Fletcher, what she was doing instructionally to prepare her students for the STAR, but ultimately the teachers mainly discussed STAR testing logistics.

Before one team meeting that I observed in January, Ms. Fletcher and Colleen talked about the STAR test that they both were giving the following day. Ms. Fletcher pulled up the STAR test platform and talked about a few questions on the test. Another 9th grade ELA teacher, Ryan, added to the informal conversation that he checks his students’ answers as they are about to turn the test in and tells them which ones they got wrong and gives them an opportunity to rethink those questions. He reasoned “it was a way for giving immediate feedback.” Shortly after, Ms. Fletcher officially started the meeting by pulling up the agenda on the board. The first point of discussion is how the team plans on offering remediation for the STAR tests. The other new teacher who taught 10th grade, Kimberly, said she had already given the test and decided to “dump two questions.” Starting to participate more in the grade level meetings, Colleen pulled up the STAR test platform and talks about how the skill of understanding context clues is needed for those questions. She also explains that her class was doing Membean, an online vocabulary practice, that could help with those types of questions. Ms. Fletcher agreed that vocabulary and context clues are a difficult thing that even AP kids need help with and reasons they “have fallen off the train somewhere” when it came to vocabulary. The conversation pivots to getting enough copies of *Romeo and Juliet* for the 9th grade classes with Ms. Fletcher, towards the end of the meeting, stating that they decided on remediation, which seemed to have been dropping certain questions and doing more vocabulary practice.

In the second semester, the 9th and 10th grade teams were able to opt-out of some of the STAR unit tests for district made project-based assessment rubrics. Colleen understood that Ms. Fletcher and Ryan, who were teachers on the district testing team, were able to provide input and modify the requirements of the tests including the order of the units and corresponding STAR test and what should be included in the project-based assessment rubric alternatives. Colleen was thankful for these changes in the second semester.

As the second semester was coming to a close, Colleen was trying to navigate the changes in expectations on the STAR tests from the previous semester and the requirements for how many formative and summative grades were required in the gradebook. She thought that the final needed to be the STAR test and that she needed two more summative grades to make the eight required— two for each of the four total units. However, she was unsure if she would have time to complete two project-based assessments, so she figured she would need to make a multiple choice test herself. Her grade-level team had opted out of the STAR tests for the drama and research units, which is what caused the changes in the summative scores from the first semester to the second. During post-planning, the 9th and 10th grade teams looked at their data. They looked at three particular questions that seemed to be difficult to students and each shared how they put it in the gradebook. For instance, Colleen gave a 12-point curve because her highest score without the curve was an 88. Another teacher allotted 50 possible points from the STAR test and 50 possible points from a project they had been working on.

DOT Tests

DOT tests were much more infrequent compared to the STAR tests as Colleen's students only took the DOT test once at the beginning of the semester and again near the end of the

semester. They also were not added to her students' grades. Colleen first learned about the DOT test through an email that detailed her students' accommodations for taking the test. Colleen shared that other ELA teachers expressed frustration that this was their responsibility, meanwhile she did not even really know what the DOT tested for and was "glancing over [her students] shoulders" during the test. She eventually learned that the DOT test was to identify her students' Lexile levels. Colleen said she liked looking at the DOT test data because it "felt important for [her] to understand," but she did take into consideration that her students did not really try when they first took it. The second testing time frame was sprung on her the same way as the first, via email, and happened to coincide in the same time frame as another required assessment described below.

Her first time administering the tests, her students expressed hatred for the test even though they were used to the tests from previous years in the district. Colleen bribed her classes to put more effort into the second DOT test at the end of the semester by saying she would give them 10 points on their lowest summative test if they improved their score by at least one point. By the end of the year Colleen was confident in the relationships she built with students but was nervous they "weren't learning anything." However, she shared,

I am very proud to say that 71% of my freshmen improved on their DOT scores. Some of my kids, who were not the strongest readers, scored the highest DOT score they have ever scored in their lives. And I was so proud of them for that. It made me so happy. I am pretty sure I cried because I was so happy for them. Not that that test really defines them, but it did just show how much progress they made inside of my classroom when it comes to reading and literature and things like that.

Colleen's 9th and 10th grade team often spoke about remediation based on test results and how to help students who without an adjustment on their school would have incredibly low averages in the gradebook. They never settled on a consistent form of remediation, often relying on test corrections for the STAR tests. But, Colleen did appreciate the remediation that one 10th grade teacher, Ms. Drew, came up with where based on the DOT test scores students would be grouped homogeneously with a student with a higher Lexile being the group leader. The group would work through a Commonlit article (i.e. online platform with texts in various genres and reading levels with paired multiple choice questions) to earn points back for their STAR tests. However, the way the points were calculated felt random to Colleen and it was time consuming to do in class, so the team did not continue this in the second semester.

Writerly

Writerly was primarily an essay-based test where students would log into the platform and read the given essays that would provide potential evidence in their written response to a given essay prompt—a process similar to the 11th grade state written exam. Students did have to answer three multiple-choice questions and a short response before the essay, but the main feedback from the test was the students' scores on the essay portion. Their scores were not added to their gradebook. Writerly was intended to take 70 minutes with an additional 20 minutes for accommodations if needed, so the test ended up taking a day and a half of instructional time.

This was the first year that Colleen's district was paying to use this external testing platform, and Colleen had little understanding of the logistics of the exam before she administered it to students the first time. She remembered her students asking how long their response should be and she guessed that a paragraph or two would be enough. She had not

realized it was supposed to be a full essay until she got the results back. The second time her students completed a Writerly essay in the first semester, Colleen worked to prepare them more by working on outlines they should use when writing essays. The other on-level 10th grade teacher did the same.

In the second semester, Colleen experienced some frustrating circumstances with the Writerly exam. Towards the end of the semester, Colleen found out at the last minute that the second Writerly two-week testing window and the DOT testing coincided in the same time frame just as she was wrapping up a research unit with her 10th graders. This was a surprise because this group of students had just taken the first Writerly about a month prior. Due to the timing, she talked to her students and together they opted to take both tests in the same week. Regretting this decision, Colleen called it the “worst week.” In addition to the unfortunate timing, Colleen explained that she had not even known her students’ first scores were posted in the portal until her students noticed a button with “view results” on it as they were logging into the second test of the semester.

Colleen’s grade-level teams had a zoom meeting with a Writerly representative who walked them through the resources that were available in the platform in the middle of the second semester. They also had a similar meeting with the whole department. Similar to how the 11th grade teachers expressed the need for 9th and 10th grade teachers to work more on multiple choice testing, like the STAR tests, to support students in the 11th grade EOC, Colleen felt that they also felt that 9th and 10th grade teachers did not have them work on enough evidence-based writing. Colleen remembered the 11th grade teachers saying, “what we’re seeing in their junior year is they’re not ready for anything.” Colleen did not find the Writerly results to be particularly

helpful, however, because she felt her students did not take it seriously and would not write very much. She did admit that the scores were “interesting to look at” but she and her colleagues agreed during a meeting that if they had more time to look through the portal and use the targeted lessons that they would like the test more, rather than it being a “random” test that “they threw on us.” In other words, Colleen accepted and adopted her colleagues decision to not use the Writerly data as a tool to guide instruction; despite the districts’ new adoption of the test, her colleagues’ disinterest of Writerly mentored Colleen not be invested in the test either.

Impact of Testing on Colleen’s Mean-Making

The frequent conversation of testing in Colleen’s ELA teacher community indicated the school and district expectations that the ELA teachers, and therefore Colleen, were recursively negotiated within the community. We will analyze this further in chapter six, but for now it is important to note how her colleagues’ expression of their personal beliefs on testing and their actions regarding the tests were present in her own negotiation of the testing.

Key Issues Present Across Colleen’s Case

To conclude, let me summarize some key issues regarding the significance of ECTs’ experiences in teacher communities that I’ve come to understand through spending the year with Colleen and writing her case. First, ECTs can be mentored by more than their assigned mentor. More specifically, ECTs’ colleagues inform ECT’s understanding of their school’s expectations around student behavior as well as their developing approaches to managing their classroom. Their colleagues’ teaching styles are also present in how ECTs make sense of their own instructional preferences. Second, ECTs engage in recursive readings of their content-specific

teacher community's norms and expectations as one process for positioning themselves within or apart from that community. They also consider personal preferences for their presence at work (i.e., levels of visibility) and relational compatibility with colleagues (i.e., shared experiences related to age) when placing themselves, or not, in their teacher community. Finally, ECTs can learn about external expectations on their content-specific teacher community through their colleagues' framing and reactions to those expectations. Therefore, colleagues influence ECTs' position on specific expectations regarding school and district testing including the ways in which ECTs prepare students for the tests, implement the test themselves, and weigh the importance of students' performance on tests.

Keeping the issues of Colleen's case in mind will be important in the coming chapters. Next, we will meet a second year ELA teacher, Kelsey, before moving into a more in-depth analysis that considers both cases to better understand ECTs' experiences in their teacher communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CASE OF A SECOND YEAR TEACHER

Next, I introduce to you, Kelsey, a second year ELA teacher at Meadow Glen High School. As with Colleen's case before, the description of this case is intended to help you get to know Kelsey, how she works in her school, and some of what she faced in her second year of teaching. In doing so, we will begin to explore some of the ways she perceived the normative behaviors of her teacher community, and her perception of the events, people, and circumstances observed in this case. As with Colleen's case, this case is bound to Kelsey and her perceptions of her experiences and is guided by the following questions:

1. How do early career teachers interpret their experiences in their teacher community?
2. How do early career teachers perceive their position in their teacher communities?

The observations are organized to attend to these questions and to set up explicit analysis in the next chapter. Additionally, you will notice ways in which Kelsey's experiences map into or at least relate to Colleen's case. On the other hand, Kelsey's presentation of herself and her teacher community offer additional insights into ECTs' experiences in their teacher communities. As you read Kelsey's case, notice how her experiences in her second year of teaching still include moments of collegial mentoring, but also present a different perspective of professional relationships. Kelsey's experience also involves a negotiation of her professional preferences

alongside the more ingrained community norms of her ELA colleagues' regarding collaboration and student accountability. With that, let's get to know Kelsey.

Kelsey and I Prior to the Study

Much like Colleen, I came to know Kelsey as a student and a teacher while working with her as a university supervisor during her student teaching semester. I witnessed her growth from initially struggling to fit into a 6th grade placement with restrictive curriculum to subsequently flourishing in a high school placement where she frequently was giving Young Adult Book Talks, reimagining lessons, and collaborating with her mentor teacher. She always carried around a teacher notebook that housed her personal reflections and reactions to teaching, but also as a place to write down takeaways after our observation debriefs. She ran a classroom as a student teacher with more confidence than I had ever seen. During her first year of teaching, we both were enrolled in a graduate level course focused on the historical approaches to teaching English language arts— Kelsey had received special permission to join a doctoral level course while completing her M.Ed. I say this to note the immense passion Kelsey had for learning and to name that I was privy to some of her experiences as a first-year teacher through our conversations in the course.

Kelsey at Meadow Glen High School

For the 2023-24 school year, Kelsey taught a new grade level than her first having three sections of on-level 11th grade American Literature each semester. Her school, Meadow Glen High School, was also located in a growing rural suburb of a large southeastern city— Kelsey taught in a different school district than Colleen. She had taught 9th and 10th grade ELA at the

same school for her first year of teaching. The school's population was a couple hundred students shy of two thousand with a little over 50% of the population identifying as White, 23% as Hispanic, 16% as Black, 5% as Asian, 4% as two or more races, and less than 1% as American Indian. The school had around 35% of its population receive free or reduced lunch and held an 88% graduation rate. Meadow Glen High was one of two high schools in Summer Grove School District with the other high school being where Kelsey completed her student teaching. Meadow Glen High was under an hour's drive to a large southeastern research institution where Kelsey graduated with both her bachelor's in education Masters of Education—the school is often used as a site for observation and practicum experiences for student teachers at that institution.

Kelsey's classroom was tucked downstairs from the entrance level of the building. While she was located near other ELA teachers, including a close colleague, who you will meet below, Kelsey's school was not organized by department or grade level. Her 11th grade PLC lead was in a different hallway also downstairs. As with Colleen's school, Meadow Glen High followed a block schedule, meaning Colleen taught three sections of students in the first semester and three different sections of students in the second semester, all 11th grade on-level American Literature. During the first semester, Kelsey had 3rd period planning and in the second semester she had 4th period planning. Her 11th grade PLC typically met on Tuesdays during school in the first semester, but also after school to accommodate teachers who did not have a planning or did not share the 3rd period planning time. They met less frequently in the 2nd semester and, if they did, it was after school.

Before we move any further into Kelsey's experiences, we need to jump ahead to the end. Kelsey did decide to leave the profession at the end of her second year of teaching. I tell you this now because it is important to pay attention to the movement of Kelsey's responses to her teacher community across the school year and ultimately to see how her experiences accumulated in her leaving the profession.

Mentors and Influential Colleagues

Kelsey's assigned mentoring support was limited in her first year at Meadow Glen High and non-existent in her second. To explain, she was assigned a mentor in her first year which we will talk about below. She also was expected to participate in a district mentoring initiative where she met for a virtual monthly meeting with first-year teachers in the district. These meetings felt "redundant" and did not "scrap[e] the surface of what [she] actually need[ed];" Kelsey felt that they were more geared towards teachers coming in through alternative certification paths. Finally, she attended a school-wide first-year teacher monthly meeting that was "casual" and mainly meant for encouragement and working through different classroom scenarios.

In her second year, and the time of this study, Kelsey had no assigned mentors or mentoring programs. However, in our conversations, Kelsey classified a few colleagues as having mentoring or supportive roles, albeit, some were more effective than others.

Meet the Mentors

Here I will introduce you to three of Kelsey's colleagues¹⁰ in order to illustrate Kelsey's relationship with these fellow teachers. You'll notice the stark difference between the numbers of colleagues that mentored Colleen to the three described below along with the ways in which each of these teachers took on the role of informal mentor. It is important to consider the decrease in number and scope of collegial mentors for second year teachers like Kelsey once the school and district induction program and policies are removed. The observations of her colleagues rely primarily on her perspective, but are also influenced by my own witnessing of some of their interactions. Nonetheless, the descriptions below help us understand colleagues' influences on Kelsey's experiences in the teacher community.

Mandy Peterson

Mandy Peterson was the ELA department head at Meadow Glen High and had been for some time. Mandy was Kelsey's assigned mentor during her first year of teaching the academic year prior to this research study. Reflecting on their mentoring relationship, Kelsey admitted that it was unhelpful and basically non-existent as Mandy only met with Kelsey one time that year for mentoring purposes with the other interactions being tied to departmental events. More specifically, Kelsey felt that Mandy "had already mentally checked out" from her role as a department head as she was nearing retirement. Mandy had repeatedly vocalized that she would retire when her high school aged child graduated.

¹⁰ Unlike Colleen, Kelsey regularly referred to her colleagues by their first names unless she was retelling an interaction with a student. As such, in this case, all of Kelsey's colleagues have been given first and last name pseudonyms and are referred to by those first names to portray Kelsey's understanding of their relationships.

Jenny Collins

Jenny was the 11th grade PLC Lead and had served as a mentor teacher for many student teachers from Kelsey's alma mater in previous years. Jenny also taught 11th grade AP Language and Composition in addition to 11th grade on-level and ESOL ELA classes. Jenny encouraged Kelsey's contributions to discussions and curricular ideas and made Kelsey feel like she had leadership potential. From Kelsey's perspective, Jenny also had potential to step into the department leadership role once Mandy retired—"I think that people will find it comforting because [Jenny had] been there for so long. And they all expect this. No one expects it to be really anybody else."

Leslie Tate

Leslie had been teaching for five years and had graduated from the same teacher preparation program. During this study, she was in her second year at Meadow Glen High. Kelsey and Leslie formed a professional relationship the year before when they taught 9th grade together. Kelsey explained that she and Leslie were "best friends," "twin flames," and "soul sisters." The two had found they shared common approaches to teaching. Kelsey described it as "carbon copies of each other in terms of pedagogy." Together, they even presented at a regional conference for ELA teachers.

Working with Colleagues: A Form of Mentoring

Kelsey's interactions and relationships with her colleagues are integral to understanding her experience as an ECT. While the colleagues in Kelsey's teacher community were not named nor framed as mentors explicitly by Kelsey, it was evident through our conversations that she

learned both about her teacher community and about her own teaching practice as a result of working with these teachers. That is not to say that these individuals set out to explicitly mentor Kelsey regarding emotions in teaching, planning and pedagogical decision making, and reading the school environment, rather Kelsey refined her understanding of these ideas as a result of working alongside them. In the next chapter, it will be important to think back to how these social interactions within the teacher community shape Kelsey's experiences.

Colleagues and Emotions

The validation as an ECT that Jenny provided Kelsey was weaved into the emotions Kelsey experienced in the larger departmental community. Kelsey felt that Jenny made her “feel seen and heard as a young educator” explaining that “never once ha[d] [Jenny] ever made [her] feel invalidated for [her] years of experience.” Indeed, Kelsey often turned to Jenny to make sense of the emotional drain that comes with teaching. Kelsey expressed gratitude for the ways that Jenny both modeled and made space for the PLC members to “vent” and get “stuff off their chest.” In fact, Kelsey had experienced traumatic events with students both in her first year and during this school year— something she felt should be talked about more within teacher preparation and in mentoring. But, she felt comfort in talking with Jenny about her experiences because she made space for the team members to share when they are “having a rough time” as people, not just teachers. We will observe a community meeting below that exemplifies Jenny's mentoring around emotions and teaching.

Leslie also offered Kelsey emotional support not only because of their friendship, but because their collaborations gave her hope when she began to not get what she needed from her teacher community. As collaboration faded on the 11th grade team during the first semester,

Kelsey held out hope for the second semester because she would have the opportunity to collaborate with Leslie again. Leslie primarily taught 12th grade ELA but also had one section of 11th grade co-taught ELA in the spring. Kelsey expected that the addition of Leslie on the 11th grade team would “add validity to [her] claims,” if not make them “louder” because they would both express similar disagreements when needed. While Leslie supported Kelsey by voicing similar sentiments around pedagogies, which we will talk about next, she also grounded Kelsey when she was feeling frustrated by colleagues and circumstances at the school. For instance, during a 11th grade PLC meeting Kelsey was expressing frustration around the 10th grade team’s decision to read five books in one semester, Leslie turned to Kelsey and said, “You said you weren’t going to do that and then you’ve mentioned 10th grade two or three times.” Leslie gave Kelsey emotional guidance when working within frustrating realities of her teacher community.

Colleagues and Pedagogy

Jenny encouraged and valued Kelsey’s perspectives on the curriculum and welcomed her in the discussion on the decisions the 11th grade team made. Kelsey and Jenny had also had conversations about Kelsey stepping into a leadership role on the 11th grade ELA team in the future as she had already been a major contributor to curriculum changes. This further affirmed Kelsey’s decisions around planning in ways that were best for her and her students and not just to “follow everyone” else in the department. Below we will observe a community meeting that exemplifies Jenny’s encouragement. For now, I’ll just name how Jenny’s welcoming role in having colleagues discuss the teaching happening in their respective rooms allowed Kelsey to

compare her own decisions and instructional moves to that of her colleagues, which further clarified understanding of how she fit within the teacher community.

Additionally, with their similar pedagogical approaches, Leslie affirmed Kelsey's pedagogical decision making and provided a collaborative outlet to ease the burden of planning with colleagues who have differing approaches or styles. Unfortunately, Kelsey found that collaboration around curriculum for the 11th grade team as a whole nearly disappeared as the second semester went on due to colleagues' differing preferences for engagement. Despite not having the same planning period, Kelsey and Leslie continued to co-plan a new unit on the young adult novel, *Scythe*, even with the rest of the 11th grade team moving through the unit at their own pace and led by their own decisions. Kelsey and Leslie visited each other's rooms for quick questions during their respective planning periods and talked through ideas on the phone home from school. Towards the end of the year, Kelsey continued to collaborate and share ideas with Leslie even when she had started putting up more boundaries with other colleagues who wanted access to her materials without having collaborative conversations. Kelsey found the collaboration to be mutually beneficial.

Colleagues and Reading the School Environment

Kelsey's limited interactions with Mandy reflected how the department typically worked in isolation or kept to their grade-level teams. Kelsey got along with Mandy on a personal level but felt there little mentoring on teaching in the relationship. Kelsey understood that Mandy's impending retirement despite her role as department head influenced a lack of direction or motivation to take up pedagogical conversations. The year prior, Kelsey admitted, she had "pushed back and been really critical about things" in regard to Mandy's departmental decisions,

however, after realizing nothing substantive resulted from the meetings, she began to not be as vocal. Kelsey's experiences with Mandy and the department will be further contextualized below.

Kelsey's interactions with Jenny around state testing were frequently mentioned in our conversations. Jenny often vocalized a negative perspective of state tests which Kelsey referred to as Jenny's "fire and brimstone speech" on state testing that expressed the tests as biased and inaccurate. In a regular meeting on the 11th grade team, Jenny casually commented that she would "march in the streets against" against the state tests. Jenny, in her leadership role, also conveyed school expectations around the testing through her personal lens on the testing to the 11th grade team. For instance, Kelsey recalled Jenny telling the 11th grade team about a meeting from years prior when administration compared individual teachers' data to other teachers in the school and the county. Jenny largely dismissed this action and reassured Kelsey that stuff like that did not matter. Jenny's understanding of state testing along with the teacher community's uptake of state testing will also be contextualized further below.

For now, note how both Jenny and Penny add to Kelsey's understanding of the ELA department's beliefs about the function of the community and what that community values. Next, we will turn to significant events within or around Kelsey's ELA department and 11th grade PLC teacher communities to further explore Kelsey's experience, but also to start to understand where she saw herself in those communities across the school year.

Position in Teacher Communities

This section differs from Colleen's case that explored how she was trying to see how she fit into her teacher community. Instead, you'll find that Kelsey started the year confident in her position as a collaborator and participant in both the 11th grade PLC and ELA department. However, her experiences within those communities alongside key school events that influenced her experiences and shifted how she positioned herself as an ELA teacher in the school. So, here I present observations on the make-up of Kelsey's ELA department and examples of common grade-level experiences paired with descriptions of key events in the school at large. My goal is to provide the contextual information needed to understand how Kelsey understood her teacher communities and how she understood her evolving position and resulting willingness to (dis)engage in those communities in order to protect her own teaching practice and teacher self. Kelsey explicitly said that it was not Meadow Glen High that led her to leave the profession after this school year, rather it was the way the job as a whole was impacting her physically, emotionally, and mentally. Yet, the observations here help us understand the experiences that are intertwined in her year and the community she was willing to leave.

The ELA Community at Meadow Glen High

Kelsey's ELA department was run by Mandy Peterson, introduced above. Despite Kelsey's hope for more structured meetings, the department rarely met, and when they did, meetings had a social rather than instruction focus. Kelsey's 11th grade PLC was largely run by Jenny and typically met on Tuesdays during their 3rd period planning in the first semester. That said, meetings were occasionally held after school to accommodate one of the members having Extended Day, meaning they taught an extra period rather than having planning. Their meetings

and collaborations decreased as the year went on and as teachers' teaching assignments shifted in the spring semester. We will first explore a description of an 11th grade PLC meeting from late October and then after we will observe some key moments related to the department as a whole.

Kelsey's 11th Grade PLC October Meeting

In Jenny's classroom, a few hallways away from Kelsey's room, the two casually talked about their day and an upcoming unit. Jenny stepped out to use the restroom while Kelsey began drawing a large grid on a giant post-it to make a unit pacing guide. The other 11th grade teacher, Penny, joined the group and together they reviewed logistics for an upcoming field trip.

Next, Jenny admitted to the group that she is "not herself" after a close friend's death and that she was not "operating at full capacity" that day. Both Kelsey and Penny offered condolences and engaged with Jenny when she shared about their friendship. Later in a reflection, Kelsey explained that she and Jenny would check on one another and felt she had "community with [Jenny].".

With the three teachers sitting at student desks in the center of Jenny's classroom, they transitioned their focus to talking about an upcoming ethics and morality unit focused on argumentation skills. They first decided when a mock argument would take place so that they could share data. Next, they moved to different mini lesson ideas that needed to be included in the unit with Jenny suggesting one on engaging an audience, telling Kelsey, "You tell me when we are doing that. I don't care," as Kelsey added the lesson to the grid. From Jenny and Kelsey's suggestions, the group agreed that students need more work with constructed responses, long essays, and narrative writing techniques. Penny pulled up materials on her computer. The group

was interrupted by another teacher looking to talk to Jenny about missing a Gender Equity Alliance meeting. The group returned to unit planning promptly focusing on the fact the students were struggling with making sense of writing prompts, specifically the language of the types of writing (e.g., expository versus information). Jenny noted, “That’s part of our vertical. We need to align and use that language throughout, but that’s a problem for another time.”

Returning to the unit discussion, Jenny shared some lesson ideas tied to the ethics and morals themes, admitting that another teacher in the past had gotten parent push back on a day that asked students to engage in an exercise about deciding who should be allowed to join a lifeboat with limited space. Ultimately, Jenny said it would still be fine to use the activity. Penny shared that she and her husband had created a similar game about hiding out in a bunker that they could use. During this conversation, Kelsey continued to write their ideas on the grid.

Next, Penny projected her laptop onto Jenny’s screen at the front of the room and walked the group through a unit she had been doing with 12th grade classes that focused on using artificial intelligence. She pulled up individual assignments to explain them; Jenny worked on her computer and Kelsey looked at what was projected. Something Penny shared prompted Kelsey and Jenny to commiserate over the Checkpoint¹¹ Writing Rubric (i.e., the state’s writing exam grading rubric). Kelsey also slid her computer to me to explain that she was unsure of why Penny was walking the group through these materials for a different grade level. Eventually, Jenny suggested that Penny map some of the ideas she had shared into the unit they were planning for 11th grade.

¹¹ Again, pseudonyms to maintain school and district anonymity.

Next, the group discussed possible argumentative essay prompts for the unit with Kelsey saying she wanted to focusing on vaping as a topic for the unit. Jenny encouraged the team to choose topics that they wanted and explained that they could “go off on their own.” She also suggested that next year they could consider using the novel, *Scythe*, with this unit and would work on getting copies of the text.

Simultaneously, Penny kept sharing materials on the board while Kelsey added names to the grid next to different activities to note which of the three teachers were responsible for making and sharing materials for those lessons. The unit planning came to a close as the teachers shifted conversation to what is happening currently in their classes and current events; Jenny expressed excitement for this unit and how they could continue tweaking it next semester.

As the teachers pack up their belongings, Penny expressed fear of her students not being ready for Checkpoint Tests in the coming weeks with Jenny alluding to it not mattering as much since they did not have a boss and therefore, the district had bigger things to worry about. Kelsey added that she saw how rumors were continuing on the local social media parent group and Jenny said it was a shame that the central office was not giving any guidance on how to address this. They all agreed that it was impacting discipline.

Standing up, Kelsey asked if there was a department meeting coming up soon. Jenny explained that they did not really have them here but asked if she was worried about something. Penny asked if there had even been one this year. The two responded that the only one was on a teacher workday, admitting it was more social than a meeting.

Takeaways from the community meeting. Before we consider Kelsey's role in the 11th grade PLC, let's take note of what Kelsey's experience during this meeting signifies for her community and for herself as a teacher. It started with Jenny modeling how to lean on colleagues for emotional support and afforded Kelsey the space to consider the emotions teachers carry because of and around teaching. Next, the 11th grade teachers talked about different curricular options for their ethics and morality unit which highlighted how teachers approach collaborative planning differently. Kelsey wanted to create a scope and sequence as guidance for the team whereas Penny was spending the meeting time combing through lessons from a different course that could be reutilized.

Within the larger conversation of the unit, the team acknowledged the role of state writing exams in their planning and how the department needed to consider this when vertically aligning the language used for writing instruction across grade-levels. Here Kelsey saw an opportunity for the department to improve instruction but also saw that idea being dismissed as not something that will occur from Jenny's perspective. Kelsey was learning more about how the ELA department functioned, including the low chance of meeting beyond a social purpose. She also learned more of Jenny's negative perspective on data from state testing and how the school community would be more concerned with their problems in leadership, which will be discussed in more detail next.

We also see parents being discussed in different ways during the meeting. Kelsey learned how parents had played a role in the past with the particular unit they were planning but Jenny's confirmation to still use the lesson conveyed teachers still had some autonomy and support to

make decisions on their instruction. Alongside this and in the same conversation, Kelsey was trying to make sense of the growing parent presence in relation to the absent principal.

Ultimately, Kelsey's experience in this particular 11th grade PLC meeting was rich with the opportunity to learn more about her own approach to planning and collaboration and that of her colleagues. It also exposed her to more of the normative behaviors of the ELA department and narratives around testing, leadership, and parental involvement in the school.

Evolution of Kelsey's role in the 11th grade PLC. In the meeting above, we see Kelsey taking on what she perceived as a "really active" role with the 11th grade PLC. Even with Jenny leading the meetings and having the experience of teaching the curriculum, Kelsey appreciated that Jenny let her have some "control of planning the units." However, towards the end of the first semester, Kelsey began to describe some frustration around her colleagues' sharing out materials and completing the tasks they had talked about. She reflected, "working with my colleagues is the least of my concerns unfortunately because I have tried a lot to collaborate and get things done like that but I've also been let down a little too many times." In fact, Kelsey explained that Jenny expressed wanting to meet to plan out the spring semester, but Kelsey was hesitant because she wanted "to make sure that the expectations are clear of if we are going to actually follow that or not."

Towards the end of January, each of the ELA grade level PLC teams were given an extra planning period to have half a day to "dig" into their Checkpoint data and make plans for improvement. The 11th grade's Data Dig Day will be described in more detail in a later section, but it is worth noting here because it signals a turning point in how Kelsey participated in the 11th grade PLC and how she struggled to see herself as a teacher at Meadow Glen long term. In

fact, in February, Kelsey explained that she had “stopped caring to that level and taking that energy.” Kelsey stopped bringing the extra-large paper to map out units, opting for small sticky notes or her teacher notebook to write out reminders if needed. Ultimately, Kelsey felt “distant” and intentionally did not take on as much “leadership.” Instead, she turned towards collaborating with Leslie, because the 11th grade team was not having “really intentional conversations about what we’re each doing.” We will explore the significance of Kelsey stopping her negotiation of her goals and needs with the rest of the teacher community in the next chapter.

Nonetheless, during the second semester, Kelsey did still turn to her 11th grade PLC to get advice on things outside of curriculum. For instance, Kelsey received an email from other teachers outside of the ELA department suggesting that she modify a student’s grade. Kelsey was somewhat blindsided by this request as the student had not communicated with her. The 11th grade team affirmed her frustration and offered suggestions on how to go about responding. So even as Kelsey had started to pull away as a collaborative member, she did still turn to the 11th grade team which she trusted for emotional support and guidance on dealing with conflicts with other colleagues.

Kelsey’s ELA Department

There was a lack of scheduled meetings and opportunities for discussion on curriculum in the ELA Department at Meadow Glen High— much more than the 11th grade PLC— which negatively impacted Kelsey’s experiences because she had hoped for camaraderie and curricular alignment across grade levels. Here are a few moments where Kelsey voiced her disappointment with the department. As you saw when meeting Mandy, Kelsey felt that Mandy’s near exit from

the department was “eroding [the department’s] moral” to where, for example, they were no longer doing community building things like Secret Santa.

As far as curriculum goes, Kelsey explained that she had tried to be more active in the department meetings during her first year but it mainly “fell flat,” and so in her second year, she chose to just bring up things when it felt important. For instance, the department had the opportunity to use some of the literacy grant funds on new textbooks. Learning this, Kelsey and Leslie spent time cataloging the books in the book room to propose new books for the allotted budget. When bringing it up to the department, Kelsey recalled that the other teachers responded nonchalantly, “Oh, you know, whatever, we’re going to still think about it and add our titles and whatnot.” By the end of the year, it was understood that each grade level could just decide on their own and get books they needed. Kelsey and Leslie also experienced frustration when they learned that the vertical alignment document that they created together the year prior supported another teachers’ evaluation and was not being used this year to support the department. Finally, despite Kelsey’s desire to collaborate, in the second semester, she had made the decision to stop sharing the materials she had made with other teachers outside of her 11th grade PLC. She shared,

I’ve had teachers who co-taught with me last year who have tried to get into my updated folders from this year that they don’t have access to and requested access, which I denied. Because, no... it’s content they haven’t taught with me on and they’re just using it because they’re not creating their own and they’re not planning with me.

Much like how Kelsey intentionally chose to invest less time and energy into actually planning out units during the 11th grade PLC time, she also worked to protect her work by not sharing out

materials across the department without benefiting from a collaborative partnership. Kelsey's strategies within her teacher communities to protect her professional needs and her mental health are further explored in the next chapter.

Searching for external professional spaces. Kelsey described finding community with like-minded teachers in two other professional spaces during the year—spaces she had to seek out herself. But as a result, these connections left Kelsey feeling further disconnected to the ELA department and her school.

First, Kelsey participated in the local site of the National Writing Project as a part of her M.Ed. the summer before this study. Early in December, she presented at the conference connected to the writing project. Kelsey's presentation brought awareness of secondary traumatic stress and its effects on teachers which was something she had come to understand as a part of her experience as an ECT. She admitted that she had not shared the topic of her presentation with her colleagues outside her close friends who knew some of the things she had experienced, in part because no one had recognized her participation in the Writing Project or the conference to begin with. Kelsey described how her trauma informed approach to teaching highlighted differences between her and her colleagues' pedagogy, making it difficult to collaborate with them—

If someone's not necessarily incredibly trauma informed or has like no understanding of that whatsoever, it's really, really hard for me to engage in pedagogy about it with them. And also [to feel] any validity of me as a person. Because really and truly the... vertical alignment I was talking about, how even pedagogically we can't, we can't even get in the same room and agree on things.

Second, Kelsey and Leslie attended and presented at a regional conference for English Language Arts teachers in the state. Note that Kelsey is engaging in a reflective practice that Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) referred to as “knowledge-of-practice,” which is beyond what is typical for ECTs. Kelsey was excited when someone new to the administration team expressed support for her “bettering herself” and attending professional conferences. Kelsey and Leslie were granted district funds to support their attendance. However, explaining that none of the grade level PLC Leads or the ELA Department Head talked about these professional growth opportunities, Kelsey began to convey how these spaces are not valued or understood, what she believed to be a normative belief in her teacher community. “They were like, ‘Oh, you want to go to [the conference]?’” There [was] no excitement, there [was] no understanding of why that would be important, or why [I] would want to do that.” Expecting that they would need to share what they had learned at the conference, Kelsey and Leslie were surprised when none of their colleagues outside the 11th grade PLC asked anything beyond, “How did it go?” before moving on in conversation. The department’s disinterest in this type of professional learning left Kelsey feeling more detached from the community. “It just makes me feel more and more alone the more I talk to people sometimes,” she admitted.

Key Actors at Meadow Glen High

In addition to her experiences with her 11th grade ELA teams and the ELA department as a whole, Kelsey repeatedly returned to the ramifications of a few key actors’ actions and presence in the school across our conversations, signifying their impact on her ELA community and her experience as an ECT.

Absent Principal

Early in the school year, Kelsey's principal was out for a little under seven weeks while under investigation for what was believed to be personnel misconduct. The district offered no official information and Kelsey explained, "the community made rumors about him and it was really uncomfortable." The teachers were left to navigate and communicate the principal's absence to parents and students without any guidance from the district. During his absence, the assistant principal over the ELA department took on more administrative responsibility, but ultimately, Kelsey felt that time period was "all about survival." She explained that many students' schedules were not finalized and so she received new-to-her students during week six or seven. Kelsey also felt this event afforded parents unique opportunities to question school personnels' decisions due to lack of administrative presence. "It [was] a really easy time for parents to kind of poke holes in the school" and that "everyone [was] gonna side with the parents instead of the teachers," she explained.

The principal's absence and proceeding resignation, therefore, played a role, Kelsey believed, in the school's "really poor morale." For instance, Kelsey explained that teachers were rarely on time and would wear jeans despite it not being days they were supposed to. She felt a sense of apathy, explaining teachers reasoned, "We didn't have a principal for eight weeks so we can do what we want because we were never informed of anything." Essentially, "aspects of culture [had] completely gone out of the window," according to Kelsey.

The teachers initially learned that his resignation would go in effect at the end of the school year through district board meeting memorandums posted in a portal teachers had access to. Even once the principal returned, he offered no explanation or communication.

The way the district addressed Kelsey's principal's misconduct had direct implications on students, teachers, and parents. Because it impacted teacher morale, student behavior, and parent's roles in the school, the absence of the principal and the district's response impacted Kelsey's experiences as an ECT. Kelsey had to navigate how each of these stakeholders were reading and responding to the unraveling events and decide how she would respond.

Literacy Specialist

A new teacher to the school, Wendy, stepped into the literacy specialist role in the ELA department at the time of this study. Kelsey understood Wendy received a salary through the grant funds rather than the typical district salary, which meant she was making over double what the majority of the teachers were earning. In addition, Wendy opted to take on Extended Day, which meant she taught an additional period, rather than having a planning period. Extended Day adds an additional twenty percent to teachers' pay. Wendy was also hired the same year as her husband, who received an additional stipend as the football coach. Kelsey described the literacy specialists' position and compensation as "contentious" and a "very big thing."

Atypical for a second-year teacher, Kelsey took on a leadership role by being on the school's literacy team, charged with cross-curricular conversations geared towards improving students' literacy, but she was unsure of the work that Wendy did. Kelsey recalled that Wendy had tried to step into the 11th grade PLC at the beginning of the year and offer suggestions, but the 11th grade team resisted because they already had a plan. Rather, Kelsey understood Wendy to have a larger curricular influence on the 9th grade PLC as she taught 9th grade courses. Given that, Kelsey felt Wendy had less influence in other grades within the department.

Kelsey had to navigate the presence of Wendy in both the department and her grade-level PLC while also coming to terms with how Wendy received the job in the school and her compensation for that work. The example of the literacy specialist, in Kelsey's case, is an example of how ECTs have to read and understand their colleagues' roles and goals in their teacher communities while also situating themselves in that same community.

Kelsey's Longevity in Her Teacher Community

The stories described here call attention to the impact of school, department, and grade-level PLCs events and politics play into an ECT's experience. Before Kelsey had ultimately decided to leave the profession, early in the spring semester, she expressed confusion around her role moving forward. She admitted that she did not like "being disengaged" and that she wanted "to be involved or at least in charge of something or leading something." Kelsey worked to be a part of her teacher community but also had to "work" as a result of being a community of teachers. Her needs around planning and curricular alignment were often at odds with how the 11th grade PLC was functioning and her values as a teacher were not being affirmed by her department. In chapter six, we will further explore the implications of ECTs being at odds with the colleagues in their teacher community. Next, we will explore the role of external expectations on Kelsey's teacher communities and thus, her experiences as an ECT.

Testing and Evaluations

In this section, you will learn about Kelsey's understanding of school and state expectations of testing as well as teacher evaluations. Both were points of frustration for Kelsey

as her understanding of these external expectations were not always aligned or even acknowledged in her ELA teacher community.

Testing and Responsibilities to Students

With teaching 11th grade, Kelsey's students were responsible for taking the state-mandated American Literature and Composition exam, referred to as Checkpoint. Checkpoint also served as the End of Course Exam for the students. While Kelsey agreed with her PLC lead's (i.e. Jenny) opinion of the complicated and biased nature of standardized testing generally, she still wanted her students to be successful. Kelsey also felt that there was additional pressure by administration placed on 11th grade ELA teachers for their students to perform well since that grade level had the End of Course (EOC) Exam. Kelsey believed that the differences in grade-level expectations for preparing students for standardized tests trickled into other practices like grading. Where she graded based on students' accuracy on assignments that were tied to the standards that were expected to show up on Checkpoint, she realized teachers in lower grade levels tended to grade based on completion, leaving potential gaps in students' learning of the ELA standards.

I am expected as their 11th grade teacher to go over all of this content and miraculously in fourteen weeks I am expected to have them be able to pass at a proficient level on the milestones where their 9th and 10th grade teachers previously had set them up for kind of failure with inflating grades and things like that.

The differences in ELA teachers' grading practices were highlighted when one of Kelsey found herself having to justify her grading practices related to a student who was not passing her class,

when the student had received A's in the grades prior. Kelsey expressed a sense of "burn out" and being "fed up" with situations related to standardized testing and student performance that had been building up across the two years she taught. Kelsey explained, "I am being held to a standard . . . not being commended or praised for doing a really good job with kids that have just been pushed by."

In addition to experiencing dissonance around student accountability within her ELA department, Kelsey also was frustrated by how the 11th grade PLC team approached reflecting on students' performance on Checkpoint from the first semester tests in order to make changes on instruction in the second semester. Let's see this unfold in Kelsey's experience with a Data Dig Day.

Data Dig Day

In late February, the 11th grade PLC was given an additional planning period so that they could spend half of a school day analyzing Checkpoint data and plan for changes to improve scores. In attendance was Kelsey, Jenny, Leslie, Penny, and one other teacher Sarah who only taught 11th grade in the spring like Leslie.

Kelsey understood the meeting was for each teacher to discuss their students' performance with the team and that an administrator would attend to discuss trends for the school. Kelsey recalled being "pumped" for the meeting, which quickly turned into her feeling "very upset" and "very angry." Kelsey came to the meeting with her "spreadsheets with [her] data in Excel, they [were] coded and sorted and ready to go," but no one else had come prepared much like what Kelsey experienced in regular 11th grade PLC meetings.

Jenny did start the meeting by asking the group if they had noticed any strengths and weaknesses in their data. Kelsey explained she looked at her data and admitted she did not see any “crazy trends,” but that her scores confirmed what they expected about students doing better with narrative writing compared to argumentative writing and scored better on questions about fictional texts compared to nonfiction. Jenny encouraged Kelsey to write down what she was noticing— Sarah began writing a list of what was being said. Kelsey recalled that Jenny admitted not having looked at her spreadsheet and Penny admitted not having downloaded her data from the online portal. The other two teachers, Leslie and Sarah, did not have data from the semester prior.

Kelsey’s frustration with the teachers not having previewed their data for the day was heightened by the unclear purpose behind the meeting. Despite her understanding of Jenny's perspectives on the tests, she was not fully dismissive of the test in the same way Jenny was. Kelsey explained,

Jenny is so much like I hate [Checkpoint]. It's stupid blah blah, as I am, too. I understand that this assessment system is flawed, inherently. But it's really confusing for me and I can imagine any other early career teacher, when you have someone who's leading your group saying it's stupid. It doesn't matter. It's stupid. And then saying gather data but then when you gather data, and you have your findings, and you bring them relevant to that meeting, and you're gonna say okay, well it doesn't matter anyways. Okay, then why the hell are we here?

As the discussion of the data died down, Kelsey suggested they modify the ethics and morality unit with *Scythe* to include informational texts on artificial intelligence and add more work on

vocabulary in context. The group agreed and split up to make use of the rest of the day as a work session.

Kelsey said she at least wanted to make a “[Checkpoint] related task” so she worked on “chapter check-ins asking about vocabulary in context and asking about inferencing skills,” which she noticed was a weakness in the data. Jenny was working with Leslie on specific minilessons for the unit and then offered to help Kelsey with the vocabulary focused lessons, but Kelsey was confused because Jenny’s class was ahead of schedule and had already started and almost finished the book. Penny worked on a root word game; Kelsey reflected that the school already paid for a similar online service.

Kelsey recalled, “I could feel the heat coming off my skin. I was just so frustrated...there was no established purpose, and the purpose [kept] shifting.” She did feel productive with the planning she did on her own but viewed the meeting as a whole as a “waste of time.”

The Data Dig Day described above highlights incongruences between how Kelsey wanted to use Checkpoint data to drive her instructional decision making, which was how she was trained in her teacher preparation program, and how her 11th grade PLC generally approached the use of testing data—an important consideration for the following chapter. Not to mention, the meeting occurred at the same time in the school year where Kelsey began to consider leaving not only the school, but also the profession. Next, we will observe Kelsey’s perception of the function of teacher evaluations at Meadow Glen High.

School District Evaluations

As Kelsey was in her second year of teaching, per district expectations, her assistant principal was expected to perform six observations of her teaching across the school year to provide feedback and evaluation as part of her annual evaluation. Kelsey was accustomed to observations and evaluations throughout her teacher certification program. In fact, towards the beginning, Kelsey explained she was “fearful, but in a good way” of observations because she wanted to “perform well and get feedback.” The teacher evaluations impacted Kelsey’s personal experience as an ECT through more than an evaluation of her classroom practice. The evaluations also had implications for how Kelsey made-meaning of ELA teachers' experiences in her school.

When comparing her experience with the evaluation system to other ELA teachers, Kelsey recognized flaws in the system itself but also how the evaluation system was applied to teachers in her ELA community. Kelsey received all threes in her summative evaluation for the first semester—the evaluation system was a Likert scale ranging from one to four. In the second semester summative evaluation, Kelsey received majority threes and one four related to her serving as a sponsor for student council, which she had actually stepped away from. In a similar vein, Leslie, Kelsey’s close friend, received majority of threes on her evaluation but their evaluator had explained that Leslie’s threes were “top of the top,” which begged Kelsey to wonder why she was not given a four. Ultimately, Kelsey held immense frustration with how the threes and fours were perceived and assigned in evaluations. She explained, “I’ve done four level work in so many areas. And I understand you don’t want the standard to be oh four, four, four,

but should it not be? Should you not want all your teachers to be striving for fours and actually achieve fours? It's embarrassing.”

The district’s evaluation system also brought about tension for how Kelsey perceived colleagues. For instance, in the year prior Kelsey and Leslie drafted a document that attempted to vertically align each grade level regarding text choice, standards, and major assignments after being tasked with the mission to align the curriculum across grade levels. Kelsey submitted the document to her then PLC lead but never heard anything about it after. Later, Kelsey learned that that colleague had received a four on one category of his summative evaluation tied to vertical alignment with work that Kelsey and other teachers had submitted being partial evidence for his performance. As an early career teacher, she did not feel that she was in a position to voice this without repercussions. Kelsey began to understand how “misaligned teacher [evaluation] grading is and how stressful that is for first year teachers and early teachers” because from perspective she was doing better than some of her colleagues who were receiving fours. Adding to her frustration, Kelsey understood that another second-year teacher in her department was not on the same evaluation plan as Kelsey resulting in less observations for the other teacher, which led her to question the consistency of her work environment. Ultimately, Kelsey summarized the role of the evaluations as not really mattering for her instructional practice as she recognized the inconsistent use of the evaluation system and that she would just get a note saying “good job” at the end of observations.

Final Evaluation Meeting

During Kelsey’s Spring semester, the assistant principal came in three days in a row and did all three of the evaluations and no coaching (i.e., two 10-minute observations and one 30-

minute observation) in that timeframe, whereas they were intended to be across the semester.

Kelsey reasoned that it was because the principal knew that Kelsey had already decided to leave the school by that point. In fact, the part of Kelsey's summative meeting for her evaluation that she took away was giving feedback to her principal about her perspective of the school. Kelsey recounted,

I said, like school, culture wise, this school is really good at making you feel nameless and faceless. I mean, just part of the cog in the machine stereotypically, if you aren't a coach, you're nothing... I also said, it's really sad that the most affirmation and kindness I've received is when people know I'm one foot out of the door. Because I've never spoken to as many faculty members as I have than when my name was published on the board briefs, and they saw that I was leaving.

Impact of Testing and Teacher Evaluation on Kelsey's Understanding

The varying uptakes of Checkpoint's importance, preparation and reflection in her ELA teacher community left Kelsey having to navigate her professional approach to standardized testing, which often indicated a separation between herself and others in the department. Likewise, the role of the district's teacher evaluation system heightened Kelsey's perceived degree of separation between her and the ELA department and the school. As we move forward, the important takeaway here is that Kelsey's colleagues' beliefs and experiences around testing and teacher evaluation heavily influenced her understanding of these external forces, much less so than personnel operating outside or above her teacher community. Additionally, how her colleagues responded to these external forces reinforced how she saw herself being apart from her ELA teacher community and the school community as a whole.

Key Issues Present Across Kelsey's Case

In conclusion, Kelsey's case illustrates key issues around the impact of teacher communities on ECTs' experience, issues we will pull into the next chapter to flesh out assertions on ECTs and their teacher communities. First, ECTs beyond their first year navigate still turn to colleagues for emotional and instructional support. Grade-level and department leaders shape ECTs' experiences and their understanding of the teacher community practices and beliefs. Therefore, colleagues and leaders in their teacher community informally mentor ECTs in their own experience but also on the social and instructional landscape of the school. Second, ECTs value time spent collaborating within their content-specific teacher communities and experience frustration when that space is inconsistent or absent. Frustration also occurs when ECTs feel as though they do not have like-minded colleagues in regards to beliefs around students and instruction. In this frustration, ECTs can begin to question their longevity in their teacher community. Kelsey's case also observes how uncommon events at a school and other school personnel directly and indirectly influence teacher communities and teachers' experiences, making opportunities for ECTs to wonder about the school's culture and values. While it is possible for ECTs to look for additional professional support, however, this will not necessarily strengthen their experience within their schools' teacher community. Third, the lack of alignment between external expectations around testing and teacher evaluations and a teacher community's uptake of those expectations creates tension within a teacher community and complicates an ECTs growing understanding of testing and teacher evaluation and how those should inform their practice.

As we move into the next chapter, we will take up these issues and revisit the key issues from Colleen's case while making assertions on ECTs' experiences within and around the teacher communities.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Where chapters four and five presents Colleen and Kelsey's experiences across the school year, this chapter offers cross case analysis. First, we'll revisit the core ideas from chapter two and recall the ways in which micropolitics exist inside of school spaces and specifically teacher communities and how it interplays with ECTs and mentoring. Next, we'll synthesize what we know as a field, reviewing literature on ECTs' experiences, teacher communities, and the roles of mentors on ECT induction. From there, I'll operationalize the micropolitical constructs of professional needs and micropolitical literacies (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a, 2002b) to discuss key issues in Colleen and Kelsey's cases. In doing so, this chapter examines the function of colleagues, mentors, and conflict using a micropolitical lens to help us learn new things about ECTs induction experiences.

Revisiting Micropolitics

In order to examine Colleen and Kelsey's cases using a micropolitical lens, let's revisit some of key ideas within micropolitical theory. Micropolitics suggests that every individual in a school is an actor with different motives and levels of power or influence (Blase, 1991) who leverages different strategies in pursuit of their personal goals (Johnson, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). So, not only do teachers come to their teacher communities with different levels of experience and training, these differences can manifest in different ways given their needs for how the community operates. Teachers' individual needs and, then, how they pursue those needs

through their interactions with their colleagues makes up a critical piece of a school's micropolitical landscape.

ECTs' preferences for their teacher community and work environment are learned through interactions; building off of Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) work, I've conceptualized these as professional needs and continue to categorize them as personal needs, material needs, organizational needs, cultural-ideological needs, and social-professional needs. ECTs simultaneously learn how to engage with their colleagues while also learning to read those same colleagues' preferences and engagement. This process is a micropolitical literacy practice that involves three aspects: 1) the knowledge of the micropolitical landscape, 2) the strategies used to respond to micropolitics, and 3) the emotions resulting from engaging in micropolitical experiences (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a). As one can imagine, engaging in this work is complex. As such, conflict is to be expected given the differences in how teachers may approach working within their teacher communities (Achinstein, 2002; Johnson, 2001). Ideally, teachers practice diplomacy and learn how to work within a socio-political space made up of actors (i.e. colleagues) that may or may not align to their personal preferences, needs, and goals for that given community (Blase, 1987). Achinstein (2006) argues that mentors should equip ECTs in "read[ing] the organizational and political system" of their schools and offers conceptualizations of formal mentor's "political knowledge" that allows them to read, navigate, and advocate within their school's micropolitical context to support their mentees with doing the same. With these ideas in mind, a more complex picture of ECTs' interactions with mentors and colleagues emerges.

These studies offer important observations for how ECTs navigate micropolitics and the role that mentors play in their induction, but Colleen and Kelsey's cases show us something

different. Kelchtermans and Ballet's work (2002a; 2002b) focused on teachers who looked retroactively at their early years to capture their construction of micropolitics in a context outside of the United States. Achinstein (2006) framed her finding on the work that the formal mentor does given the micropolitical landscape. In contrast, this study looks into two ECTs' nascent experiences across the length of a school year to capture their real time engagement in and processing of work within their teacher communities. In doing so, we start to see how colleagues function as formal and informal mentors who interplay with ECTs' professional needs and their positions in their community.

Returning to the Literature

To help ECTs through the time of professional socialization (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999), the field largely considers specific school-based mentors (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and school or district based induction programs (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999) as an effective support mechanism for ECTs (Keese et al., 2023; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). As such, colleagues and other adults in the building are an integral component of ECTs' experiences, both good and bad, and are often studied through their time spent in and around their teacher communities. Teacher communities have long been thought of as spaces for teachers to come together as colleagues to improve their practice— “*knowledge-of-practice*” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) — by focusing on student learning and subject matter content (Grossman et al., 2001). Westheimer (2008) also writes that one goal of a teacher community should be to support ECTs' learning. In other words, teachers with any degree of experience in the field gain insights toward improving their own practice through participation in teacher communities, but there should also be attention to supporting the other teachers in the community, especially the early career ones.

Ultimately, these teacher communities function as reciprocal learning spaces that are responsible for mentoring the newest members.

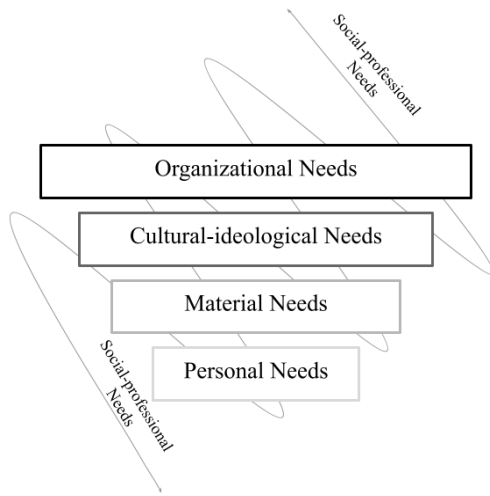
Some studies have documented ECTs' positive experiences within their teacher community in that ECTs were learning specific instructional strategies and problem solving instructional dilemmas (Bickmore, 2013; Little, 2003). However, the literature also demonstrates that ECTs' can have teacher communities that offer little to no support (Knotts, 2016; McCann et al., 2005; Scherff & Hahs-Vaughn, 2008) or even negative experiences in those communities (Scherff, 2008; Sutton, 2009). And so, we know that mentors can help support how ECTs navigate their early years in the profession and we know that ECTs work within teacher communities whose members informally mentor ECTs for better or for worse. That said, there is still more opportunity for understanding ECTs' perspectives and approaches within these experiences, hence the focus of this particular study.

Attending to ECTs' Micropolitical Needs

In the previous chapters, we saw Colleen in the thick of reading her new teacher community and trying to responsively strategize as she navigated her first year of teaching. We saw Kelsey doing the same but with more micropolitical knowledge of her school and with learned micropolitical literacies for navigating her community given her additional year in the context. The previous chapters offered the bigger stories that were grounded in initial rounds of analysis. Now, let's return to specific moments within Colleen and Kelsey's cases using updated versions Kelchtermans and Ballets' (2002a, 2002b) micropolitical frameworks, specifically micropolitical professional needs, to build some larger assertions about ECTs' development and experiences in their teacher communities.

Given my interest in supporting ECTs, the following sections are organized in a way that I found helpful for understanding how professional needs may be used to better support ECTs by attending to their micropolitical literacy practices. While these needs are all interrelated and are not necessarily hierarchical in nature, organizing the needs as you see in Figure 1 can be helpful in how we approach mentoring ECTs into their schools. First, ECTs must be supported in reading the role and function of their teacher community and those in it or acting upon it (i.e., organizational needs). From there, they can refine their own beliefs on what it means to teach while understanding their context and colleagues' beliefs and practices (i.e., cultural-ideological needs). It follows that, then, a closer examination of the way teaching materials used by ECTs and their colleagues (i.e., material needs) function as a mechanism to name and clarify the structure and beliefs of the organization. Next, the ways in which ECTs are affirmed, experience discomfort, and are made visible in their spaces are an important aspect for how we support them throughout this work (i.e., personal needs). Finally, the social relationships they hold with their colleagues sit at the backdrop of all these other professional needs (i.e., social-professional needs). Considering ECTs' professional needs (not necessarily in that order) is a helpful way to understand their micropolitical practices, and, therefore, identifies possible areas for personalized mentoring support. For now, let's revisit aspects of Collen and Kelsey's cases while focusing first on their organizational needs.

Figure 1.



Conceptual Organization of ECTs' Professional Needs

Significance of Organizational Needs on ECTs' Self Positioning

ECTs' organizational needs first require them to read the "procedures, roles, positions or formal tasks in the school" and then to determine how their needs for the position they want to hold fits within that organizational structure (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002b, p.113). Unlike the ECTs in Kelchtermans and Ballet's (2002b) study, Colleen and Kelsey's organizational needs moved well beyond concerns of just being an employee at their school. In fact, both Colleen and Kelsey had little concerns for their employment as ECTs and instead framed their organizational needs in terms of how they were able to work in relation to their colleagues. Even so, Colleen and Kelsey held very different understandings of their schools and teacher communities' organizational makeup. Especially early in the year, Colleen expressed uncertainty of who in the ELA department served as the department head or who led each of the grade level teams. Colleen's disinterest in the key actors in her ELA community paired with her preference for

invisibility in that space (which we will talk about more later) makes sense given her need to return to a community she was familiar with and therefore to not remain at this school long term, which she voiced for most of the year. For someone who was just looking to get a few years under her belt before moving back home, it makes sense that Colleen did not express many needs in the organizational structure of her community.

In contrast, Kelsey was keenly aware of not only those in leadership but held opinions on their leadership styles (e.g., her critique of Mandy's leadership approach in the department) because she was envisioning her own potential engagement in future leadership responsibilities. Where Kelsey had spent more time in the school given it was her second year, her institutional knowledge and repeated story telling of the interrelationships between her colleagues and key actors reflects a vested interest in her community as a micropolitical organization, one where she was navigating to see if her needs could be met.

To explain, let's revisit the way Kelsey portrayed two key actors, her principal and the literacy specialist, and consider the implications of their roles within Meadow Glen's micropolitics. First, the principal's actions that led to his lengthy absence are outside the scope of this analysis. However, Kelsey's framing of his absence and the ramifications it had on her and the school is evidence of the knowledge aspect of her micropolitical literacy practice. The lack of leadership at the beginning of the year, in Kelsey's perspective, led to actions from students, parents, and teachers that did not align to her professional needs or foster an optimal school environment. She explained that the parents felt they could question teachers knowing remaining leadership would side with parents. Student behavior worsened given the lack of united administration. Finally, teachers felt they could not uphold professional expectations around being on time and following a dress code. Kelsey found each of these problematic but

also explained how the district's lack of communication and guidance exacerbated these other factors. In other words, Kelsey was reading the ways in which her principal's actions led to his inaction as a leader in the school which ultimately impacted the roles she and other teachers had to step into especially given the district's failure in managing the investigation.

Kelsey's micropolitical literacy allowed her to see the ways in which actors and events led to parents having more power. Her micropolitical awareness did support her well-being while dealing with parents as she was able to not take things personally which is in contrast to the ECT in Scherff's (2008) study that failed to engage in a micropolitical read of his school and had resulting feelings of powerlessness. However, that same awareness led Kelsey to understand how the principal's actions created an organizational system that was not aligned with what she envisioned nor had experience working within. In this case, Kelsey's organizational need of having present and effective leaders is intertwined with her cultural-ideological need, which we will get to in the next section.

We also need to discuss the role of the Literacy Specialist, Wendy, at Meadow Glen High. Despite not knowing the extent of Wendy's responsibilities as the Literacy Specialist, Kelsey's understanding of how Wendy stepped into the role was enough to lead her to dismiss the formal tasks that Wendy was trying to implement as the literacy coach. Along with her 11th grade team, Kelsey was indifferent to Wendy's role. Unfortunately, Kelsey's knowledge of the complicated history of Wendy's role meant she was not viewed as a potential informal mentor and was not welcome in Kelsey's classroom, whereas colleagues viewed as having unproblematic roles were welcome in Colleen's classroom space and served as informal mentors and supporters. Ultimately, Kelsey's more advanced knowledge of her school as an organization and how the people in her school had potential implications for her experience are significant

given her ultimate decision that she did not fit into that space. Kelsey's affinity for reading and navigating her school's organizational structure begged questions beyond "Can I keep my job at Meadow Glen High School?" and asked questions like "Do I want to keep my job at Meadow Glen High School?" Even Colleen's lack of organizational needs conveys her disinterest in finding a role within the organizational structure of her teacher community.

Nonetheless, Kelsey's case demonstrates how key actors and their behaviors within the organizational setting have implications for how ECTs envision themselves within their school and teacher community, especially when those actors create an environment that does not align with ECTs' expectations of schools and needs as professionals. Given Kelsey's keen ability to understand individual actors' influence on her school as an organizational system and the ramifications of her not seeing a future within that space, Kelsey's case suggests that not only do ECTs begin to read the leadership roles, power dynamics within their schools, but they question if those micropolitical realities align to the type of school they hope to be in. As such, an ECT's organizational needs might not just be about maintaining employment as Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) found; it is also about seeing if their needs will be met by confirming compatibility within who gets to have power in their teacher community and school. Given this, ECTs' organization needs are a necessary area for supportive mentoring. In the following chapter, I will suggest ways in which ECTs along with their mentors, schools, and districts can attend to ECTs' organizational needs. For now, we will turn to Colleen and Kelsey's cultural-ideological needs.

ECTs' Cultural-Ideological Needs

ECTs' cultural-ideological needs are influenced by their ability to understand what behaviors, values and beliefs make up the majority of the teachers' beliefs or at least how the

teacher community functions. Policies and practices related to testing were areas where Colleen and Kelsey's cultural-ideological needs showed up in varying degrees within their cases. Their compliance with or commitment to negotiating within their respective teacher community's norms and values around testing demonstrates the need to attend to this professional need when mentoring ECTs. To unpack this, let's reexamine moments of conflict regarding testing within each case.

While there are more examples of Colleen and Kelsey's cultural-ideological needs, I'll pull from two illustrative examples: 1) Colleen's experience with Dr. Mullin and his advocacy for keeping all district tests and 2) Kelsey's experience with her 11th grade team's Data Dig Day. Interestingly, neither of these examples describe conflict with new policies, mandates, or reforms like we see in the literature (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2016; Coburn & Stein, 2006; Malen & Vincent-Cochran, 2015). Rather they capture how conflict can occur between colleagues when they have the opportunity to change community expectations or policies like teachers changing the rainy day policy in Craig et al.'s (2014) work or when new members join and complicate the ways in which the teachers within a given community take up the policy like in Connors and Bengston's (2020) work.

First, Colleen explicitly describes the meeting where Warren High's ELA department debates the possibility of removing some of the required district testing as having tension. She unpacks how some colleagues teaching 11th grade felt the STAR tests were a necessary preparation for the state exam whereas colleagues teaching other grades argued that the tests were overly difficult and unhelpful for the struggling readers in their classrooms. In our conversations, Colleen expressed frustrations with the STAR tests but did not engage in the conversation during the meeting. Ultimately, Colleen was prepared to comply with whatever the

department decided rather than attempt to negotiate the department's beliefs regarding the role and effectiveness of the testing. She felt comfortable doing so given the lack of guidance and grade-level team expectations around how testing was administered and how the scores were used in the gradebook and otherwise. Yes, colleagues in other grade levels seemed to value the STAR tests, but Colleen never expressed that she valued the tests in the same way in her day-to-day instruction. In fact, she explicitly said the district tests did not inform her instructional decisions. So, while her cultural-ideological needs regarding testing did not align with the district and some of the ELA department, her needs were still being met given her 9th and 10th grade colleagues also were dismissive of the tests. In other words, Colleen's needs were not so different from those she was directly working with, so the conflict with the district and others in the department was not worth trying to work through. As Malen & Vincent Cochran (2015) argued, Colleen opted to avoid conflict rather than try to influence her larger teacher community's norms and values.

In building the assertion of the significance of colleagues as informal mentors of ECTs, I cannot examine this moment of conflict in Colleen's case without discussing the role of Dr. Mullin on Colleen's cultural-ideological needs. As an 11th grade teacher and veteran in the department, Dr. Mullin, acting under his own cultural-ideological needs, went out of his way to persuade Colleen into supporting his beliefs about testing. In retelling this conversation, Colleen never critiqued his deficit framing of students related to testing and began to use similar language in our conversations as the year progressed. She did liken the conversation to "classic teachers talking about each other" but did not disagree about his stance that teachers who do their jobs well are the ones who push students to do well on the STAR tests. Across our conversations, there are moments where Colleen dismisses the significance of STAR tests and critiques the

design of the tests, but, at other points in time, she also expresses pride for her students' strong performance on tests. Ultimately, Colleen's interaction with Dr. Mullin functioned as an influence on Colleen's cultural-ideological needs because it clarified an expectation of how testing should be viewed within the ELA department and ultimately upheld the routines for which district tests should be given and how often. Whether or not Colleen fully adopted Dr. Mullin's perspective was not evident in our conversations, but she did not feel the need to disagree with him or speak out in the department meeting as a whole. In other words, an existing teachers' cultural-ideological needs were not only met instead of an ECTs' needs, but the power differentials between the two from his tenure in the department and his advanced degrees led him to shift the an ECTs' beliefs about testing, just as McLaughlin and Talbert's (1993) report suggests is possible.

Looking at Kelsey's case, we see how her own beliefs on testing and data aligned with those in her 11th grade team because they agreed on the inherent biases in the tests. But, we see conflict arise in the Data Dig Day because Kelsey did not agree with the individual's expectations and behaviors during that set community time. Even though Kelsey understood the limitations of the data that was to be discussed in the meeting, she still prepared for the meeting by analyzing her data in hopes of learning together to improve the next semester's instruction. Much like the divide between veteran teachers and ECTs in Flores' (2007) study, Kelsey, having comparatively less experience in the school, was still relying on her teacher training to make data informed instructional decisions, whereas her more veteran colleagues, with more experience of the testing, were largely dismissive of the Data Dig Day. The literature discusses how ECTs can feel pressured to teach in ways that match district policy or school expectations (Connors & Bengston, 2020; Hungerford-Kresser & Vetter, 2017), but Kelsey's case also supports the need

to consider how ECTs might feel pressured to participate in their grade level teams or departments in ways that leadership expects (i.e., meeting routinely, data talks) (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). They experience conflict when the more experienced teachers do not meet the same expectations that they believe they are held to. In other words, while Jenny had been upfront about her view of the testing, perhaps Kelsey would have benefited from an overview of the team's expectations for how they could use that time effectively, even if it did not emphasize the data itself.

One's cultural-ideological needs involve actors' work in establishing an organization's culture (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002b) but Kelsey's colleagues' lackadaisical preparation for the meeting and use of the meeting time itself led to further frustration and disappointment. Kelsey did not feel she had the "political efficacy" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b) or believe that she could influence the 11th grade team's dominant culture around using community time to share problems of practice in the way that research suggests is beneficial for ECTs (Bickmore, 2013; Little, 2003) and which her teacher preparation program and student teaching experiences taught her.

These two illustrative examples answer the third research question by showing how ECTs learn to read the significance of external policies or district expectations—in these cases, expectations of testing and data— via their colleagues' reading beliefs on those policies. As when Colleen and Kelsey made sense of their experiences with and beliefs on testing and data in their interview responses and memos, their colleagues' expression of their personal beliefs were present within those reflections. In this process, ECTs interpret their colleagues' beliefs and responses to external expectations as representation of what their teacher community values. But what really matters here is that ECTs then work to determine if their cultural-ideological needs

can work within what they understand their colleagues' cultural-ideological needs to be. Like organization needs, ECTs with more developed cultural-ideological needs can use them as a tool to determine compatibility. Those with less developed cultural-ideological needs and who are in the early stages of reading their colleagues are susceptible to collegial influence on things that may shift ECTs training and beliefs. As such, it would be beneficial to ECT and their colleagues for teacher communities to come together and examine their cultural-ideological needs such as beliefs and practices around testing and being open to shifting or evolving those needs given the make-up of the teachers.

So far, we've seen the significance of ECTs' professional needs on a broader scale with their organization and cultural-ideological needs. Now, we are going to zoom in a bit further to consider how teaching materials Colleen and Kelsey used within their teacher communities were significant in how they engaged with their colleagues.

Teaching Materials as Part of Micropolitical Literacy

In both Colleen and Kelsey's cases, we saw the materials they used for teaching to be a recurring point of conversations with colleagues. At times, the discussion of their material needs illustrated both their approaches to teaching English and their relative willingness to share those materials within their teaching community. We also saw how the practices that supported the collaboration and reflection on the materials used can signal when ECTs are in conflict with their teacher community. So while the literature suggests that ECTs enjoy having access to others' teaching materials as a tool for relieving the stress of the endless planning (McCann et al., 2005), these cases also illustrate that ECTs' potential preferences for the materials, how teaching materials work as a form of mentoring, and how practices creating those materials in their teacher community are important for how ECTs read both their colleagues and their community.

Remember, teaching materials not only function as a reflection of ECTs as practitioners, but they also can function as a micropolitical tool for reading their teacher community. In other words, the ways colleagues introduce and use teaching materials within a teacher community is one way of how ECTs are both mentored into that community and how they eventually position themselves within their community.

Looking back at Colleen's case, her colleague, Ms. Drew, shared her entire 10th grade curriculum through a shared online drive. The teachers who were teaching 10th grade during the first semester would often reference this drive and freely use the materials. Colleen admitted that she used Ms. Drew's materials the whole first semester because she was more occupied with planning and preparing for her multiple sections of 9th grade. However, throughout our conversations, Colleen would note when she was teaching a unit and using materials (i.e., *Romeo and Juliet*, the two-week poetry unit, repetitive graphic organizers) that neither she nor her students enjoyed, but as an ECT she was trying to survive, which meant relying directly on the materials from her colleagues. So, for most of the first semester, the materials she used with her 10th grade class functioned, in a micropolitical sense, as tools for surviving the reality of having multiple preps, rather than as artifacts demonstrating her competence as a teacher or as a tool for reading her colleagues' practices.

However, as the year continued, the shared teaching materials and Colleen's adoption of those materials evolved into a different micropolitical function. Much like the ECTs in Kelchtermans and Ballet's study, Colleen spoke about particular aesthetic preferences and not wanting to "look at things [she didn't] like." She was invested in designing her presentation slides and handouts in a particular way to the extent that she did not mind spending time reworking the materials for aesthetic purposes. Yes, she made changes to "'advertise' [her]

professional competence,” reflecting the introspective nature of the materials, but she also used them in extrospection to read her colleagues’ teaching practices (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002b, p. 113). In other words, the teaching materials were a site for Colleen to deepen the knowledge aspect of her micropolitical literacy because they led her to perceive her colleagues’ pedagogical preferences as different from her own. For instance, Colleen understood the sheer amount of worksheets used by her colleagues to be in conflict with her preference for students’ working collaboratively. She also problematized the materials shared by her colleagues because they did not easily align with how she liked to “chunk” or to break up instruction and tasks for her students. In this way, the materials shared within her teaching community not only were a foundation piece of Colleen’s material needs, but also functioned to help her understand what her colleagues value in terms of teaching practice, which added to Colleen’s knowledge of the micropolitical landscape of her teacher community. These materials were not ones that Colleen created. Rather they were ones that she used in her classroom and now had the opportunity to lead revisions on them with her grade level team. As such, I see the teaching materials as an opportunity for Colleen to clarify her own cultural-ideological needs and that of her colleagues. So, the materials both mentored Colleen and also grew her micropolitical literacy.

The materials also positioned her differently within her teacher community during the second semester. Colleen explained that she was the only 10th grade teacher who had used the curriculum in the first semester, so she would often contextualize the materials to the teachers who were now using the materials for the first time. So, not only did Colleen feel more authority to make changes to the curriculum and the presentation of the materials, but she also felt more confidence in her voice in the 10th grade PLC because she could explain how particular units worked or needed modifications when using them in the second semester.

Similar to Colleen, Kelsey received access to an online document with hyperlinks to materials that the 11th grade ELA team had built or used the previous year. However, Kelsey's expectations for how the materials circulated within the teacher community were very different from Colleen's. Colleen preferred to access the materials in her own time, to ask questions when needed, but ultimately be left alone to plan for her classes. Based on her experiences in student teaching, Kelsey, on the other hand, needed her 11th grade PLC to be a collaborative space where they talked through materials, made new ones together, and learned from one another's plans for how they would use the materials. Despite being a need of ECTs for many decades (Davis, 2020; Scherff, 2008) and a successful support for ECTs (Bickmore, 2013; Eschar-Netz & Vedder-Weiss, 2021; Kardos et al., 2001; Little, 2003), Kelsey's teacher community did not establish their time together as a space with potential to meet her needs as an ECT. Instead, Kelsey took charge of the planning time of the team's initial meetings by creating a large unit pacing guide on poster paper. So, for Kelsey, the shared materials functioned as a vehicle for establishing potential norms for how her teacher community approached planning with one another but also functioned as an opportunity for Kelsey to display her professional competence as a new member on the 11th grade team by who still took the lead on organizing the units and materials.

At an initial 11th grade PLC meeting held at the start of the semester, the teachers talked about creating an updated space to house the materials online because the one they were accessing was dated and disorganized. Kelsey was excited by this and felt it would be useful moving forward into the second semester and future years. However, this updated collaborative space for material sharing never came to fruition. Additionally, the meetings that were held earlier in the year where Kelsey's team talked through the materials together became less and

less frequent throughout the year. So, as the year progressed Kelsey's material needs were increasingly incompatible with her teacher communities' material needs. This conflict, in a micropolitical sense, left Kelsey feeling disconnected to her teacher community.

Ultimately, the teaching materials within the Colleen and Kelsey teacher communities held micropolitical importance for two reasons. First, they created a more manageable workload as they reduced the need to create all the materials from scratch. In doing so, they afforded both ECTs an opportunity to sharpen their material needs or their preferences for the development and visual components of the materials they use in their teaching. Second, the materials provided an opportunity for both Colleen and Kelsey to "read" their colleagues' material needs while also teasing apart some of their teacher community norms for shared time and beliefs about instruction. In that sense, the way Kelsey's 11th grade colleagues used the materials and approached collaborative planning arguably had more of an impact on Kelsey than the materials themselves. From Kelsey's read, the other teachers in her community preferred to use their planning time, a valuable and scarce resource in the lives of teachers, to work independently rather than refine their material needs alongside one another. Ultimately, Colleen and Kelsey's reflections on their material needs not only tell us about what and how they teach, but also what they think of their colleagues' teaching and how those preferences shape the practices of the teacher community. Teaching materials and those that make and use them, then, informally and implicitly mentor ECTs on what it means to teach within a particular context.

Informal Mentors and Material Needs

Colleen and Kelsey's reflections on their teaching materials throughout the study were situated within interactions with colleagues (i.e., material made in collaboration or handed off explicitly by another teacher) or described as artifacts of the teacher community (i.e., shared

curriculum that is accessed by the teacher community year-to-year). Both scenarios suggest the importance of colleagues and their materials in the ECT experience.

As mentioned above, Ms. Drew's materials functioned as a vehicle for a mentoring relationship. Not only were Ms. Drew's materials an important resource that Colleen used to get through the semester, but Ms. Drew's actions of sharing the curriculum also made Colleen feel like she could go to Ms. Drew to ask questions. Colleen talked about always feeling welcome to pop into Ms. Drew's class and ask for help even if it was a few minutes before the bell would ring for class to start. So, by supporting Colleen's material needs through the materials themselves and being accessible to Colleen regarding the use of the materials, Ms. Drew was an effective informal mentor in terms of alleviating the stress of planning and lack of time experienced by ECTs.

In Colleen's case, Terry, Colleen's mentor teacher from student teaching, also teaches us that simply sharing materials and answering questions only serves ECT's material needs to a certain extent. Colleen's read of the 10th grade materials showed her that her teaching preferences did not necessarily match her colleagues'. For example, when Ms. Fletcher shared that she was having her students write vignettes and do a Document Based Question (DBQ) essay, Colleen explained that she was not comfortable with using both. Colleen said, "It's just too much stuff. I can't build up to the vignette and to the DBQ. Like, I can't, I don't like throwing things at [students] that I feel like I haven't broken down enough." Where Colleen preferred to have a slower pace during writing instruction, she did not see that same practice reflected in the materials her colleagues were using. Given this, Colleen explained that she was more confident in reaching out to Terry with questions about curriculum because Colleen created her personal "teaching style" by watching and imitating Terry's teaching. While Terry was not a part of

Colleen's teacher community at Warren High School, the fact that Colleen saw her as a resource given her personal material needs reflects the literature that argues for ECTs being able to see their colleagues teach (Wang et al., 2008). Seeing how other teachers use their teaching materials helps ECTs to discern who they align with pedagogically and who they would want to turn to with questions of practice, which was one of Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999) goals when theorizing teacher communities.

In Kelsey's case, Jenny's understanding and explanation of the 11th grade shared curriculum strengthened Kelsey's trust in her as a team leader and a colleague open to collaboration, at least during the first semester. In my observations of their community meetings, Jenny frequently positioned the materials as things that can be adjusted or would often remark that she was open to other ideas or that each person could do their own thing. Jenny's flexibility in how the teachers in the 11th grade team took up the shared teaching materials may have also contributed to the less frequent teacher community meetings in the second semester as they had already largely discussed the curriculum throughout the first semester and were building off of that with new students in the second semester. As a result, Kelsey's needs for collaboration were unmet.

Also, Jenny's experience in the school and her "institutional knowledge" supported Kelsey's read of her school's micropolitical landscape. For example, as the returning member to the team and the PLC lead, Jenny was able to talk about why certain assignments were made or what was good and bad in past years about the curriculum. For instance, when Kelsey's team was preparing for a unit on ethics during one team meeting, Jenny shared a role-playing introductory activity where students would have to decide who could be "saved" on the life raft and who would not. In talking about the assignment, Jenny discussed its' merit for grabbing

students' attention and how it connects to the later assignments in the ethics unit. She also talked about how students and parents responded in previous years across the different levels of the course (i.e. AP, honors, on-level) so that the rest of the teachers on the team, Kelsey included, could anticipate such and decide how to adjust if needed.

Let's pause and consider how the micropolitical construct of material needs helps answer the first research question on how ECTs' interpret their experiences in their teacher community. We see in both cases that the teaching materials are shared with ECTs in ways that help alleviate the stress of planning a year's worth of curriculum from scratch. The materials circulated among ECTs and their colleagues are opportunities for them to showcase their own styles of teaching and to read their colleagues' styles of teaching. Colleen and Kelsey often reflected on their experiences in their teacher communities while talking about the units they were planning, the worksheets that were shared, and the assessments they gave. In other words, ECTs interpret their experiences in their teacher communities through the artifacts or teaching materials of that community. Therefore, teacher materials are symbols of their teacher community's values and practices (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002b). The production of teacher materials and the materials themselves should be a consideration for how we think about mentoring ECTs into the field.

Colleen and Kelsey's cases also extend the micropolitical implication of ECTs' material needs to also include the role of colleagues as informal mentors in the application of those materials that are constantly interplaying with how ECTs position themselves within their teacher communities. It is not just about how the ECTs read and use the materials on their own, but also how they see their colleagues create, talk about, and reflect on those materials in ways that shape their material needs. From there, ECTs use this process of their operational

micropolitical literacy to determine how they position themselves within their community. Not to mention that there is vulnerability involved when ECTs create and share materials themselves because those materials function as an outward sign of their values. That makes those moments of sharing an opportunity for colleagues to evaluate ECTs and assess their compatibility and contributions to the teacher community. As such, by examining Colleen and Kelsey's material needs and by extension their colleagues as informal mentors of those materials urges us to consider the ways in which teacher communities are responsible for the mentoring and induction of ECTs through the ways they are expected and encouraged to plan, co-create, and reflect on their teaching materials.

So far, we've explored what I consider to be broader professional needs (i.e., organizational, cultural-ideological, and material needs) because they require ECTs to read the larger system around them in their schools and put what they find in dialogue with their own needs for their workplace. Next, we are going to turn inwards to ECTs' personal needs of affirmation, vulnerability, and visibility. While these personal needs still interplay with the people and structures around them, they have more direct implications on the individual ECT's identity.

ECTs' Micropolitical Pursuits of Personal Needs

This section examines ECTs' personal needs including looking for self-affirmation, coping with vulnerability, and finally dealing with visibility. The point of this section is to show how ECTs enter their schools with an idea of who they think they will be as a teacher, which is informed by their experiences in student teaching and teacher training (Flores & Day, 2006) their exposure to teachers and teaching in their childhood (Lortie, 1975) and, additionally, through the popular media (Chong et al, 2011; Mitchell & Weber, 1999). Their identity as a teacher, then, is

further negotiated given their other professional needs (described above) and their levels and types of visibility in their school and how that visibility affirms their work as a teacher and brings out feelings of vulnerability. To do so, this section will demonstrate how Colleen and Kelsey's cases describe similar personal needs, albeit uniquely tied to their school's micropolitical landscape.

Self-Affirmation

When examining ECTs' need for affirmation, we must also attend to the ways in which micropolitical elements such as power and status of those around ECTs interplay with how ECTs are affirmed and in what ways. And so, what we see in Colleen and Kelsey's cases, is that when they experience affirmation, or lack thereof, they are also experiencing opportunities to engage in operational micropolitical literacies in pursuit of their politics of identity. In other words, there is a necessary micropolitical awareness entangled within receiving praise.

For example, we see this in Colleen's case when Dr. Mullin affirms her capability and status as a professional in ways that are uniquely different from the examples that Kelchtermans and Ballet document. They talk about ECTs receiving praise for reaching a student or volunteering for additional jobs, whereas Dr. Mullin's affirmed Colleen when saying she was the only new hire the department chose and that she had a different level of understanding of what it meant to teach given her training at the large, research intensive institution where she earned her certification. While Colleen noted that Dr. Mullin should not have shared that information for her, she did admit that she felt "hyped up" after receiving this kind of praise. Colleen did not name the micropolitical nature of Dr. Mullin's praise, but I interpret the admiration given by Dr. Mullins as more than praising Colleen's professional abilities. Rather it worked to situate her as part of a group of teachers with particular status within the ELA department due to their training,

which also worked to fulfill his own professional needs regarding testing. With that, the interaction between Dr. Mullin and Colleen was an opportunity for Colleen to further read her teacher community's micropolitics, but from what I could gather, Colleen did not do so.

In Kelsey's case, we see the effects of an ECT seeking affirmation through structures like teacher evaluations and then expressing frustration when she fails to identify strategies to respond to that system and ultimately describes her school as a place that made her feel that she was just "part of the cog in the machine." Kelsey's critique of the teacher evaluation system, particularly the standard approach of rarely awarding the highest category for effective performance despite a teacher's actual work, is an example of how an ECT's knowledge of and response to their teacher community's micropolitics affects their professional personal needs. As described earlier, Kelsey sought affirmation for her capabilities and dedication as a teacher, but as she came to understand how the formal system of teacher evaluations problematically assessed teacher performance it was more difficult to see how her personal needs could be met. Ultimately, Kelsey's experiential micropolitical literacy events are ones of frustration and disappointment as a result of her role as a teacher in this community. Here, Kelsey's case captures the effects of school ultimately not meeting the needs of her politics of identity because it did not affirm her as a capable, confident professional in the ways she needed.

And so, both cases do demonstrate ECTs seeking affirmation as members of their teacher community or feeling pride when colleagues praise their work or professional identity. Yet, we also learn from Colleen and Kelsey that ECTs' understanding of their political identity is complexly related to their engagement with their micropolitical literacies (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002a). This analysis that considers the operational micropolitical literacies used by ECTs as they interpret moments of self-affirmation suggests that ECT's politics of identity is

constructed by more than the ECT. Rather, it is entangled within the ECT's professional pursuits, their colleagues' motives, and the power dynamics within the larger teacher community. Next, we will discuss additional components of ECTs' personal needs, vulnerability and visibility.

Vulnerability

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) interpreted ECTs' coping with vulnerability as working to avoid personal shortcomings and perceived failure as well as navigating external criticism. As such, this personal need is intertwined with the self-affirmation need from earlier because ECTs seek affirmation and avoid feelings of vulnerability—I'd argue most teachers do the same. What we see in Colleen and Kelsey's cases are evidence of how their colleagues can create feelings of vulnerability whether that is intentional or not.

Colleen never expressed that her colleagues criticized her professional abilities, but across our conversations she regularly positioned herself as younger than her colleagues. This distancing was further demonstrated by calling her colleagues "adults" and using their last names (ex., Ms. McCoy), referring to them in the same way students are expected to. Interestingly, Colleen's teacher community was made up largely of veteran teachers whereas Kelsey had many colleagues in the ELA department who were in their first five years, including her close colleague, Leslie. The large gap between Colleen and her colleagues' years of experiences may have contributed to her feeling more vulnerable about her capabilities than what Kelsey experienced. Calling back to the literature, we know that ECTs want to use common planning times to grow as professionals (Sutton, 2009). We also know that ECTs' ability to engage in a "borderland discourse" or the ability to merge their multifaceted identities into their teacher identity supports them seeing themselves as teachers (Alsup, 2006). So, Colleen's colleagues were not close to her age nor did they share similar interests or lived experiences and/or choices

(i.e., the colleague questioning her wardrobe more reflective of what her students wore).

Therefore, Colleen had to learn to cope with vulnerabilities and to engage in a borderland discourse that she did not see her colleagues engaging in.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) also identify ECTs' students' performance as a contributing factor to ECTs feeling vulnerable as grades or test scores can be interpreted by colleagues as evidence of ECTs' capability to teach. A similar example of this comes out of Kelsey's case when other teachers emailed her and inquired about adjusting a student's grade in her class. This example adds another layer in that it demonstrates a way an ECT might respond to moments of vulnerability by engaging their operational micropolitical literacy. Despite feeling confident in how she has supported this particular student in her class, Kelsey brought the issue to her 11th grade teacher community and affirmed her plan to respond to the other teachers because she felt they had overstepped. By doing so, Kelsey is comparing her beliefs on grading and policies regarding missing or late work to that of the other teachers in her community while framing how she would defend her decision making to the colleagues from another department. In this process, she was able to see how she fit within her ELA teacher community— an aspect of the cultural-ideological need from earlier. For now, the significance of this event from Kelsey's case lies in the fact that she was feeling vulnerable about her abilities to support struggling students, but she was also feeling vulnerable about the perception of and implications for her email response given the larger teacher community at Meadow Glen High.

So, what we learn from both Colleen and Kelsey is that where ECTs deal with vulnerability tied to their experience and effectiveness, those feelings of vulnerability do not only occur as they are standing in front of their students. They can also be situated within their teacher communities and sit outside of their own control. As such, ECTs' responses to vulnerability

further positions themselves among their colleagues. Colleen's repeated practice of referring to her colleagues as older or the "adults" positions herself as outside of the teacher community, possibly contributing to her disinterest in staying in that community. Kelsey's decision to bring the vulnerable feelings around the email to her 11th grade team expresses her commitment to learning from her colleagues in that space and in doing so, she is further affirmed in both her approaches to grading and her communication with other teachers. The important takeaway here is not that ECTs' teacher communities should work to relieve ECTs' feelings of vulnerability, rather that ECTs and their mentors should be aware of how teacher communities can contribute to ECTs' feelings of vulnerability outside of the classroom and how those feelings can impact ECTs' sense of belonging and commitment to that community.

Visibility

The personal need of visibility is inextricably tied to both seeking affirmation and coping with vulnerability as an ECTs' level of visibility is the catalyst for how they are seen, affirmed, and critiqued as teachers. In other words, as ECTs are more visible in their teacher communities compared to what they experienced in their student teaching, they are susceptible to feelings of vulnerability about their work and position in the community, but also could have more opportunity for praise. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) talk about ECTs being visible through partial artifacts of their teaching like homework and test scores, colleagues or administrators seeing them teach, or even their interactions with students in the school outside of their classroom walls. The cases in this study capture what it means for ECTs to be visible or invisible within their grade level and department teacher communities and their approaches for controlling their visibility. In both Colleen and Kelsey's cases, we saw degrees of visibility but also disguise that they were afforded in their teacher community spaces and among their colleagues.

Before we further examine their (in)visibility within the context of their school's teacher communities, we must acknowledge the way in which Colleen's viral Teachertok interplays with her professional needs. Colleen was comfortable with being incredibly visible in an online space where she was able to determine what parts of her professional and personal identities were packaged for the short videos aimed at a community of teachers who are more like peers given the typical age of those on the social media platform. She is overtly confident in her voice in that space; as her visibility grows, so does the affirmation. She spoke about creating the account as a space to give advice to other first year teachers and argued that the main audience was teachers. Yet, she expressed discomfort and anxiety as the teachers in her building became aware of her account even though she ultimately received admiration for her work. Meanwhile, she had taken steps towards cloaking her personal and even her professional identity within her teacher community for most of the school year. Colleen was also worried about her colleagues and her administration seeing her videos and seeing her personality which was more like her true self, unlike the mask she wore in teacher community meetings, especially if she would get in trouble for having the account. Yet, she was not worried about teachers across the world getting glimpses into her personality and her teaching.

Colleen's diametrically opposed preferences of visibility across the different spaces speak to how important this professional need is for supporting an ECT into the profession. As we continue to strive for more effective ways of mentoring ECTs into the field, we must consider the ways in which ECTs' visibility can be affirming or can bring forth feelings of vulnerability. To consider this further, we will look at Colleen and Kelsey's visibility of practice and visibility of ideas within their respective contexts and how that visibility has implications for their politics of identity and position within their teacher community.

Visibility of Practice

The implications of the ECTs' instructional practices being visible to colleagues is important for how we aim to induct and mentor them into the profession. Unlike what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) discuss regarding ECTs feeling unease with other teachers being in their classrooms, Colleen explained that she trusted Ms. McCoy and Ms. Weaver's advice because they had seen her teach and knew the students she worked with. In a different sense, Kelsey was skeptical of the feedback she received on her teaching during her formal evaluations in the second semester because the administrator was only in her classroom for a short window of time across three days. So, ECTs may still have varying needs for their visibility in teacher community spaces including how much they share their own instructional ideas, but, in both of these cases, the ECTs did not negatively frame colleagues or administrators seeing them teach. This also reflects what literature tells us in that ECTs benefit from having colleagues and mentors see them teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Wang et al., 2008).

Visibility of Ideas

At the time of this study, Kelsey had one more year of experience with being visible in her teacher community than Colleen. Colleen's preferences to plan on her own to avoid asking the wrong questions or to not talk much in ELA teacher meetings stand in stark contrast to Kelsey wanting to have her planning and instructional decisioning be more visible to her 11th grade colleagues and her initiative to lead during the meeting time. Kelsey did not shy away from facilitating unit planning among the 11th grade team and was actively choosing to be visible in that way. In fact, Kelsey's visibility in her teacher community only became something of concern when she realized her teacher community would not allow her to be visible through contributing ideas and helping to lead the team because her colleagues did not have similar

professional needs and often would opt to not meet. In fact, Kelsey's lack of opportunity to be visible as a professional in her school, particularly with the increasingly sparse planning meetings, led to her seeking external professional spaces that could meet her personal needs by affirming her beliefs and helping generate new instructional ideas. Her seeking visibility as a budding ELA teacher in state professional organizations led to further isolation from her teacher community because of their limited recognition of the value of teachers participating in such spaces. As Kelsey made herself visible in professional spaces beyond her school, the teacher community and informal mentors inside her school appeared increasingly inadequate as the year went on. Kelsey's experience demonstrates the significance of ECTs having opportunities to be seen as professionals with potential for contributing valuable ideas to their teacher community and to the field.

Micropolitical Implications of Visibility

The previous section captured some of Colleen and Kelsey's moments of visibility that have micropolitical significance for how they saw themselves fitting within or outside of their teacher community spaces. The strategies they used to navigate their visibility (i.e., operational aspect) had implications on their emotional and professional needs (i.e., experiential aspect) which help us to consider how we might better mentor ECTs into their teacher community spaces.

Kelsey's unmet need to be seen as a professional in her teacher community despite her attempts to meet this professional need through taking on responsibility during grade-level meetings and by attending and presenting at professional conferences led her to not seeing herself fitting into her teacher community. In contrast, Colleen employed a very different operational micropolitical strategy that helped her be visible within her own terms, creating a

Teachertok in a space where she felt more comfortable with vulnerability and opting to be more of an observer during grade-level and department meeting spaces where she felt discomfort around sharing her professional ideas. For Colleen, this approach had little negative impact on her experience in the teacher community because, while she remained committed to teaching, she did not see herself within that community long term.

Not only did Colleen and Kelsey's visibility have implications for how they saw themselves fitting within their community, but it also was a conduit for further understanding the micropolitical landscape of their teacher community, particularly when colleagues of more experience and power within the department are the ones seeing and responding to ECTs' practices, ideas, and beliefs. To explain, let's revisit a key event from Colleen's case where she experiences heightened visibility with classroom management.

Despite Colleen's appreciation that her classroom was physically tucked away from many other teachers in the ELA department, she still was nearby veteran teachers. The close proximity is what allowed those colleagues to witness her emotional struggle with student behavior and intervene, mentoring her based on their management perspective and therefore the school's commonly expected ways of navigating unwanted student behavior and to not show emotion while doing so. In this instance, Colleen expressed gratitude for their support without noting the ways in which this glimpse into her teaching practice and beliefs was partial. While she was confident in the way she portrayed her classroom management approaches in the new teacher meetings, the fear of being seen as someone with poor classroom management by colleagues with different levels of experience and regard in the department prompted her to take on methods of sending students with unwanted behavior out of the room rather than examining her relationship with that student. Much like the student teacher from Correa et al.'s (2014) study

that negotiated her practices based on the practices of the teachers in the community, Colleen's position as an ECT in the teacher community led veteran teachers to project their management practices onto Colleen without making space to consider the purpose or implications for sending students to more experienced colleagues, one of whom is male. Colleen's colleagues, whom are not her formal mentors, failed to recognize that she was still in the stage of an ECTs development that relied on her formal study of teaching rather than being able to rely on the experience of responding to the daily challenges of teaching, which is the epistemological shift that Feiman-Nemser (2001a) explained occurs in the first few years of teaching. So, Colleen might have benefited from a mentor who could facilitate a deeper reflection on the difficult behavior of 2nd period and also name the ways in which teachers' professional needs can shape how they respond to students and how they coach other teachers in the building.

Moments of visibility for ECTs are often opportunities for mentoring even with informal mentors. Yet, this example shows how ECTs might not have engaged in their knowledge aspect of their micropolitical literacy often enough to understand how mentoring is wrapped up in other's professional needs as they move from a student teaching mentoring context to their early teaching contexts. In other words, it is important for ECTs' to consider how they want to be seen, but also the role of their colleagues who are doing the seeing.

Ultimately, the ways in which Colleen and Kelsey responded to their levels of visibility matter for how we mentor ECTs into the profession. Since it is not guaranteed that every ECT is ready to step into teacher community spaces without also guarding themselves due to their level of experience, opportunities for different forms of visibility—and therefore affirmation and vulnerability—through informal mentoring are important and aligns to Keese et al.'s (2023) recommendation of a “multi-faceted” approach to induction. In these cases, ECTs had

opportunities or sought opportunities for visibility in specific mentoring spaces like new teacher meetings, in collaborative spaces like grade level meetings, in the school through their classroom's proximity to other teachers, in external professional spaces like conferences, and in their classroom when colleagues pushed to support students. They also were subject to moments of visibility where they had little control. So, the frame of visibility as a professional personal need also considers the proximity and accessibility of colleagues as well as colleagues' personal needs. Therefore, the cases assert that ECTs are mentored in moments of visibility regardless of comfort levels and with important implications on how they positioned themselves given their "politics of identity" as teachers in their community.

ECTs' Social-Professional Needs

Given the social aspect of teaching, I do want to add a note on Colleen and Kelsey's social-professional needs or the "quality of interpersonal relationships" in the school (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002b, p. 115). While Kelchtermans and Ballet situate this need as a top concern for ECTs, Colleen and Kelsey's cases suggest that while positive social relationships with colleagues is important for ECTs, it is not the only professional need involved in an effective mentoring relationship or to feel aligned and integral to one's teacher community. As such, I've chosen to situate this section last because the relationships with the other teachers in their teacher community work as the backdrop for the professional needs described so far. Looking first at Kelsey, we see her social-professional needs primarily being met by her relationship with Leslie. However, Kelsey and Leslie's relationship extended far beyond social needs. Not only was Kelsey at ease when working with Leslie, but their professional relationship helped meet Kelsey's other personal and material needs. Leslie was one outlet for the level of visibility and affirmation that Kelsey wanted and they had a reciprocal relationship for

brainstorming and creating teaching materials. Ultimately, Leslie's compatibility with Kelsey's other professional needs like being seen as a professional and collaborating on curriculum allowed her to be a more robust support than Kelsey's other mentors. In fact, even though Kelsey found her assigned mentor, Mandy, to be unhelpful and disengaged, she still spoke about her positively as a person— "On a personal level, I adore her. She's great. She's awesome. But as a teacher and professional, I definitely have pushed back and been really critical about things." Kelsey and Mandy's mentoring relationship, or lack thereof, reflects the literature that calls for mentors that are not just kind but are trained on how to support ECTs' development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Langdon et al., 2014).

For Kelsey, it was not enough to get along with her colleagues and mentors. Kelsey repeatedly criticized the fact that department meetings were more social meetings compared to collaborative spaces. She also was disappointed when no one in the department responded to her initiative to start a Secret Santa. The juxtaposition between Kelsey's two wants— department meetings that take up issues of teaching and curriculum along with community bonding activities— indicate that ECTs' professional needs are more complex than just getting along with their colleagues. In addition, Kelsey's efforts to push back on her community's norms and question her mentors' approach to leading the department still fell short in meeting her professional needs. Kelsey was unable to experience the success of being in a community that values social relationships while also engaging in critical discourse (Eschar-Netz & Vedder-Weiss, 2021) and constructive conflict (Uline et al., 2003) that could have allowed Kelsey and her colleagues to negotiate their varying professional needs.

Colleen's social-professional needs held more significance as the year continued and had different implications than what we saw in Kelsey's case. While Colleen felt supported by her

teacher community and named many effective mentors, she did not feel at ease to show up on a personal level around her colleagues. This is evident through events in her case like when a colleague commented on her clothing choices, likening them to what students' wore, or her decision to create a Teachertok that merged her professional and personal identities for an audience more like herself. It was also evident in the way she discursively positioned herself as younger than her colleagues by framing them as the adults, calling them by their last names and likening herself more to her students. Colleen originally talked about being content with not engaging during grade level and department meetings, which was very different from the way she showed up in courses or alongside her cohort when in her teacher preparation program. Yet, as the year went on, Colleen talked about the joy she found in meeting more younger teachers from other departments as she began to work more after school events.

Interestingly, the shifts in her social-professional needs—moving from what she thought to be an unnecessary professional need to one that offered her encouragement and community—coincided with her shifting commitment to staying at the school. In other words, Colleen began the year talking about how she wanted to go back home and teach at the high school where she grew up because of her community there, but at the end of the year, as she began to find more community at her Warren High School, she talked about seeing herself staying there longer than she had originally anticipated. Now, there were other events of micropolitical significance that occurred during Colleen's shifting perspective, but in terms of ECTs' social-professional needs, Colleen's case suggests the need not only for effective mentors that meet ECTs' professional needs, but also for colleagues that socially and personally reflect ECTs' needs. This is yet another reason, as the literature suggests, for ECTs' to have a robust and multi-faceted support

system that allows for their induction to occur within a community rather than isolation (Keese et al., 2023).

To summarize, Kelsey and Colleen's social-professional needs held significance for how they positioned themselves in their community. Kelsey's social-professional needs were more complex than simply wanting to find friends at her school. She distinguished between how her colleagues met her social-professional needs from her other professional needs in a way that ultimately allowed her to see that she did not align with how her colleagues' viewed the purpose of the community. As Colleen's social-professional needs began to take on more significance for what she wanted in colleagues, she sought out more opportunity for personal connections, and started to envision herself staying at the school longer. Again, it is not a surprise that ECTs would care about the relationships they have with their colleagues given the social nature of working in a school. However, when thinking about how we support ECTs, it is not enough for them to have friendly colleagues. We must consider ECTs' preferences for social relationships with their colleagues as the backdrop for how their other professional needs are refined in the micropolitical landscape of their school. Mentoring is necessarily social and relational work.

Lessons on Micropolitics, Mentoring, and ECTs

In summary, this study offers accounts of ECTs' experiences with the focused micropolitical context of the function and purpose of teacher communities. Thinking with the first research question—"How do early career teachers interpret their experiences in their teacher community?"—we saw how as ECTs develop a stronger understanding of the micropolitics within their teacher community, they refine their understanding of their professional needs that function as an interpretative framework (Kelchtermans, 2019) for reflecting and reacting to their experiences in their teacher communities. As such, ECTs' professional needs are not simply a

wish-list, rather they become guideposts for who they believe they are as teachers and a lens for determining if their teacher community will be a context that can sustain them emotionally, intellectually, and professionally. So, that leads us to the second research question— “How do early career teachers perceive their position in their teacher community?” Rather than capturing how ECTs feel their colleagues position them as new members in their community, the ways in which ECTs use their professional needs as an interpretative framework for their experiences capture if ECTs feel as though they want to be continual members of that community and if so, how do they want to use their position to continue or change the practice in that community. In that sense, ECTs do in fact have agency to engage or not engage in the practices of their teacher community (Kelchtermans, 2019).

Colleen and Kelsey’s cases offer nuanced and nascent accounts of ECTs’ needs. By examining each of the professional needs within the cases of this study, we were able to discern Colleen and Kelsey’s preferences for how their teacher community functioned and in what ways they were in alignment or conflict with the colleagues in their teacher community. These needs, then, also highlighted opportunities for induction support that could help ECTs strengthen their micropolitical literacies that would help to read and write themselves into their teacher communities in ways that meet their professional needs. The professional needs outlined in this chapter made evident the ways in which ECTs may see themselves as (in)compatible with their teacher community, identifying potential foci for induction support. We also saw how ECTs refine their professional needs as they work alongside colleagues. So, while interactions with colleagues require engagement with ECTs’ micropolitical literacy, those very same interactions shape ECTs’ identities as teachers. Finally, ECTs’ material needs and cultural-ideological needs pertaining to school, district, and state expectations of testing suggested that their colleague’s

beliefs and practices of testing largely determine the significance of the tests for the teaching community. In fact, teachers in the community with more influence and experience can determine how the teacher community prepares for tests and uses the data in what that can either shift the needs that ECTs came into their early years with or create a community in which ECTs feel that they do not fit.

Looking across the research questions, then, we see the significance of colleagues on the development and support of ECTs. Colleagues, regardless of formal title or training, heavily influence ECTs' experiences and understanding of their teacher community and how they see themselves as fitting within that community. Where the literature suggests that mentors are the most effective way to support ECTs into the profession, these cases assert that all the adults within an ECT's teacher community interplay with ECT's professional needs for better or worse. While Achinstein's (2006) work suggested formal mentors' support ECTs in a micropolitical sense, this study complicates the notion of mentoring in that the very people who hold formal and informal mentoring roles make up a prominent piece of the micropolitical landscape that ECTs must navigate. Brody and Hadar (2015) remind us that veteran teachers can feel threatened by ECTs in the sense that veterans want to be positioned as the experts but ECTs can bring new and innovative ideas to the teacher community. So, we must consider the ways in which ECTs are experiencing shifts in their professional identity as a result of "confronting the day-to-day" interactions with colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a), while also recognizing that their presence can cause shifts for their colleagues as well, both of which matter for how we mentor and induct ECTs into their teacher communities. Next, the final chapter will consider the implications of the assertions made in this chapter and will offer suggestions on how this study can change the way we prepare and support ECTs in the field.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore three main questions: How do early career ELA teachers interpret their experiences in their teacher community? How do early career ELA teachers perceive their position in their teacher community? And, how do early career ELA teachers' make sense of school, district, and state expectations of their teacher community? Colleen and Kelsey's cases offer descriptive accounts of ECTs making sense of their formal and informal mentors, the beliefs and practice of their teacher communities and colleagues, and the purpose and use of tests within their teacher communities. Their experiences detail the complex processes that ECTs engage in when trying to meet their own professional needs while also reading and responding to the micropolitical landscape of their teacher community.

Summary of Findings

ECTs have varying degrees of micropolitical literacy at this beginning stage in their careers. Their engagement with their teacher community asks ECTs to engage with their micropolitical literacy in order to understand the beliefs and practices of that community and also to determine if and how they see themselves fitting in that community. We saw in chapters four and five that much of the knowledge that Colleen and Kelsey were building about their teacher community had to do with who they trusted as mentors, how their colleagues planned, collaborated, and implemented instruction, their relational compatibility with colleagues, and finally, the requirements for testing and how their colleagues responded to such requirements. As they continued to make sense of their teacher community, they operationalized strategies to

engage in their community while experiencing both frustration and contentment. This process allowed them to determine if their own professional needs aligned with those in their teacher community, which impacted their feelings of belonging to that community.

Chapter six, then, captured Colleen and Kelsey's professional needs given key events, actors, and recurring ideas within their cases. Organizational needs can indicate an ECT's feelings of if and how they see themselves fitting into their community like Colleen's disinterest in knowing the department head or grade-level leads. Kelsey's commitment to understanding the key actors and their roles within her teacher community, on the other hand, added to her critique of her school and questioning on if she was willing to stay in that community. Cultural-ideological needs, or the beliefs and normative behaviors within the teacher community, can also indicate compatibility if ECTs hold different perspectives on how the teachers within their community should engage with one another or do not align with one another's beliefs. We saw this in both cases regarding conflict around not only the purpose of testing, but also how tests were used with students and within teacher communities. Material needs are important for ECTs because they help clarify the aforementioned needs while also meeting a direct need of planning for instruction. Colleen and Kelsey spoke about the materials their colleagues shared and the materials they used in their teaching as ways of communicating how they were mentored and also how they were reading the teaching styles and practices of their colleagues.

From there, chapter six describes how professional needs are wrapped up in ECTs' politics of identity, and, specifically, how moments of affirmation, vulnerability, and visibility can support or hinder ECTs' feeling connected to their teacher community. We see how both Colleen and Kelsey wanted to feel affirmed and be seen as professionals in their instructional practice and ideas and were willing to take steps like joining professional organizations or

making oneself less visible during meetings in order to feel less vulnerable. Finally, we see how all these professional needs are situated within the professional relationships that ECTs have with their colleagues. While we hope that ECTs are surrounded by kind and helpful colleagues, their social-professional needs also consider factors like age and compatibility with the other professional needs described here. Ultimately, examining key ideas in the cases through the theoretical concept of professional needs highlights areas for the field to consider when making changes for how ECTs are mentored and inducted into the profession.

Implications

Implications for Teacher Preparation

Teachers' micropolitical awareness and literacy begins in their teacher preparation program. As such, teacher preparation programs have a responsibility to include opportunities for preservice teachers to recognize their professional needs and to practice reading schools as micropolitical spaces both in courses and in practicum experiences. Kelchtermans and Vanassche (2017) point out that micropolitics is complex, nuanced, and context specific and therefore no research-based methods for teaching micropolitics exist yet. However, they do argue that all aspects of micropolitical literacy (i.e., knowledge, operational, experiential) are involved in teacher education.

Starting with some self-study, this training could start with having preservice teachers answer questions like: What kinds of coaching and feedback do you find helpful? How do you navigate conflict? How do you learn best, collaboratively or independently? From there, conversations can shift to what they imagine their optimal teacher community to be like. Would they hope for their future colleagues to meet regularly, share materials, and improve their practice? What do they hope for this to look like? What teaching philosophies around instruction,

curriculum design, content, or classroom management are central to their practice and how will they respond if those philosophies are questioned or dismissed?

Assignments in teacher preparation courses that ask preservice teachers to strengthen their micropolitical literacy are necessary. This could be done through reading and discussing case studies that describe ECTs navigating conflict with colleagues around curriculum changes, responding to emails from another teacher questioning their grading practice, or even asking questions about how their teacher evaluation is being implemented. It also could be a more structured task where preservice teachers are asked to write a rationale for a particular lesson or content choice directed at future colleagues so that they have practice with naming and supporting their professional needs to colleagues. Given the literature on ECTs' focus and struggle with classroom management (Achinstein & Barrett; Bullough, 1989; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Veenman, 1984) and what we witnessed in Colleen's case, teacher preparation programs should also preview different types of classroom managements approaches so that preservice teachers can understand how specific approaches are not necessarily right or wrong, but rooted in different beliefs about the purposes of school, power, authority, agency, and voice. In other words, preservice teachers should have opportunities to practice their micropolitical literacy that would allow them to read and respond to what is the standard practice at a school like a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative for example.

Also, we need to help preservice teachers understand how the organizational features of their future workplace can impact their experience. The features that could be discussed could include important actors (i.e., principals, ESOL and Special Education teachers, instructional coaches, department leaders), structures (i.e., evaluation systems, grade-level and department teams, mentoring programs), and events (i.e., changes in leadership, local or state testing shifts,

and retirements or new-leadership). Understanding the organizational structure of a teacher community, including who has power to facilitate or thwart change, positions ECTs to better respond to moments of informal mentoring or to participate in teacher community meetings. Lastly, given the current educational climate, it is also important for teacher educators to discuss with preservice teachers how macropolitics related to education can trickle down into the micropolitics in their future schools.

Notice how all of this work is not discipline specific. Yes, these cases offer ECTs' experiences in ELA contexts, but all teachers are thrust into their school's micropolitics. Subject area specialties might bring about more nuanced conversations because of how curriculum or policy changes are occurring within a specific subject and therefore having ramifications on teacher communities. For instance, I would imagine Math teachers in the state of Georgia are having to renegotiate how they are using their community time and resources given the recent substantive changes in state standards. However the micropolitics unfolds in a given subject area, attention to it needs to be included in all teacher preparation programs.

It should be mentioned that doing all of this work in hypothetical situations will only help preservice teachers so far as they venture into their first year of teaching; Clinical experience is an integral part of high-quality teacher preparation programs (AACTE, 2018). As such, teacher educators and university supervisors should encourage preservice teachers to read the micropolitical landscape of their student teaching contexts and coach them on how to engage and respond. As such, university supervisors and teacher educators have a responsibility to describe how they use to manage micropolitics when teaching and model how they do so in their current roles while also being "micropolitical advocates on behalf of student teachers" (Kelchtermans & Vanassche, 2017, p. 17). For example, university supervisors can help preservice teachers

develop the micropolitical skills to negotiate with their mentor as in Ehrich and Millwater's (2011) study. Guidelines or checklists for practicum experiences should require discussion around how various actors in schools (e.g., principals, instructional coaches, department heads, grade-level leaders, or veteran colleagues) may have different professional needs than that of ECTs. The key here is to not only name the way micropolitics could shape preservice teachers' future experiences, but to also strategize ways they can navigate their future schools. Engaging in micropolitical literacy as a preservice teacher could be helpful in the future for two reasons. First, preservice teachers could consider how their professional needs match their placement site and can further pursue employment there. Or, as we saw in Colleen's case, preservice teachers can establish a rapport with their mentor teacher that can be called on even if they work at a different school in the future.

Ultimately, we need to start framing teachers positions in schools as part of an organizational system that is not limited to their classroom walls and the students that enter in it. Where strong teacher preparation programs are known to increase the likelihood of teachers remaining in the profession (Podolsky et al., 2016), attending to micropolitical literacy as a piece of teacher preparation can only help improve teacher retention.

Implications for School-based Induction

We have known the importance of a robust induction program (Isenberg et al., 2009) including assigned mentors, observations of other teachers, professional development, engaged and supported administrators, teacher community membership, and introductory orientations (Keese et al., 2023). Colleen's case captures some of these characteristics through both district-wide new teacher meetings and an assigned mentor; Kelsey's induction experience the year prior, however, lacked many of these support systems which we know to be effective. So, this

study is first a reminder that we need to be implementing a “multi-faceted induction program” with ECTs like the literature tells us to.

It is important to distinguish the purpose of specific induction programs and understand how trained and supported mentors play a role within this larger programming, as these can be easily convoluted (Bullough, 2012). If we want the induction programs to not just be about surviving the early year, but about actually developing ECTs into effective teachers who are invested and engaged in their school, as Feiman-Nemser and colleagues (1999) suggest, then we must consider micropolitics. In fact, this study suggests the need for explicit conversation and instruction on professional needs and micropolitical literacy in school-based induction programs.

To go into detail, this study highlights the immense amount of attention and energy it takes to read and write oneself into a teacher community. Yes, teachers, especially early career ones, need support with their teaching strategies, classroom management, and interactions with parents. But, this study shows that they also need intentional support with how to interact with their colleagues and engage within their teacher community. To start, a program should have explicit expectations and guidelines for how mentors can support ECTs in strengthening their micropolitical literacy. This could look like mentors supporting ECTs to name their professional needs at the beginning of the school year and to strategize ways to get those needs met across the school year as they are in ongoing negotiation within their teacher communities. As Achinstein (2006) argued, this study also suggests mentors have a responsibility to help their mentee to understand and engage in the micropolitics of their school. As such, mentors need explicit, intentional training and support in order to do so.

This study also suggests that much of the mentoring ECTs receive is within their teacher communities and through informal interactions with their colleagues. As such, schools and

districts need to put more consideration into how these communities are constructed and the time and resources they are given in order for the teachers to actually be in community with one another. Administrators need to be engaging in their own micropolitical literacy when assigning ECTs mentors and deciding what colleagues will physically be located in close proximity to their classroom and therefore setting them up to be informal mentors. Schools and departments should revisit the roles and functions of their set teacher communities and consider ways that incoming and outgoing members may instigate necessary changes and shifts to the normative behaviors of that community. Teacher communities should anticipate conflict and have mechanisms in place that will allow the community to work through conflicting professional needs as we see in both Eschar-Netz and Vedder-Weiss (2021) and Uline and colleagues' (2003) works. In order to do this, school leaders would need to set out time during preplanning for this purpose and possibly provide guidance or suggestions for what this might look like. Relatedly, these teachers who are expected to have shared material needs and cultural-ideological beliefs regarding their teaching in order to actually share problems of practice and improve student learning, as Grossman and colleagues (2001) describe, need to have shared, protected planning time during the school day.

They also need to have opportunities to see one another teach. Colleen and Kelsey's preference or at least indifference to having others see their teaching is not surprising given both had recently moved from a student teaching context where both they received daily feedback from the mentor teachers and multiple forms and modes of feedback from the supervisors and professors. The visibility of their actual teaching essentially plummets once they start teaching full time. So, if the field is serious about wanting to retain ECTs then mentoring and induction programs should include opportunities for mentors and colleagues to observe and adequately debrief ECT's teaching with the purpose of growing their practice, not evaluation. It is in the

moments where ECTs' teaching is visible that mentors and colleagues can have influential mentoring conversations as many ECTs are familiar with getting feedback on their instruction.

On the other hand, the student teaching context does not always allow preservice teachers to step into professional responsibilities during grade level or department meetings to the same extent they step into teaching itself. So, ECTs may be more comfortable with being visible in their teaching but not with their planning or idea generation because they have not experienced being visible in grade-level or department meetings without the buffer of their student teaching mentor. Therefore, it is not surprising that ECTs' personal needs regarding visibility across different school spaces are unique to the ECT and their experiences. However, as Kelsey's demonstrates, if an ECT's desires for their ideas about teaching to be seen, then their mentors can cultivate such opportunities by making space for ECTs' voices and perspectives to be heard within the school — as Jenny did early in the year when the 11th grade team regularly met and co-planned units— and by participating in external or additional professional opportunities alongside ECTs— as Leslie did when attending the state conference for ELA teachers with Kelsey. Attention to ECTs' needs as teacher communities and induction programs begin at the start of the school year affords a more systematic approach to meeting individual ECT's needs.

Ultimately, Colleen and Kelsey's cases demonstrate that assigned mentors or add-on teacher meetings are not enough to adequately support ECTs if we want them to stay in the profession and become integral members of their teacher communities. More specific attention to how ECTs are supported into and by their teacher communities adds a necessary layer to school-based induction programming.

Implications for Mentors and Colleagues

As much as this study is about ECTs, it is just as much about the teachers that both formally and informally mentor ECTs. This was mentioned above, but it is important enough to explore further. Mentors can have explicit conversations regarding key actors' leadership styles, school or teacher community normative behaviors, and organizational structures like teacher evaluations would strengthen the mentoring process. As such, formal and informal mentors need to be micropolitically aware of their school as an organization and set aside time to have these conversations with ECTs rather than just waiting for ECTs to come to them with questions or concerns. The concept of professional needs is also something mentors can use in these conversations to not only get to know the ECT but also to have a framework for identifying where ECTs might be struggling with seeing themselves as part of their teacher community. Lack of any of the professional needs in these categories may be areas for mentors to support so that ECTs first clarify their needs and talk through strategies aimed at meeting those needs and strengthening their feeling of belonging to their teacher community.

As Westheimer (2008) discussed, one of the responsibilities of a teacher community is to support the new members in becoming a part of the community and profession. This study deepened this claim in that it showed how colleagues' behaviors and practices are incredibly influential on ECTs' experiences whether that was the colleague's intention or not. If teachers want to strengthen their school's community and continue to do so year after year without starting over constantly due to teacher turnover, then all teachers, regardless of official mentoring status, need to be intentional when interacting with ECTs. This includes the ways they participate in community meetings, give advice between classes or at lunch, and even create and share teaching materials. So, the professional community of the school needs to explicitly engage

in supporting ECTs, which involves coming together as an authentic community that can navigate conflict.

Potential Benefits of Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology provides descriptive, context-dependent accounts of the phenomena within consideration (Merriam, 1988). The beauty of case studies are the “mundane particulars” that make the reader feel like they are there in the case (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 4). By binding these cases on ECTs’ perceptions and meaning making of their teacher community, we are able to return back to those easily forgotten first years as teachers. We are reminded of how ECTs read their schools, how they respond to the endless demands of teaching, and how they negotiate their evolving teacher identity. In a way this “vicarious experience” (Simons, 2009, p. 23) allows us as readers to learn from Colleen and Kelsey’s cases “in private, personal ways, modifying, extending, or adding to [our] generalized understandings” of ECTs experience mentoring, colleagues, and micropolitics (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 115). By expanding readers’ experiences on a phenomena, case studies are important because they play a role in “advancing a field’s knowledge base” (Merriam, 1988, p. 32).

Additionally, working closely with ECTs for an extended amount of time could potentially benefit the ECT as the methods common in case study methodology provide opportunity for additional reflection on their experiences. Similar to what Bullough (1989) described in his research, case studies on ECTs may allow the participants to feel they have someone in their “corner” as they navigate their school contexts. For instance, Kelsey shared that she felt that she could reflect freely without having to “police [her] own language.” I also found that the interviews and self-reflections encouraged Colleen and Kelsey to think about some of the bigger organizational aspects of their schools like I describe in the implications. For example,

when I asked Colleen about the strategies she used when interacting with colleagues she responded, “honestly, I don’t have any. I probably need some.” However, as she continued, she started to realize she was very purposeful in who she went to for help and in what ways.

Undoubtedly, there are design-based limitations to case study research, which will be taken up next. However, what should be emphasized here is that case studies are not only suitable for educational research, but that the close examination of phenomena found in case studies can “perhaps even improve practice” (Merriam, 1988, p. 32).

Potential Limitations of Case Study Methodology

Inherent in qualitative research is the question of generalizability. Case studies do not adhere to the idea that the assertions presented are generalizable knowledge, rather cases aim for “*concrete universals* arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail” (Erickson, 1986, p. 130, as cited in Merriam, 1988). While some may see this as a limitation, case study researchers focus on “tacit and situated understanding” of the case itself; particularization is the goal, not generalization (Simons, 2009, p. 24). Given this, Colleen and Kelsey’s experiences are not meant to be representations of every ECT’s experiences. Instead, they are unique to their time and place (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). As chapter three discussed, case study methodology focuses instead on internal validity of the particulars of the cases through means of multiple data sources, member checking, extended time studying the case, and clarifying researcher bias (Merriam, 1988). It is in these methods that case study researchers move towards assertions grounded in each case.

Some critique the subjectivity of the researcher inherent in qualitative research, but Simons (2009) argues that when “monitored and disciplined” it can be an “essential in understanding and interpreting the case” (p. 24). So, while I discussed my role in the research in

chapter three, it must be reiterated here that my experiences, theoretical orientations, and methodological decisions shaped how Colleen and Kelsey's cases were analyzed and written. Cases are always bound based on the researcher's questions, interests, and purpose of the study. As such, my focus on ECTs' perceptions as the unit of analysis limits the assertions made about ECTs' experiences in their teacher communities by largely excluding their colleagues' perceptions.

Beyond broader limitations of case study methodology, this inquiry itself came with its own limitations. First, access to Colleen and Kelsey's contexts required school district IRB approval, both of which were not approved until a few months into the fall semester. So, I was unable to observe teacher community meetings at the very beginning of the school year. Similarly, observations were subject to the scheduling of communities in each context; the meetings were often scheduled or canceled on a whim, making it difficult for me to attend. Nonetheless, these limitations are somewhat to be expected when doing research in school contexts, and will inform my methodological decision making in my future research.

Next Steps

This inquiry has encouraged me to continue to study and support ECTs. In my next context, I intend to create a network and community of ECTs by holding space for them to come together and bond over shared experiences and learn about each other's teaching contexts, expectations on their teaching, and community culture. I hope for this space to be a site that could transition into or at least inform my next research project that establishes ECT inquiry groups that invite participants to explore the micro political landscapes of their various school contexts and come together to strengthen their micropolitical literacies. Additionally, this inquiry reiterated the significance of mentoring on ECTs' experiences. As such, I also hope to study

professional development opportunities for mentors interested in strengthening their approaches for mentoring ECTs' practice in the classroom but also their own engagement and position in their teacher community.

Closing Thoughts

This study emphasizes the complex micropolitical landscape that ECTs step into when becoming a teacher. Given this, I have offered suggestions across multiple phases of teachers training and induction that can help them socialize into the profession. Thinking back to the beginning of this dissertation, I would like to imagine that I would have been better prepared to engage in critical conversations with my 6th grade ELA colleagues about why we should be using full novels if I had practiced having similar conversations in coursework, in student teaching, and with an assigned mentor. I also believe that other colleagues might have been more apt to push back on the school's book policy if they had received similar training. In other words, if we start to attend to micropolitics in multiple stages of a teacher's development and encourage continuing development in this space, then ECTs might step into teacher communities with colleagues equipped to help them better understand the organizational system of their school. And, in doing so, we can work actively against the teacher shortages described in chapter one.

To close, this dissertation demonstrates how ECTs bring their own ideas and expertise to their schools which can be amplified by giving them the power to read and respond to people and events occurring in their teacher community. As such, this work answered Kelchtermans' (2019) call for future research that positions ECTs as agents, networkers, and assets in their schools as opposed to deficit-oriented interpretations. As a result, I see this as having implications on ECTs themselves. This study shows that ECTs must see themselves as having power and voice within

their teacher community and schools. ECTs—and others in the field—should no longer heed the advice of “wait until you have more experience.”

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM EARLY CAREER ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH TEACHER COMMUNITIES

Dear Teacher:

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Sara B. Kajder, Ph.D.
Department of Language and Literacy Education
skajder@uga.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

The purpose of this study is to examine early career English Language Arts teachers' experiences in their teacher communities. Such an understanding will contribute to both how schools and teacher preparation programs seek to support and mentor early career teachers into their communities. It will also help us add to the growing body of studies which look at the ways early career teachers are inducted into the profession.

To participate in this study, you must fulfill two conditions: (1) you must be in your first three years of teaching (excluding student teaching and practicum experiences in the 2023-24 school year; and (2) you must teach at least one section of English language arts in grades 6-12.

Your participation will involve the following:

1. Participating approximately bi-monthly interviews with Madison Gannon ~ hour long interviews will be scheduled based on participant availability via Zoom.
2. Engage in approximately bi-weekly reflective writing in the mode of your choice (e.g., written journal, digital word document, audio recordings, email, etc.) focused on your experiences in your teacher community.
3. Collect and share relevant artifacts from your instructional planning (e.g., lesson plans, materials) and school and district related to community norms and curriculum development (e.g., meeting agendas, district curriculum maps, etc.)
4. Agree to observation of two- three department or grade-level meetings upon school districts' IRB approval.

If you are still working in a graduate program, the decision to participate or not participate in the research study will have no effect on your grade in program courses, the scoring of program requirements, etc. Decision to withdraw (at anytime) will not affect your grade.

There are minimal risks or discomforts associated with this research. Where there are no direct benefits for participating in this research, some individuals may feel a sense of satisfaction knowing this research can lead to a better understanding of how schools and teacher preparation programs seek to support and mentor early career teachers into their communities and also add to the growing body of studies which look at the ways early career teachers are inducted into the profession. There are no incentives for participating in this study.

All information collected in this study that can be identified as yours will remain confidential, unless required by law. No individually-identifiable information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be shared with others without your written permission. This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. All research data will be kept on a private, password protected computer that only the researchers will have access to. Identifying information of participants will be removed from the research records after all data collection has been completed. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. De-identified Information obtained from this research may be used for future studies (or shared with other researchers) without obtaining your additional consent. The observations will not be recorded. If you participate in the interview, it will be audio recorded. The audio recording will be destroyed after transcription is complete and codes have been assigned.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as a part of the study and may be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return or destroy the information.

The main researcher conducting this study is Madison Gannon, a doctoral candidate of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Madison Gannon at madison.gannon@uga.edu or at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706-542-3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

By proceeding with the survey, you are agreeing to participate in the above-described research.

_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Name of Researcher	_____ Signature	_____ Date

APPENDIX B

SECONDARY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM EARLY CAREER ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH TEACHER COMMUNITIES

Dear Teacher:

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Sara B. Kajder, Ph.D.
Department of Language and Literacy Education
skajder@uga.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

The purpose of this study is to examine early career English Language Arts teachers' experiences in their teacher communities. Such an understanding will contribute to both how schools and teacher preparation programs seek to support and and mentor early career teachers into their communities. It will also help us add to the growing body of studies which look at the ways early career teachers are inducted into the profession.

To participate in this study you must fulfill two conditions: (1) you must be in the teacher community of an early career ELA teacher; and (2) you must teach at least one section of English language arts in grades 6-12.

Your participation will involve the following:

1. Agree to observation of two-three department or grade-level meetings upon school districts' IRB approval.
2. Volunteering for one interview with Madison Gannon ~ hour long interviews will be scheduled based on participant availability via Zoom.

There are minimal risks or discomforts associated with this research. Where there are no direct benefits for participating in this research, some individuals may feel a sense of satisfaction knowing this research can lead to a better understanding of how schools and teacher preparation programs seek to support and mentor early career teachers into their communities and also add to the growing body of studies which look at the ways early career teachers are inducted into the profession. There are no incentives for participating in this study.

All information collected in this study that can be identified as yours will remain confidential, unless required by law. No individually-identifiable information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be shared with others without your written permission. This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. All research data will be kept on a private, password protected computer that only the researchers will have access to. Identifying information of participants will be removed from the research records after all data collection has been completed. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. De-identified information obtained from this research may be used for future studies (or shared with other researchers) without obtaining your additional consent. The observations will not be recorded. If you participate in the interview, it will be audio recorded. The audio recording will be destroyed after transcription is complete and codes have been assigned.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as a part of the study and may be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return or destroy the information.

The main researcher conducting this study is Madison Gannon, a doctoral candidate of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Madison Gannon at madison.gannon@uga.edu or at XXX-XXX-XXX. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706-542-3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

By proceeding with the survey, you are agreeing to participate in the above-described research.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

APPENDIX C

EXPANDED DATA FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

Table 4

Colleen Data Collection

Interview(s)	Interview Date & Format	Interview Length
Interview #1	11/28/23 (zoom)	54 minutes
Interview #2	1/29/24 (zoom)	51 minutes
Interview #3	3/13/24 (zoom)	40 minutes
Interview #4	4/25/25 (in classroom)	50 minutes
Interview #5	5/24/24 (zoom)	34 minutes
5 total interviews	3 hours and 49 minutes	
Self- Reflection(s)	Reflection Date	Reflection Length
Reflection #1	10/25/23	7 minutes
Reflection #2	11/1/23	7 minutes
Reflection #3	11/6/23	5 minutes
Reflection #4	1/5/24	7 minutes
Reflection #5	1/11/24	7 minutes
Reflection #6	1/22/24	10 minutes
Reflection #7	3/13/24	6 minutes
Reflection #8	4/10/24	4 minutes
8 total journal reflections	53 minutes	
Observation(s)	Observation Date	Observation Length
Observation #1	2/5/24	26 minutes

1 total observation	26 minutes	
Secondary Interview(s)	Interview Date	Interview Length
Ms. McCoy	4/3/24	52 minutes
Ms. Weaver	4/17/24	22 minutes
Additional Datum		
1. Teacher Community Planning Time expectations 2. 9th and 10th grade PLC Agenda from 2/5/24		

Table 5

Kelsey Data Collection

Interview(s)	Interview Date & Format	Interview Length
Interview #1	10/19/23 (zoom)	1 hour 2 minutes
Interview #2	12/12/23 (zoom)	44 minutes
Interview #3	2/28/24 (zoom)	30 minutes
Interview #4	4/16/24 (in classroom)	31 minutes
4 total interviews	2 hours 47 minutes	
Self- Reflection(s)	Reflection Date	Reflection Length
Reflection #1	10/4/23	3 paragraphs (typed by Kelsey)
Reflection #2	10/6/23	2 paragraphs (typed by Kelsey)
Reflection #3	10/25/23	5 paragraphs (typed by Kelsey)
Reflection #4	11/28/23	8 minutes
Reflection #5	11/29/23	10 minutes

Reflection #6	12/7/23	9 minutes
Reflection #7	1/5/24	10 minutes
Reflection #8	2/27/24	5 minutes
8 total journal reflections	10 paragraphs and 42 minutes	
Observation(s)	Observation Date	Observation Length
Observation #1	10/25/23	1 hour 15 minutes
Observation #2	1/5/24	1 hour 5 minutes
Observation #3	4/16/24	30 minutes
3 total observations	2 hours 50 minutes	
Secondary Interview(s)	Interview Date	Interview Length
Leslie Tate	4/2/24	54 minutes
Additional Datum		
1. District Instructional Framework 2. District Strategic Plan		

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your school and school district. How big is your district? How would you describe the area? School population?
2. What were your initial impressions of the school work environment?
3. What grade level do you teach?
4. When do you have planning and/or meeting times through your school day/week?
5. Tell me about the makeup of your department and your PLC.
6. How are you in contact with _____ throughout your school week/month?
7. Could you tell me about any impactful experiences with other ELA teachers in your school?
8. What influences how you build curriculum and plan instruction for your teaching?
9. Could you tell me about how you learn about district and school expectations regarding your ELA curriculum?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE SELF-REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. What role does your co-teacher play in your teacher community?
2. What strategies do you use when interacting with colleagues?
3. What has been the most challenging part of working with other ELA teachers this year?
4. What routines or expectations (spoken or not) have picked up on about your PLC or teacher community?
5. What stands out to you about working with your colleagues, especially regarding how you look to wrap up this semester?

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE SECONDARY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. To get us started, could you share how many years you've taught and how many years you've been at Warren County High School?
2. What do you teach?
3. Tell me about how you got into the role of supporting first year teachers? How long have you been doing it?
4. What is your approach to this work?
5. What are the types of support that you find 1st year teachers are typically needing? Does this shift across a year?
6. What challenges do you face when supporting early career teachers?
7. If the profession could make some changes to how we induct new teachers into our field, what changes would you like to see?

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE STRUCTURED FIELD NOTES

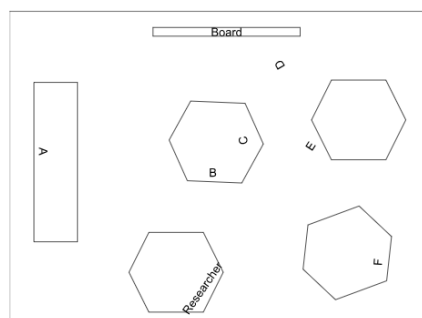
Date/Time: 2/5/24 3:15 pm-3:40 pm

Location: Another teachers' classroom, Warren County High School/ 9th and 10th grade PL Meeting

In attendance: A, B, C, D, E, F, Researcher

Ref #	Running Record of Topics/Discussion	Direct language/quotes	Researcher Memo/Thoughts
1	"D" explains that vocabulary is a difficult thing and that even AP kids need help with vocabulary. She continues to talk about how they need to work on this to prepare them for American Lit.	"What this is telling me..." "We have fallen off the train somewhere..." in regards to vocabulary	I am noticing how "D" uses the conversation to then think about "next steps" for the group/her own teaching. I wonder if "B" is picking up on this? These American Lit teachers/years seem to be "the goal," I wonder if there is room to think about other things in this community?
2	"A" says that new standards are going to include Greek and Latin root words.		Does "B" know about the new standards? What info has she been given?
3	The conversation switches to books (this is an agenda item). "D" explains that they need to think about what books they want for next year because the process starts now if new ones need to be approved. She says to get the information to XYZ.		How much flexibility do they have here? Ask "B" about this later.

Room Layout



APPENDIX H

SECOND CYCLE CODES

- Actions in community
- Administering tests
- Age comparisons
- Assigned mentors
- Classroom Management
- Community values/norms
- Comparisons to other ECTs
- Conflict
- Critical Event: Data Dig Day
- Critical Event: Email from teachers outside community
- Critical Event: ESOL support at beginning of year
- Curriculum/Units
- Disconnection from community
- ECT emotions
- Feelings in community
- Getting support from community
- Ideal work environment
- Jenny Collins
- Key Actor: Interactions with Dr. Mullins
- Key Actor: Literacy Specialist
- Key Actor: Principal resignation
- Lack of participation
- Languaging of students
- Leadership/autonomy
- Leslie Tate
- Making comparisons to colleagues
- Mandy Peterson
- Methodological Considerations
- Ms. Drew
- Ms. Fletcher
- Ms. George
- Ms. McCoy
- Ms. Shelton
- Ms. Weaver
- New Teacher Meetings
- Parents
- Participation in external organizations
- Physical description/building layout
- Planning/Collaboration
- PLC characteristics/description
- Power/Influence/Status
- Preplanning
- Reading colleagues teaching and materials
- Reading colleagues' needs/circumstances
- Recognition and/or visibility
- School Characteristics/Information
- Seeing differences in teaching styles
- Shared struggles across community members
- Student Teaching
- Teacher Evaluation
- Teachertok
- Teaching Assignments/Course Load
- Testing interventions
- Testing uses/purpose
- Thoughts about staying in the profession
- Unassigned mentors
- Wanting more direction/leadership

APPENDIX J

THEORETICAL CODING

Table 6

Codes Organized within Professional Needs

Organizational Needs
• Dr. Mullins • Feelings in community • Jenny Collins • Key Actor: Literacy Specialist • Key Actor: Principal resignation • Leadership/autonomy • Mandy Peterson • Ms. Fletcher • Ms. McCoy • Ms. Shelton • Ms. Weaver • Parents • PLC characteristics/description • Power/Influence/Status • Reading colleagues' needs/circumstances • School Characteristics/Information • Shared struggles across community members • Student Teaching • Teacher Evaluation • Teaching Assignments/Course Load • Thoughts about staying in the profession • Unassigned mentors • Wanting more direction/leadership
Cultural-ideological Needs
• Administering tests • Community values/norms • Critical Event: Data Dig Day • Disconnection from community • Key Actor: Interactions with Dr. Mullins • Jenny Collins • Key Actor: Literacy Specialist • Lack of participation • Languaging of students • Leadership/autonomy • Leslie Tate • Making comparisons to colleagues

• Ms. Fletcher • Ms. McCoy • Planning/Collaboration • PLC characteristics/description • Power/Influence/Status • Seeing differences in teaching styles • Testing interventions • Testing uses/purpose • Thoughts about staying in the profession • Unassigned mentors	
Material Needs	
• Curriculum/Units • Disconnection from community • Getting support from community • Jenny Collins • Leadership/autonomy • Leslie Tate • Making comparisons to colleagues • Ms. Drew • Ms. Fletcher • Planning/Collaboration • PLC characteristics/description • Reading colleagues teaching and materials • Seeing differences in teaching styles • Student Teaching • Unassigned mentors	
Personal Needs	
Affirmation	• Comparisons to other ECTs • ECT emotions • Getting support from community • Jenny Collins • Leslie Tate • Ms. McCoy • Ms. Weaver • New Teacher Meetings • Unassigned mentors
Vulnerability	• Critical Event: Email from teachers outside community • Critical Event: ESOL support at beginning of year • ECT emotions • Power/Influence/Status • Shared struggles across community members • Thoughts about staying in the profession
Visibility	• Age comparisons

	• Classroom Management • Key Actor: Interactions with Dr. Mullins • Leslie Tate • Ms. George • Ms. McCoy • Ms. Weaver • New Teacher Meetings • Participation in external organizations • Power/Influence/Status • Recognition and/or visibility • Teacher Evaluation • Teachertok • Unassigned mentors
Social-professional Needs	
	• Feelings in community • Jenny Collins • Leslie Tate • Mandy Peterson • Ms. George

Table 7

Codes Organized within Micropolitical Literacy Aspects

Knowledge Aspect
• Age comparisons • Assigned mentors • Community values/norms • Comparisons to other ECTs • Conflict • Critical Event: Data Dig Day • Curriculum/Units • Dr. Mullins • Ideal work environment • Jenny Collins • Key Actor: Interactions with Dr. Mullins • Key Actor: Literacy Specialist • Key Actor: Principal resignation • Mandy Peterson • Ms. Shelton • Ms. McCoy • Ms. Weaver • Parents

• Physical description/building layout • Planning/Collaboration • PLC characteristics/description • Power/Influence/Status • Reading colleagues teaching and materials • Reading colleagues' needs/circumstances • School Characteristics/Information • Seeing differences in teaching styles • Shared struggles across community members • Teacher Evaluation • Teaching Assignments/Course Load • Testing interventions • Testing uses/purpose • Unassigned mentors • Wanting more direction/leadership
Operational Aspect
• Actions in community • Critical Event: Email from teachers outside community • Getting support from community • Lack of participation • Leslie Tate • Making comparisons to colleagues • Ms. McCoy • Ms. Weaver • New Teacher Meetings • Participation in external organizations • Planning/Collaboration • Student Teaching • Teachertok • Testing uses/purpose
Experiential Aspect
• Critical Event: Email from teachers outside community • Critical Event: Data Dig Day • Disconnection from community • ECT emotions • Feelings in community • Getting support from community • Key Actor: Literacy Specialist • Key Actor: Principal resignation • Leslie Tate • Ms. George • Ms. Weaver • Power/Influence/Status • Recognition and/or visibility

- Shared struggles across community members
- Teachertok
- Thoughts about staying in the profession