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A Wild Distinction: The Metamorphosis of Teacher Identity Through Cognitive Dissonance and Urban Field Experiences

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A wild distinction: The metamorphosis of teacher identity through cognitive dissonance and urban field experiences

Introduction

Teacher identity is not a common construct - it is used in different ways, by different people, and in different contexts. Yet the process of developing teacher identity as beginning professionals is critical. To paraphrase the word of one pre-service teacher, there is a *wild distinction* between the identity of a student and the identity of a teacher.

Opportunities within preparation programs to explore the unknown and unfamiliar lead pre-service teachers to re-create their professional beliefs and ideals based on new knowledge and experiences. It may be impossible to predict the cognitive development of others. Nonetheless, a structured exploration of professional teacher identity provides an individual teacher with a unique experience in cognitive dissonance. This may lead to changes in what one chooses to think, how these thoughts are refined, and what actions or behavior result.

The concept of teacher identity needs to expand to encompass factors outside the individual person. How teachers interact with broad social systems is now, more than ever, an important component of teacher identity. Teacher educators have a responsibility to prepare beginning teachers to encounter a world we do not yet know. There will be challenges and complexities wholly unknown at this point in time. Changes in population demographics, the influx of students and families whose first-language is not English, budget reductions at both federal and state levels - these factors have synergistic implications for teaching and learning experiences in urban public school classrooms.

When the development of teacher identity encompasses factors outside the individual person,

such as an urban field practicum, this experience can initiate an exploration of social justice. Field experiences with a commitment to social justice are also opportunities to connect the theory to the practice of social justice. These experiences can foster awareness and sensitivity to diversity and enhance pre-service teachers' "understanding of the connection between beliefs, actions in classrooms, and how these actions impact student learning" (Ticknor, 2015; Villegas, 2007). This understanding is a prerequisite to teaching for social justice.

As the P-12 student population becomes increasingly more diverse, teacher educators have increased the focus on how to best prepare beginning educators to teach students representative of this diversity (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Goldenberg, 2013; Hollins, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2008). More specifically, individuals who teach in urban schools will likely have classrooms filled with students who are different from them, and come from diverse backgrounds (Delpit, 1995; Jensen, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2008; Munin, 2012; Nieto, 2009; Weiner, 2006). "Depending on the cultural background of specific teachers, these differences can be represented in the race, ethnicity, language, religion, family structure, and/or socioeconomic status of the students" (Authors, 2016).

Teacher preparation programs in the 21st century must therefore demonstrate a clear commitment to prepare teachers to work with diverse students in varied school settings (CAEP, 2013; NCATE, 2007). The preparation of pre-service teachers must guide individuals in developing a broad and deep understanding of the influence culture has on urban students and the schools they attend. Teacher educators are responsible for preparing pre-service teachers, through classroom instruction, as well as the construction of specific field experiences, to serve effectively in urban environments.

Pre-service teachers benefit from multiple field experiences in multiple settings, including urban environments (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Delpit, 1995; Gorski, 2013). Yet it is not sufficient to simply provide pre-service teachers with access and opportunity to urban schools. One way to address this challenge is by purposeful guidance of teacher preparation through urban field experiences and corresponding critical reflection contribute to the development of the professional identity of pre-service teachers. Guided urban field experiences are connected to coursework, situated in an urban context, and further characterized by a sustained period of time as well as tasks, which require critical reflection.

The purpose of this study was to determine how creating cognitive dissonance in pre-service teachers through an urban field experience facilitates the development of teacher identity. Developing one's professional teacher identity- including personal beliefs, values, and ideals associated with culture, ethnicity, race, and language - is the foundational layer for understanding differences in others who contribute to the learning partnership in urban schools - students, parents/guardians, families, colleagues, community workers, and administrators.

Review of Literature

Teacher Identity. The traditional coursework and clinical components found in many teacher education programs may fall short in providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to consider their own teacher professional identity. While teacher educators cannot *teach* professional identity, they can provide guided opportunities for pre-service teachers to understand who they are, where they come from, and how this may begin to take shape as a teacher identity. Many argue learning how to *be* a teacher is equally as important as learning *how* to teach (Ayers, 2004; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Sachs, 2005).

Sachs (2005) describes professional teacher identity as follows: Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act', and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (p. 15).

"Erikson (1974) believed identity development was metamorphic in nature. According to Erikson theory of psychosocial development, identity develops through a process with distinct stages before it reaches maturation." Chong & Low (2009) applied this idea of an emergent identity to the field of teacher education. They stated professional teacher identity begins in pre-service teachers:

...initial development of a teacher's professional identity is formed from their perceptions about teaching during the pre-service phase and that these pre-service perceptions are formed by their own prior experiences as pupils and exposure to teachers who taught them. This identity continues to evolve and develop during the pre-service years and the beginning teacher years.

By the time pre-service teachers enter the final stages of their preparation program, they will have spent extensive time in P-12 classrooms. Ideally, programs should foster a steady development of teacher identity within individuals as pre-service teachers may experience shifts in their teacher professional identity. Throughout the teacher preparation program, there is a progressive shift from thinking like students - which has been most of their academic experience - to thinking like teachers who are now responsible for planning, instruction, and assessment (Lortie & Clements, 1975). This shift in thinking influences their decisions and actions.

New teachers take pre-service teaching and learning experiences and weave them into the development of their teacher identity. "Teacher identity is based on the core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher; beliefs that are continuously formed and reformed through

experience” (Walkington, 2005, p. 54). Each decision teachers make, each action they take, is simultaneously a consequence of past action and present context, and a condition shaping future action and context (Hall & McGinty, 1997).

According to Lasky (2005) teacher identity, “starts with the belief that human beings have the ability to influence their lives and environment while they are also shaped by social and individual factors” (p. 900). Pre-service teachers’ interactions with these social factors may challenge their existing identity and belief structure. Given this, there may be a connection to teacher identity and Festinger’s (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Festinger’s premise describes the intellectual disequilibrium people encounter when they are introduced to an idea or have an experience inconsistent with previously held perceptions. To resolve their discord, people re-examine their original cognitions in light of the new cognition, and as a result may change their beliefs or perceptions.

Challenging perceptions has important implications for teacher educators preparing pre-service teachers for urban school settings. First, it is important for teacher educators to recognize pre-service teachers’ beliefs are complex and reflect multiple facets including the appearance, atmosphere, resources, and students in urban schools (Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008). Second, teacher preparation programs must realize the potential impact field experiences can have on these perceptions. Pre-service teachers’ perceptions of the teaching conditions and students in urban schools as well as their own efficacy related to Browning, & Purdum-Cassidy, 2007; del Prado Hill, Friedland, & Phelps, 2012; Jacobs, 2015).

Critical Reflection.

Notable scholars have supported Dewey’s (1933) original call for critical reflection in education (Howard, 2003; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Schon, 1983; Yang, 2009). Howard (2003) defined critical reflection as “...reflection within moral, political, and ethical contexts of teaching” (p. 197). Teacher educators must provide opportunities in coursework and field experiences to construct meaning for pre-service teachers and provide them with the skills and knowledge best suited for effectively educating a diverse student population. This can be done, in part through opportunities to critically analyze important issues such as race, ethnicity, and culture and recognize how these concepts shape the learning experience for many students (Howard, 2003).

Critical reflection has the potential to allow pre-services to reconsider existing beliefs of race, culture, and social class, and how this affects teaching and learning in an urban environment. Critical reflection can help pre-service teachers recognize internal or external biases they may have related to working with students who may be culturally different than them. In his book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, Parker J. Palmer (2007) asserted, “...knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass

darkly, in the shadows of my own unexamined life - and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well (p. 3).”

Cognitive Dissonance.

Field experiences in urban schools can create cognitive dissonance in pre-service teachers and lead to changes in their preexisting beliefs (Haberman & Post, 1992; Nieto, 2006; Nuby, 2010; Olmedo, 1997; Singer, Catapano & Huisman, 2010; Sleeter, 2001; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2005). For pre-service teachers, the dissonance is as important as development of their pedagogical practices. In order to move toward change in beliefs, pre-service teachers must be provided with field experiences different from their personal experiences (Lortie, 1975). During these experiences, pre-service teachers experience cognitive dissonance as they compare and contrast their existing knowledge and assumptions of urban schools to what they observe, encounter, and learn during an urban field experience. (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

How might pre-service teachers resolve the dissonance between what they thought they knew about urban educational settings with the new information discovered during field experiences? Pre-service teachers confront and resolve their cognitive dissonance related to these contexts by moving through and between a series of stages outlined in Figure 1 (Author, 2016).

Pre-service teachers progress through these stages at different paces and in different ways as existing beliefs (original cognitions) of urban contexts are challenged by what may be contradictory information discovered and experiences encountered (new cognitions) during urban field experiences. This discourse (dissonance) is not a singular consideration of conflicting beliefs. Rather, cognitive dissonance is a continuous process by which pre-service teachers reconfigure their beliefs and develop their identity as urban teachers (Author, 2016).

Figure 1 <here>

Dissonance in the first three stages challenges perceptions specific to teaching and educational contexts. During the first stage, Creating a Felt Need, pre-service teachers develop an understanding of the demand for urban school teachers who are able to teach students who are likely to have a background different than them. (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2010; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). In the second

stage, Shifting from Apprehension to Appreciation, pre-service teachers replace, or at least balance, their perceptions of urban schools as dangerous, poorly maintained, or devoid of assets, with a recognition of positive attributes and opportunities represented in urban school settings (Ladson-Billings, 2008; Milner, 2013; Author 1 et. al, in press).

Once this appreciation is established, pre-service teachers conceptualize how assets of urban

environments can be leveraged to enhance teaching and improve student learning. In this third stage, *Moving beyond the Deficit Approach*, pre-service teachers advance beyond a deficit-driven philosophical view of teaching to one which: (a) draws from the contextual assets of urban communities; (b) values a rigorous and relevant curriculum; and (c) balances high academic expectations with compassionate empathy (Delpit 1995; Lazar, Edwards, & Thompson McMillon, 2012; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Yosso, 2005).

The dissonance experienced in the final two stages broadens to encompass constructs and systems external to education. In the fourth stage, *Closing the Gaps*, pre-service teachers begin to understand how disparities outside the school environment impact academic achievement of urban students (Irvine, 2010; Jensen, 2009; Kantor & Lowe, 2013; Gorski, 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Rothstein, 2013; Welner & Carter, 2013). In the final stage,

Teaching for Social Justice, pre-service teachers develop a more reciprocal understanding of teaching, recognizing education impacts society and society impacts education. As a result, they see their potential to influence social inequities, which contribute and perpetuate prejudicial or discriminatory practices and policies (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Karp, 2007; Lallas, 2007).

Methodology

This study examines how the phenomenological construct of teacher identity intersects with cognitive dissonance during urban field experiences. An understanding of how this process occurs, and to what extent teacher identity develops as a result of the forced cognitive dissonance through guided critical reflections, can best be illuminated through a qualitative methodological design. A qualitative methodology allows the researcher to study the lived experiences of participants, pre-service teachers in an urban field experience, without manipulating the research setting (Patton, 1990). The purpose of this study was to determine how teacher identity develops by creating cognitive dissonance in participants, using an urban field experience as the catalyst. Since the unique nature of the participants' field experiences was highly individualized, a case study design was most appropriate to gather in-depth information and was particularly salient in this study for three reasons.

First, a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1989, p. 23). The focus of this study required the investigation to occur within the university environment as well as P-12 settings. The research occurred in a mid-size, northeastern university. The designated course and related urban experience were part of the regular course sequence in a teacher preparation program.

Second, the case study concentrated on individual participants. In this study, participants were pre-service teachers in one teacher preparation course, which included a co-requisite 80-hour

urban field experience.

Third, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident at all times (Yin, 1989). Case studies do not identify isolated data parts, as in experimental research. Instead, the information-rich, detailed nature of case studies often generate findings unavailable through purely quantitative methods of research (Patton, 1990). In this investigation, the boundaries between course experiences and urban field experiences by design overlapped and intersected.

Exploring participants' perceptions about their experiences as they engaged in teacher identity development occurred through the use of multiple, overlapping data sources and thick description (Creswell, 2009; Geertz, 1973). Three types of data were employed for the study: (a) guided responses written by each participant on the implications of teaching in an urban environment, (b) a post-field experience summary/critical reflection paper, and (c) a post-field, semi-structured interview. Analysis of the descriptive data identified categories, patterns, and relationships emerging from this recursive exploration of participants' identity development. The data sources provided opportunity for triangulation of information to strengthen confirmations and underscore disparate ideas.

Researchers individually reviewed the critical reflection papers to identify significant, common statements from the papers of 24 participants enrolled in an introductory teacher education course. Reviewers then compared all remarks emerging from participants' writing. Next, the three researchers combined statements and identified evidence supporting the five Stages of Cognitive Dissonance: (a) Understanding the Felt Need; (b) Shifting from Apprehension to Appreciation; (c) Moving Beyond the Deficit Approach; (d) Closing the Gap; and (e) Teaching for Social Justice.

Next, purposeful sampling procedures were utilized to identify three participants who met the following criteria: (a) successful completion of course requirements, (b) demonstration of high-quality written expression, and (c) inclusion of comments pertaining to four or more stages in their writing. Researchers then reviewed the guided responses for the three selected pre-service teachers'.

Finally, each of the three selected participants was individually interviewed. Researchers sent interview questions and definitions of the Stages of Cognitive Dissonance to the participants, and each responded via telephone and/or email. Questions and definition included:

In what ways did your urban field experience develop your identity as a teacher ('how to be', 'how to act', and 'how to understand' your work as a future teacher)?

In what ways did your urban field experience impact you as related to the following areas defined below: (a) creating a felt need, (b) shifting from apprehension to appreciation, (c) moving beyond

the deficit approach, (d) closing the gaps, (e) teaching for social justice. Provide specific examples if you can.

Definitions:

- a. Creating a Felt Need - the realization of the growing demand for teachers in urban schools.
- b. Shifting from Apprehension to Appreciation - the realization that perceptions framing urban schools as dangerous, poorly maintained, or devoid of assets are often stereotypes rather than reality.
- c. Moving Beyond the Deficit Approach - the realization of the importance of balancing empathy for students who may live in difficult conditions with appropriate academic expectations for those students.
- d. Closing the Gaps - the realization that factors outside of school impact academic achievement.
- e. Teaching for Social Justice - the realization teachers can influence historic or system-wide inequities, which prejudice or discriminate against groups.

Findings

An 80-hour guided urban field experience, which included critically reflective tasks, provided an opportunity for participants to question and challenge existing perceptions of urban schools and urban students. Participants identified their existing knowledge of urban schools and often perceived them as dangerous, dilapidated, and/or academically under-performing (original cognition). After engaging in a guided field experience, the same participants viewed urban classrooms as safe learning environments and recognized urban students' desire to learn and capacity to meet high expectations (new cognition).

Participants were faced with an ideological conflict (dissonance) regarding urban schools and students. As they worked to resolve this dissonance, their teacher identity began a metamorphic change. Direct quotations from individual critical reflection papers and interviews provided evidence of participants' cognitive dissonance and metamorphosis. Quotations are organized into the stages of cognitive dissonance to portray participants' thought processes as they begin to develop professional teacher identity

Creating a Felt Need

Critical reflection papers included evidence of a clear realization of the growing demand for teachers in urban schools. Each participant noted the lack of consistent, high-quality teaching personnel as an early observation within the guided field experience.

Participant Comment: The contextual chart also accurately indicates the racial and cultural profile, of the students that [sic] are attending this school. The implications here necessitate a

cultural awareness from the teachers, and require the capability to connect with students of diverse cultural backgrounds. My experience showed me how challenging it is for low-income schools to provide the necessary teacher to student ratios that promote a productive classroom.

Participant Comment: I did observe that absolute necessity of quality educators in an urban system; many of the students in my cooperating teacher's classroom came with significant gaps in understanding of material from previous years. Though these gaps may not have been entirely the fault of the students' previous teachers, a string of excellent educators would likely have made a tremendous difference.

Participant Comment: One of the days I was at the middle school for fieldwork every teacher besides my cooperator and one other on the 7th grade floor called out. This required a substitute for every teacher, plus any others in the district, to which my teacher said there weren't nearly enough. It had me thinking... If you loved your job you wouldn't call out unless you were very ill, right? So at this moment I began to realize just how in need these students were for teachers who wanted to teach them.

Shifting from Apprehension to Appreciation

Perhaps the most frequently noted aspect of cognitive dissonance applied to urban schools and students was a shift from apprehension to appreciation. The participants realized perceptions framing urban schools as dangerous, poorly maintained, or devoid of assets are often stereotypes rather than reality. They shared this shift in thinking in descriptive, accessible language.

Participant Comment: I did talk to a lot of other student teachers who were worried and had the wrong perception of urban districts. They thought that students attacked each other daily in classrooms and that no one stopped them. That is far from the truth. There are many well-behaved and promising students in urban districts and probably the same amount of troublemakers in these districts as there are in suburban districts, however media does not call attention to this.

Participant Comment: I was nervous, scared, and hesitant. The last time I had been in this type of setting was my own high school four years ago and I had only known negative things about [urban city]. As I approached the front entrance the students were lined up males on one side and females on the other as they entered the building.... Being in [urban city] has opened my eyes to a whole different world of education that I may never have been exposed to if it were not for the education program at [university]. I have been exposed to students who live in impoverished neighborhoods and face circumstances in their lives that some could never imagine, all while still finding the strength to come to school to learn.

Moving Beyond the Deficit Approach

As participants progressed through the guided field experience, they reached a turning point in

developing teacher identity. Participants recognized the need to approach teaching students in ways involving more than friendship and empathy. There was a significant realization of the importance of balancing empathy with appropriate academic expectations for students who may live in difficult conditions. This allowed them to move beyond the deficit approach, a common perspective of urban students.

Participant Comment: The most profound realization in working with these children was that regardless of the disadvantages of their urban setting and the historically lower learning outcomes of these school districts, these children displayed at least the same learning potential as students in more advantaged school districts. My cooperating teachers made me realize that many students work to support their families and often do not receive the nutrition they need to maintain energy to think.

Participant Comment: Witnessing education in urban schools is an odd experience: while many aspects of urban education fall in line with stereotypes, some [K-12 students] are entirely surprising, defying expectations. The students were willing to do the work, and in some cases had already done it, but lacked a confidence in their own mathematical abilities, so much so that they needed external confirmation to feel comfortable with their answers. Students had been “helped” in excess and measured against standards, which were inappropriately low. As such, they had developed learned helplessness. Many students lacked confidence in their work and knowledge of the material, even when they truly understood what had been taught. The way the teacher interacted with his classes required them to take ownership of their own learning and engage [with] the material under their own power. Assistance was available to any student who truly needed help, but my cooperating teacher did an excellent job developing his students’ potential for independence.

Participant Comment: A piece of advice I learned from my teacher was to always take into consideration the amount of work they [K-12 students] are capable of doing with their outside circumstances and to always make arrangements. Seeing the determination of the students is inspiring, but so is the determination of the teachers. Academic expectations were not unreasonable, but the teacher showed empathy for a student when he failed.

Closing the Gaps

As participants realized factors outside of school impact student achievement, the field experience provided ample evidence underscoring their pre-existing suppositions. While participants may have entered the experience with some knowledge of these factors, engagement with urban students and teachers deepened their understanding of the complexities of a teacher’s roles, responsibilities, and interactions not only within but also beyond the school community.

Participant Comment: The needs of individual students as well as the educational needs of this community are so particular and urgent they [K-12 students] can be considered “ground zero”

when attempting to design an education system, which works for all children. This situation made me realize that I really have to do my research or sit down to talk to a struggling student to make sure I know what is going on outside of the classroom that could be affecting his learning.

Participant Comment: I have learned that it is not uncommon that a child has gone hungry in the evening before school and the breakfast that is served in the classroom is always entirely distributed, without any foods being send back. Another implication of the poverty levels in the community is the family's [sic] struggle to provide adequate school supplies. While many of the basic supplies are provided, such as books, notebooks, pencils and folders, they are not replenished throughout the year, and students quite frequently search for supplies, which are most often provided by the teachers from their own budget. Furthermore, many of the students don't have access to technology resources at home. It was clear that the school was very aware of the possibility that students might not have these things at home, and was determined to provide an equitable education despite these challenges. It is true that the school, in conjunction with community services, offers after school programs to help narrow this gap, however it is not nearly enough.

Participant Comment: While working-age individuals are struggling to provide for their families their children are sent to school during the day and placed in the hands of another caregiver, the teacher. With a rising crime rate, low socioeconomic status [of many students], and diversity of individuals [students], teachers are faced with the reality that a student's struggle at home is transferrable to the classroom. It is the duty of the teacher to face these implications and structure the classroom to fit the needs of the students. The students in urban communities experience many difficult things that other children in their surrounding communities do not.

Teaching for Social Justice

Through critical reflection, participants began to realize the importance of social justice. In the last stage of cognitive dissonance, they were developing a framework for professional teacher identity. Participants demonstrated a profound shift in thinking when they recognized the potential power of an individual teacher to impact society.

Participant Comment: I realized that being a teacher in an urban school district, is not limited to educating students, but necessitates constant advocacy and a relentless lobbying against administrative and political roadblocks to sensible education reform. These lessons can teach students to value one another's differences and hopefully change the pattern of prejudice and discrimination.

Participant Comment: This experience has also shaped the aspirations for my own future as an educator and an advocate. Regardless of where I will be teaching, and which post-graduate education path I will take, I will always work to improve the quality of education not only in my own classroom, but for the education system as a whole. After this experience, it is my firm

believe [sic] that the key to improve and reform education lies not with politicians and administrators, but with the collective and individual competency of the classroom teacher.

Teacher Identity

As the guided field experience progressed, participants increasingly recognized the individual classroom teacher as a potential agent of change in the educational community. Participants considered how their existing perceptions converged with the guided field experience to shape their teacher identities. This experience also deepened their understanding of who they were becoming as teachers. Each participant displayed distinct shifts from thinking like a student to thinking like a teacher.

Participant Comment: Being exposed to an actual classroom environment, and being able to apply learned material from my course provided me with a deeper understanding of what it means to be a teacher. I was able to sit in on many different kinds of classes including honors, academic, and inclusion classes. Within each class I was able to witness and work with students from various cultures and learning levels. Being open to new experiences makes all the difference.

Participant Comment: As I understand it, the goal of the introductory semester of [university] teacher-education program is to transform students into teachers. Most Intro students have been in college for two to three years, if not more; given that information, it's not surprising that the mindset of the average individual entering the intro semester is that of a student. Though the roles of students and teachers are linked, they are wildly distinct; priorities, goals, and viewpoints differ greatly. However, when students leave the program, they must be fully equipped to succeed in the professional world of education. They must be able to think and act like teachers. As such, the education curriculum as a whole, and the introductory semester in particular, assumes the role of a cocoon in which the student-teacher metamorphosis takes place. That transformation has been my experience this semester. Classroom instruction in pedagogical theory is necessary, but no experience prepares a student to become a teacher like interacting with real students and teaching lessons to real classes.

What We Learned

In the words of one participant, "though the roles of students and teachers are linked, they are wildly distinct." This participant was able to recognize these identities as both dichotomous and simultaneous. Findings of this study confirm the role of teacher preparation programs in shifting the identities of pre-service teachers, particularly in urban settings.

The focus of this study was the intersection of preparing pre-service teachers, the context of urban educational environments, and the development of teacher identity. When teacher

preparation programs include guided urban field experiences, these programs can influence the emergence of teacher identity by challenging pre-service teachers' existing perceptions through cognitive dissonance. However, without teacher preparation programs guiding urban field experiences, the identity of pre-service teachers may be overly influenced by personal perceptions and experiences. Guidance is critical in order to support pre-service teachers as they struggle through their dissonance and the metamorphic process of professional identity development.

The dissonance in the first three stages represents the development of individual teacher identity of pre-service teachers. However, the two final stages, Closing the Gaps and Teaching for Social Justice, extend dissonance beyond individual pre-service teachers and into the larger context of the profession. Pre-service teachers reach these stages when they view their profession as an interactional component of society rather than something separate from or solely reactive to other elements of society (Apple, 2013). In the final stages, the writings of pre-service teachers demonstrated the development of identities transcending themselves as individual teachers. Pre-service teachers now consider a much broader and collective professional identity.

Conclusion

In this study, it was evident participants had a shift in thinking about themselves as individuals and as future teachers. Participants who once thought a career as an urban educator was not a viable option reconsidered the possibility of becoming an urban educator. They also reframed their perceptions of urban schools and the students who attend them as well as the communities in which they are situated. They even began to reconfigure the perception of their identities as teachers and the role teaching plays in contexts well beyond the classroom walls.

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FIGURE 1

