On Becoming Teacher: Re/contextualizing the Gendered Encounters, Entanglements, and Expectations of Early Career Teachers

by

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Abstract

This collection of four papers explores and critically considers the expectations encountered in becoming teacher as early career teachers enter the profession. Although each manuscript functions as a standalone paper, collectively the papers take up common threads in the study of early career teachers, and becoming teacher, through engagement with theoretical and methodological approaches that include feminist critical discourse analysis, feminist poststructuralism, feminist theory, affect theory, and narrative fiction. Drawing upon the aforementioned theoretical perspectives provides the theoretical tools to critically engage with the often hidden, or obscured, affect laden and gendered tensions that complicate becoming teacher, while also creating space to inquire into learning to teach in ways that extend beyond questions of practice. What are the struggles and dilemmas that are produced through expectations of becoming teacher? How are expectations of becoming teacher exacted through discursive means? How might we make space to deconstruct and contend with the expectations that produce "bad feelings" for and in early career teachers? Each of these papers, alone and together, aims to contribute to the perpetually unfinished conversation of becoming teacher and foreground the often-veiled quandaries of learning to teach.

Keywords: early career teachers, teacher becoming, feminist theory, affect theory, feminist critical discourse analysis, narrative fiction, academic fiction

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this work to Vincent and Gus—the canine members of my family that saw me through many years of graduate work. They provided comfort, laughter, and joy when I needed it most.

I also dedicate this work to my maternal grandparents—Karen and Svend Spangen—because without their bravery, and the courageous decisions they made throughout their lives, I would not be where I am today.

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Introduction

Early career teachers enter the profession of teaching gripping to impressions, memories, desires, and phantasies that shape images, as well as expectations, of becoming teacher. The encounters, entanglements, and expectations of learning to teach, and becoming teacher, are fraught with uncertainties (Webb, 2013). Expectations of predictability are interrupted by frustrations when the collisions between assumptions and lived realities produce irreconcilable tensions (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Perryman, 2022; Voss & Kunter, 2020). In becoming teacher, early career teachers struggle against, and within, the expectations that complicate learning to teach. Expectations that are produced through discursive, material, and affective forces but are often felt to reside insularly within the teaching subject as an internal struggle (Britzman, 2003; Janzen, 2014). To recognize the socio-cultural, historical, and political situatedness of the expectations of early career teachers is to acknowledge that expectations are constituted through and by forces that operate within relations of power. The instability present within constructions of expectations opens up possibilities to re/consider the structures and practices that produce expectations. Disrupting expectations allows for other ways of knowing and becoming. Unsettling "bad feelings" (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018) shifts the focus away from the teaching subject and onto the systems that produce problematic expectations.

This thesis will include four manuscripts that will collectively and independently deconstruct, theorize, and re/consider the expectations that are imposed upon early career teachers and their becoming as they transition from being a preservice teacher to an inservice teacher. Each manuscript will trouble the implicit expectations of early career teachers and how expectations become problematic for the teaching subject's construction of their identity(ies), the work of teaching, and becoming teacher (learning to teach). Engaging with a variety of theoretical

perspectives and methodological approaches, these manuscripts will seek to enliven the study of early career teachers through critical consideration of learning to teach as a contested and situated practice. Recognition of teaching, and becoming teacher, as complex, layered, and partial offers a critically significant conceptualization that stands in contrast to neoliberalism's instrumental, practice-oriented, and reductive notions of teachers and teaching.

Throughout my graduate work, my attention has been drawn to the critical consideration and theorizing of the difficulties encountered by early career teachers as they are becoming teacher. Stirred by the work of Deborah Britzman (2003), I have engaged with theory, particularly those of poststructural, feminist, affect, and critical, to make sense of the obscured, taken-for-granted, and hidden aspects of becoming teacher that position struggles and dilemmas within the individual teaching subject rather than considering the systems and structures that produce complexities, contradictions, and confusions in becoming teacher. My master's thesis, *The Hidden Work: Early Career Teachers' Experiences of Becoming Teacher* (2019), took up a phenomenological study to inquire into the perceptions of early career teachers as they were learning to teach. Engaging with a poststructural theoretical framework, I sought to deconstruct the accounts of lived experiences to understand how early career teachers were making sense of becoming teacher as their identity(ies) were being shaped. My doctoral dissertation is an extension of this work that draws upon feminist perspectives to interrogate the ways in which teaching, as a gendered profession, produces problematic expectations of early career teachers. Engaging with affect and feminist theories has allowed me to further problematize and trouble the hidden work of early career teachers by attending to the gendered (recognized as part of an intersectional framework [Crenshaw, 1989]) and affective tensions that reside within, and shape,

the work of becoming teacher, while simultaneously complicating what it means to learn to teach.

Positionality Statement

I come to this work as a cisgender white woman of parents that immigrated from Northern Europe to Canada. As a graduate student and teacher in the public school system, I have the privilege of living the work that I also study. I have direct experiences of being an early career teacher and encountering the overwhelming, often confounding, difficulties of entering the profession and coming face-to-face with the limitations of my assumptions, memories, and phantasies of being, and becoming, a teacher. As a woman in teaching, and through my university studies and research as a novice feminist scholar, I have come to recognize the gendered work of teaching that elicits limiting and reductive conceptualizations for women in the teaching profession. Being a teacher and graduate student impacts my research because I occupy an "insider-outsider" position (Goundar, 2025) in which I have increased familiarity with many aspects of teaching and becoming a teacher. My shifting and overlapping identities of teacher, graduate student, woman, and researcher magnify the intensities and tensions that I encounter in this work.

Early Career Teachers

Within the field of research on early career teachers, there is a distinction between the literature that views or isolates the practices of teaching as separate from the contexts that they are situated within, and informed by, and the research that acknowledges the situatedness of teachers. Research that compartmentalizes the work of teaching from the teacher, and their material, discursive, embodied, and affective realities, often seeks to remedy the "shortcomings" of early career teachers (e.g., Johnson & Down, 2013). Additionally, within this area of research,

conceptualizations of becoming teacher are often premised upon assumptions that learning to teach is linear, uncomplicated, technical, and certain (Britzman, 2003; 2007; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). In contrast, the literature that inquires into the contextualized complexities of teaching seeks to contribute to the ongoing-ness of understanding and conceptualizing becoming teacher without establishing rigid truths that remain disjointed from the shifting contemporary landscapes of education (Ball, 2016; Clarke & Phelan, 2017; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Gannon, 2018; Johnson & Down, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Pucheggar & Bruce, 2021; Stacey, 2019).

Unsettling the complications and paradoxes that are inherent to becoming teacher provides alternatives to the narratives in research, and the public domain, that rest upon conceptualizations of teaching as instrumental, technical, and practice oriented (e.g., Ball, 2016; Buchanan, 2015). Becoming teacher is a complex, non-linear, and recursive endeavour that resists being completely known, defined, or exhaustively portrayed. It is necessary to engage in research about early career teachers that considers the contexts that the teacher is situated within and the ways in which systems inform the work of teaching as the perspectives and systems themselves are shifting and unstable. Considering the teacher in isolation ignores the myriad educational influences that complicate and confront early career teachers as they are situated within unpredictable and volatile contexts in an uncertain world. Research that remains grounded in the situatedness of the teacher recognizes the socio-cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts that inform and constitute discourses that produce problematic understandings of teachers and teaching. The work of teaching, and becoming teacher, is rendered as a contested site and understood to be problematic. Critical interrogation of dominant discourses allows for deconstruction of the assumptions, contradictions, and fallacies that structure narratives of

teachers and teaching, subsequently informing expectations imposed by the self (internally) or others (external to the self) (Weedon, 1997). This research will aim to contribute to the ongoing conversation of early career teachers through the deconstruction and theorizing of the problematic expectations that are imposed upon a teacher's becoming. Through the work of wresting understandings of teachers and teaching from dominant discourses, possibilities are produced for re/considering what it means to be and become teacher.

Rationale and Purpose

The purpose of this work is to recognize the situatedness of becoming teacher as well as critically deconstruct and re/consider the expectations that are placed upon early career teachers as they are becoming teacher. Often implicit and obscured, expectations are produced through discursive, affective, and material forces, determining narratives about teachers and teaching that yield problematic assumptions, conceptualizations, and expectations (e.g., Juvonen & Toom, 2023). The research of early career teachers includes not only the study of what teachers do day-to-day (i.e., practice) but how the work of learning to teach impacts and affects teachers. By critically considering the ways in which problematic pressures are produced will afford the space that is necessary in seeking to understand the influence of dominant discourses in constraining and defining what it means to be and become teacher.

Early career teachers are generally considered across the literature as having zero to five years of experience (e.g., Lavigne, 2014). High attrition rates are identified through the research as prevalent in the first five years of entering the teaching profession (e.g., Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Early career teachers are confronted by implicit expectations that are produced through, and by, forces that are embedded within, for example, texts that are intended to support and structure the transition, or induction, into the profession of teaching. Affective encounters and the

day-to-day dissonance of experience results in frustration and confusion for being and becoming teacher. When these obscured expectations are left unconsidered, they function as naturalized aspects of becoming teacher and the work of teaching. The regulating effects of expectations limits early career teachers by placing parameters on how one is to be/come a teacher and conduct themselves as such. Socially constructed expectations position the struggles in learning to teach as flaws, failures, and faults of the individual teacher. The overarching research interests that span across the four papers are:

1. In what ways are the expectations of early career teachers constructed, produced, maintained, and re/produced?
2. What are the implications for early career teachers when they encounter (problematic) expectations as they are becoming teacher? Specifically, how do expectations inform, interfere, and impede the teaching subject's becoming and the work of learning to teach?
3. How can expectations of early career teachers be deconstructed and re/considered for productive and generative possibilities to make space for other ways of becoming teacher?

These research concerns are taken up across all four papers in varying approaches to consider the troubling incoherence and impact of expectations that are encountered through discursive, affective, and material force. Weaving throughout the papers are the common threads that gather the discussions together: early career teachers, language and power, teaching as a gendered profession, "bad" feelings, hidden struggles, and expectations. Each of the papers provides varying theoretical and methodological perspectives that pull at and rip the seams of problematic narratives and dominant discourses that are stitched within the fabricated narratives of becoming teacher.

Relational Complexities of the Contemporary Educational Landscape

Neoliberalism and Teaching

Contemporary educational landscapes are permeated by the insidious interests and problematic pursuits of neoliberal ideology (Ball, 2016; Davies & Bansel, 2007). Neoliberalism conceptualizes the teacher through practice-oriented, instrumentalized, and reductive impressions that narrow the scope of teaching (Buchanan, 2015; Connell, 2013). Teaching is viewed as certain, predictable, and bounded within (and by) teacher competence and standards frameworks that separate what is assumed to be the work of teaching from the teacher (Buchanan, 2015; Churchward & Willis, 2022). Becoming teacher and learning to teach is neither linear nor unproblematic (Britzman, 2007; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). It is fraught from the outset as those who decide to become teachers are already caught in an ontological and epistemological entanglement of what they presume it means to be and become a teacher. The whispers of childhood memories from time in school as a student constitute expectations and hopes (Britzman, 2003).

Threads, Tangles, Frays, and Knots

Each of the following manuscripts function as a standalone paper but also as an inquiry into the common themes of early career teachers, the tenuous transition into the profession of teaching, as well as the complexities and contradictions of becoming teacher. Engaging with contrasting theoretical perspectives and lenses allows for different aspects and experiences of early career teachers to be drawn into the foreground and critically considered for the ways in which they are constituted, normalized, and re/produced. Often many of the encounters and dilemmas in early career teaching are left to gnaw at the individual teacher, hidden amongst the isolating struggles of becoming teacher (Janzen, 2014). Feminist critical discourse analysis

allows us to critique the ways in which language exerts power over the discursive shaping and constitution of teacher identities and the expectations placed upon teacher becoming and learning to teach. The intersections between feminist theory and affect theory provide critical perspectives to deconstruct the often taken-for-granted aspects of becoming teacher that are in fact gendered, patriarchal, and oppressive, allowing for consideration of the problems of the system rather than perpetuating a narrative of problems residing within the individual teacher (Weedon, 1997). Introducing narrative fictional writing into the academic conversation of early career teachers creates a space to draw on research, personal experience, and imagination that offers the character as a mediary space to explore the embodied, discursive, material, and affective experiences and contexts in becoming teacher. An account of the experiences of early career teachers will always be partial as teachers are continually becoming and lived experiences cannot be fully apprehended (Britzman, 2003). Conceptualizing teaching, and becoming teacher, in such a way allows for the research of early career teachers to meander between research as inquiry and as a creative act, a space of transformation and possibilities to take risks for re/considering other ways of knowing and becoming. Recognition of the ongoing-ness of becoming teacher, and learning to teach, enlivens the work of teaching through the undulating movement in contemporary landscapes of education that is nested within a world that is already given and not of our making or control (Biesta, 2019).

This research is comprised of four manuscripts, each one focusing on a specific topic, and drawing on particular theories, to foreground the numerous dynamics of becoming teacher as an object of study. Below I will briefly describe the purpose, research questions, and theoretical approach for each of the four manuscripts.

Disturbing Discourses

The first manuscript provides a literature review on the topics of early career teachers. The search strategy for this literature review is characterized as a "hybrid strategy" (Mourão et al., 2020) whereby database searches of digital libraries and index databases were completed alongside the snowballing strategy of reviewing the citations in texts as well as those in the reference lists. This literature review was not intended to be exhaustive, rather, it aimed to provide an overview of the thematic topics that resonate within the contemporary research on early career teachers and provide a discussion of the topics pertinent to situating the subsequent manuscripts within the research landscape. The texts included in this review reflect contrasting viewpoints of teaching rather than being a selection that adhere to a specific theoretical framework or purpose. The literature review is situated within the larger project of this dissertation which critically considers the expectations of early career teachers, how these expectations are constructed, and how expectations produce problematic discourses for becoming teacher. Providing a robust survey of the current research on early career teachers generates a context for the proceeding papers to be positioned within the current research as well as establish how these papers contribute to filling some of the existing gaps in the literature by extending conversations or introducing new considerations. The subsequent papers include literature reviews that narrow the topic of early career teachers in relation to the specific paper's discussions (e.g., induction, women in early career teaching, becoming teacher). Additionally, some of the articles and texts that have been included refer to the pre-service experiences of early career teachers due to the influential impacts of the time during teacher education programs and the inability to create rigid delineations between the experiences of learning to teach.

Reading Expectations

This manuscript inquires into the topics of induction and early career teachers. I engage with feminist critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2023; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Lazar, 2005, 2007, 2014, 2018; Rogers, 2011) to analyze and critique induction texts, specifically handbooks, intended for early career teachers who are entering kindergarten to grade 12 public school education systems in Canada. Only English-language documents that are publicly available across Canada, through online searches, are included in this study. The purpose of this manuscript is to foreground the dominant discourses that are embedded in the language of induction texts and the ways in which "preferred teacher identities" (Carswell & Conway, 2022) are discursively constituted. I use feminist critical discourse analysis as a critical methodology to deconstruct the text of handbooks, foreground, and name, the discourses that structure the texts, and analyze the discourses to consider the tensions that are created through expectations of early career teachers. The research questions taken up in this manuscript include the following:

1. How is the teaching subject, and the work of teaching, discursively constructed in texts written for early career teachers (i.e., induction handbooks and guides)?
2. How are expectations of early career teachers discursively constructed in these texts?
3. How are the implied expectations problematic for early career teachers and their becoming?
4. How might these expectations be deconstructed and re/considered in order to produce other ways of welcoming early career teachers into the profession?

Feminist poststructuralism is used to theorize the discourses embedded in the handbooks in order to consider the relations between power and gender that inconspicuously operate within the work of learning to teach. This research will contribute a critical consideration of induction that

utilizes a feminist lens and seeks to go beyond the practicalities and organization of induction for early career teachers.

Interrupting Expectations

This manuscript takes up the topic of women in early career teaching and the affective forces that shape and inform their teaching identity(ies). I engage with feminist theory and affect theory to deconstruct the experiences of women in early career teaching to re/conceptualize the "bad feelings" that are encountered. The dominant discourses that generate meaning in the experiences of early career teachers are critically considered separately and together to understand how they are discursively produced and they ways in which they function to impose certain narratives of learning to teach and becoming teacher. The purpose of this manuscript is to foreground the dominant discourses that construct "bad feelings" in the experiences of early career teachers. The research questions addressed in this manuscript include:

1. Where do the "bad feelings" experienced by early career teachers come from? In what ways are they discursively produced? In what ways do the discursive expectations of early career teachers produce "bad feelings" for the individual teaching subject?
2. How might we understand the material and embodied manifestations of "bad feelings"?
3. How might we re/consider the ways in which "bad feelings" are produced and experienced by women in early career teaching?

Feminist theory and affect theory provide theoretical tools to deconstruct and interrogate the tacit power relations that are structured through dominant discourses. Critical recognition generates possibilities for reconfiguring our understandings of bad feelings as something other than a failure, flaw, or fault within the individual.

A Year In

This paper challenges the conventions of academic writing by using a first-person fictional narrative to delve into the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of an early career teacher as she enters the teaching profession. This manuscript considers the following questions:

1. How do expectations of early career teachers compound and complicate the work of becoming teacher?
2. How might an arts-based approach, such as narrative fictional writing, create conceptual spaces to engage with and re/consider the hidden dilemmas produced through expectations of becoming teacher?

The fictionalized narrative offers a "textual representation" (Tummons, 2014) of early career teaching that is emotive in its embodiment of the complexities and frustrations that punctuate the work of learning to teach. Arts-based research methods, such as storytelling, "offer tools for researchers and research participants to interact with the material world in ways that eventually enhance our understanding of reality" (Tian, 2023, p. 5). Through an arts-based research approach, I use creative writing to construct spaces where readers can engage with tenuous, messy, and affect-laden moments of teaching that exist outside of themselves but can have impact on their own lived experiences (Tian, 2023). The manuscript includes a preface and afterword to detail the theory and research that are embedded in the fictionalized narrative. In this collection of papers, learning to teach is conceptualized as becoming, and "it is precisely the process of *becoming* rather than *being* that arts-based research aims to capture" (p. 5).

The entirety of this research draws attention to *how* implicit expectations of early career teachers are produced and the ways in which they are problematic, how the teaching subject and their teaching are constructed, and how we might re/consider these troubling expectations

through engagement with theory to recognize the ways in which struggles to become teacher are not simply a failing within the individual teaching subject.

The Manuscripts

Each of the following manuscripts function as standalone inquiries but also collectively aim to theorize questions regarding the experiences of early career teachers, the transition into the profession of teaching, as well as the complexities and contradictions of becoming teacher. Engaging with differing theoretical perspectives and lenses allows for a variety of aspects and experiences of early career teachers to be drawn into the foreground and critically considered for the ways in which they are structured, normalized, as well as re/produced. Often many of the encounters and dilemmas in early career teaching are left to gnaw at the teacher, hidden amongst the isolating struggles in becoming teacher. The three manuscripts that follow the literature review collectively and independently deconstruct, theorize, and re/consider the expectations that are imposed upon early career teachers and their becoming. Each manuscript troubles the implicit expectations of early career teachers and how expectations become problematic for the teaching subject's construction of their identity(ies), the work of teaching, and becoming teacher. Engaging with a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, these manuscripts seek to enliven the study of early career teachers through critical consideration of learning to teach as a contested and situated practice.

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Disturbing Discourses:

A Literature Review of the Facets, Frictions, and Fractures of the Research on Early Career Teachers

Abstract

This literature review critically considers the current scholarship on early career teachers (from approximately the last ten years) to situate the discussions of becoming teacher within the contemporary educational research contexts. An overview of the topics in early career teacher research is provided prior to taking up specific themes and tensions that resonate within the literature. A *hybrid strategy* was utilized for this literature review whereby database searches of digital libraries and index databases were completed alongside the snowball strategy of reviewing the citations in texts and in the reference lists. The process of searching and collecting texts using a database search highlights the imperfections and inconsistencies of the process and the challenges in achieving a "complete" literature review. Consideration was given to establishing a robust collection of literature to provide a thorough representation of the current research. This literature review is situated within the larger project of this dissertation which critically considers the expectations of early career teachers and how expectations are constructed, as well as the ways in which problematic expectations are produced by dominant discourses.

Keywords: early career teachers, becoming teacher, literature review, ECTs, new teachers

Disturbing Discourses: A Literature Review of the Facets, Frictions, and Fractures of the Research on Early Career Teachers

The study of early career teachers is a significant area of research because the transition into the profession (including the first few years) is fraught with experiences, struggles, and confusions that demand attention and critical consideration. Ongoing research of early career teachers provides continued opportunities to critically attend to and reconsider the ways in which teachers enter the profession, how they are welcomed, and what they are encountering in the dynamic landscape of education. Educational research engages with the study of early career teachers through a diverse range of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies for a multitude of purposes. The topic of early career teachers offers a vast expanse of possibilities for inquiry due to the innumerable facets, conditions, contexts, and experiences that punctuate and shape learning to teach—becoming teacher (Britzman, 2003; Janzen, 2013, 2014, 2015; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016; Ovens, et al. 2016; Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). Acknowledging that learning to teach is a non-linear and recursive phenomenon without a precise endpoint—a perpetually unfinished endeavor (Britzman, 2003, 2007; Strom & Martin, 2017)—means that developmental, solution-oriented approaches and reductive conceptualizations of teachers and teaching limits recognition of the material, political, historical, affective, and discursive forces on becoming teacher and how these might be critically considered. This literature review includes the current scholarship on early career teachers (from approximately the last ten years) to situate the discussions of becoming teacher within the contemporary educational research contexts. An overview of the topics in early career teacher research is provided prior to taking up specific themes and tensions that resonate within the literature, establishing the research landscape in order to situate the subsequent manuscripts.

Purpose

This literature review was not intended to be exhaustive, rather, it aimed to provide an overview of the thematic topics that resonate within the contemporary research on early career teachers. The texts included in this review reflect contrasting viewpoints of teaching rather than being a selection of texts that adhere to a specific theoretical framework or purpose. The literature review is situated within the larger project of this dissertation which critically considers the expectations of early career teachers, how these expectations are constructed, and how dominant discourses produce problematic expectations for becoming teacher. Providing a robust survey of the current research on early career teachers generates a context for the proceeding papers to be positioned within the current research as well as establish how these papers contribute to filling some of the existing gaps in the literature. The subsequent papers include literature reviews that narrow the topic of early career teachers in relation to the specific paper's discussions (e.g., mentoring, women in early career teaching, becoming teacher). Additionally, some of the articles and texts that have been included refer to the pre-service experiences of early career teachers due to the influential impacts of the time during teacher education programs and the inability to create rigid delineations between the experiences of learning to teach.

Methodology

The gathering of texts for this literature review was conducted between October 2023 and July 2024, using the University of Manitoba Libraries' database search tools. Texts published within approximately the last ten years (2014–2024) were included as well as works that are regarded as seminal texts in the study of early career teachers (e.g., Britzman, 2003). Because early career teachers are identified in various ways, I used the following search terms to ensure that my search was expansive enough to capture relevant research:

- beginning teachers
- early career teachers
- first-year teachers
- new graduates
- new teachers
- newly qualified teachers
- novice teachers

Additional articles or books were included through a *snowball strategy* (Mourão et al., 2020) through review of the reference list of a text that was located through use of the original search terms. The search strategy for this literature review is characterized as a "hybrid strategy" (Mourão et al., 2020) whereby database searches of digital libraries and index databases were completed alongside the snowball strategy of reviewing the citations in texts and in the reference lists. The process of searching and collecting texts using a database search highlights the imperfections and inconsistencies of the process and the challenges in achieving a "complete" literature review. Consideration was given to establishing a robust collection of literature to provide a thorough representation of the current research. That being said, selecting any of the specific themes or topics identified in this literature review would surely produce numerous additional references and could be explored in considerable depth.

Exclusions & Inclusions

For the purposes of this dissertation, and to create parameters for the scope of the literature review, this review focused on English-language scholarly texts that studied teaching within the context of kindergarten to grade 12 public schooling. Any research related to pre-school or early childhood education settings, private schools, higher education, adult learning,

and English language learning was not intended to be included. Although, it is noteworthy to mention that the research about early career teachers in contexts outside of kindergarten to grade 12 often studies similar topics and themes, such as learning to teach, the transition to in-service teaching, and teacher identity (e.g., Bukor, 2013; Glas et al, 2021; Vu, 2021). Research from both Canadian and international settings were included but only English-language publications were reviewed. Use of the term *beginning teachers* was noted in the research on pre-service teacher education, but texts that focused on pre-service teachers were not included.

Thematic Grouping

Using the hybrid search strategy, the search results were comprised of 420 scholarly texts (peer-reviewed articles and books) that were included in this literature review. I reviewed the abstracts to determine the thematic groupings of the texts. Where an abstract was not available, or too vague or brief, then I reviewed the entire text to determine the topic or theme. The range of thematic topics included in the literature review, although sorted into groups, are recognized as interrelated with common themes and tensions that run throughout. Appendix A provides a list of the thematic groupings. The discussion included in this literature review critically considers the topics that establish a foundation for the subsequent manuscripts, thus situating them within the current research.

Early Career Teachers: Terminology

Early career teachers are generally defined across the literature as having between zero to five years of experience (e.g., Lavigne, 2014; Morris & Imms, 2021; Owens, 2019; Weldon, 2018). The key terms used in the literature to denote this initial "stage" of teaching vary and include:

- *beginning teachers* (e.g., Gannon, 2018; Pillen et al., 2013)

- *early career teachers* (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2013; Johnson & Down, 2013; Lambert & Gray, 2022; Mansfield et al., 2014; Nichols et al., 2017; van der Wal et al., 2019)
- *first year teachers* (e.g., McLean et al., 2020; Mosley & McCarthy, 2023; Nichols et al., 2017)
- *new teachers* (e.g., Bruno et al., 2020; Kemmis et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2023)
- *novice teachers* (e.g., Duarte, 2019)
- *new graduates* (e.g., Longaretti & Toe, 2022)
- *newly qualified teachers* (e.g., Kemmis et al., 2014)
- *neophyte teachers* (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2013; Buchanan, 2015)
- *new practitioners* (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009)

It should be noted that in some of the literature, novice teacher (e.g., Clarke & Sheridan, 2017) or beginning teacher (e.g., Voss et al., 2017) are used in reference to pre-service teachers or teacher candidates. I prefer the term of *early career teacher*, as it retains an openness related to teacher identity by not pre-determining who the teaching subject is to be(come) or what they are to know. The use of *new* and *beginner* teacher may be equated with expectations of age, experience, or ability, and consequentially, the lack thereof (Gore & Bowe, 2015). Within the research, there is an assumption that early career teachers lack ability as a result of their perceived deficits when in fact early career teachers often have knowledge and skills that allow for the questioning of established practices (Kvam et al., 2023) and the introduction of innovative pedagogy (van Leeuwen et al., 2024). The language of *new*, *novice*, or *beginner* suggests that the subject is not yet a teacher and evokes a sense of naivety and lacking, while also proffering assumptions about “deficits” (Gore & Bowe, 2015). Additionally, *new*, *novice*, and *beginner* imply a static positioning of the teacher in relation to a chronological and routine

progression that is related to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and experience. Early career teacher is commonly used throughout the literature in North America and in international contexts (e.g., Aspfors et al., 2019; Gallant & Riley, 2014). Therefore, I intentionally use the term early career teacher throughout this dissertation because it references a temporal range at the start of a teacher's professional career and does not use language that conceptualizes teachers in somewhat vague, limiting or loaded terms, such as beginner or new. The wording of early career teacher maintains a specificity for delineating research related to the experiences that are temporally situated within the initial years of in-service teaching.

Overview of the Literature

The literature review of the recent research on early career teachers helps to situate the discussion of the myriad tensions and complexities that early career teachers encounter and negotiate as they are becoming teacher. As this review will demonstrate, there are numerous themes and topics across the literature on early career teachers. For example, neoliberal education reform is a topic that is frequently referenced throughout the current research on early career teachers and is present across literature from a variety of geographical contexts (e.g., Canada, United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom). Some of the research available on early career teachers tends to focus on the performative and technical aspects of teaching practice; the "doing" of being teacher (e.g., Bismack et al., 2022). In the study of early career teacher, the work of teaching may be fragmented from the teaching subject thereby encapsulating knowledge and skills as neutral and detached from social, political, historical, and cultural contexts when in fact they are interconnected and relational (Ovens et al., 2016). As a result, some of the literature diminishes the complexities inherent to the work of being and becoming teacher by providing simple strategies, tips, solutions, or remedies that target or isolate a specific

aspect of teaching or facet of the teacher (e.g., Mansfield et al., 2014; Salazar, 2022). Appendix A provides an overview of current research on early career teachers and is intended to be a robust but not exhaustive survey of the variety in topics, approaches, theories, and methodologies.

The research on early career teachers approaches the study of teachers through two contrasting perspectives: a) inquiring into the external aspects of teaching that are observable and sometimes quantifiable; and b) seeking to make meaning from the internal thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of teachers. This seemingly binary characterization is not intended to precisely define the literature but, rather, offer a broad impression of the differences across the research. Within the literature on early career teachers, there is a growing body of work that addresses the complexities of becoming teacher (e.g., Broemmel & Swaggerty, 2017; Strom et al., 2018) and shifts the focus from diagnosing the perceived ills of the individual teacher to critically considering the ways in which the teacher, and their teacher identity, is situated within complex and contradictory contexts (e.g., Gallant & Riley, 2014; Gannon, 2018; Johnson & Down, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Pucheggar & Bruce, 2021; Stacey, 2019; Strom & Martin, 2017). What is significant here is the recognition that "developing a concerted focus on the socio-cultural contexts in which teachers' work takes place is important because much of the extant research on teachers, and particularly early career teachers, elides the significance of such contexts" (Stacey, 2019, p. 405). The literature that refrains from problematizing phenomena throughout the research on early career teachers (e.g., attrition, self-efficacy, resilience, quality teaching), and presents phenomena as isolated issues of the individual teacher, risks diminishing the dilemmas that are inherent to the ways in which the phenomena have been constituted within social, cultural, historical, and political contexts (Phelan & Janzen, 2024). In the literature on early career teachers, fragmenting phenomena from its situatedness presents a reductive impression of

becoming teacher that simultaneously positions the individual teacher as the solution and the problem (Johnson & Down, 2013). In this way, the teacher is understood to be responsible for, and in control of, their successes and their failures, as well as the achievement of their students (Biesta, 2017). Decontextualized accounts of early career teachers serve the aims of neoliberal education reform and policies, apparent in studies that focus on accountability by blaming, whether implied or overt, the individual teacher for failures rather than taking the systems and contexts into account (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Johnson & Down, 2013). Furthermore, decontextualizing the work of becoming teacher overlooks the intersubjective and relational dynamics that are emmeshed within the struggle that is inherent to becoming teacher (Janzen, 2014). Early career teachers, like all teachers, are becoming teacher, yet they are doing so in a context of urgency, one that does not hold still nor pause to allow for making sense of the contradictions and perplexities. Early career teachers working in the teaching profession are continually encountering the problematic presumption, or expectation, that they are a fully formed and complete teacher—"finished" in their becoming.

Threads, Twists, and Tangles in the Themes and Tensions of the Literature

Neoliberalism: Weaving and Wandering

Throughout the literature on early career teachers there is a prevalence of research that focuses on the teaching subject teaching, and learning to teach, in relation to the discursive, affective, and material effects of neoliberal education reform (e.g., Broemmel & Swaggerty, 2017; Brown, 2015; Brown et al., 2015; Burns, 2016; Chruchward & Willis, 2023; Lambert & Gray, 2020, 2022). Neoliberal education reform is a thread throughout the literature that demonstrates the pernicious ways in which neoliberalism masks itself with good intentions through disciplinary tools such as performance standards (e.g., Lambert & Gray, 2020, 2022).

Neoliberalism is pervasive throughout much of the recent literature on early career teachers, whether named directly or characterized as accountability, standards, or performance. Across the literature that speaks to neoliberal education reform, the articles tend to focus on the individual teacher as opposed to the teaching subject situated within social and historical contexts and in relation to normative discourses. There are examples of research that intentionally shifts the focus from the individual teaching subject to the contexts they are situated within and critiques neoliberal education reform in the process (e.g., Ball & Olmedo, 2014; Clarke, 2022; Duarte, 2019; Lambert & Gray, 2020, 2022; Luke & Gourd, 2018). Neoliberalism's insidious persistence surfaces across the discussions of themes and tensions from the literature on early career teachers.

Neoliberal Education Reform

Research on the impacts and consequences of neoliberal education reform continues to maintain a significant presence within the literature on early career teachers (e.g., Duarte, 2019; Lambert & Gray, 2022). On a global stage, neoliberalism has been present and growing in prominence within education reform since the 1980s (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Rigas & Kuchapski, 2018). Neoliberal education reform seeks to measure, quantify, and evaluate only that which is observable in teaching and schools. It neglects and denies the myriad aspects of education that are not quantifiable but are equally, and perhaps arguably, of greater importance to teachers and the students being served by schools (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). Education reform that is underpinned by a neoliberal agenda creates a culture where "accountability through external or independent quality control has replaced the trust that used to be granted to professionals" (Marom & Ruitenberg, 2018, p. 365). Within neoliberal education reform, the work of the teacher is reduced to a shallow and individualistic pursuit of competencies rather

than re/constructions and re/imaginations within a conceptualization of education as dissensus (Biesta, 2017). Within the neoliberal landscape, teaching precariously sways upon a precipice that could see the intellectual and ethical complexities of teaching, and becoming teacher, collapse into ruins, existing only as a technical process of control and re/production for economic growth.

Neoliberal education reform is problematic because it attempts to render the work of the teacher as neutral (fragmented from contexts of gender, politics, race, or class) and views success—student achievement based on test scores—as the responsibility of the individual teacher. In public school systems, educational policies driven by neoliberal agendas often manufacture crises that are solved or fixed through "solutions for sale" that are produced by the private sector, such as a pre-packaged kits or programs. Neoliberalism aims to standardize the profession and impose a formulaic approach in order to minimize the complexities and dilemmas of teaching, and in so doing, the teacher is constructed as a technical practitioner who requires training on technique rather than an education that fosters professional judgement. Teaching framed within ideas of training presumes that teachers are being given the "right" knowledge and skills that will undoubtedly make them into "effective" or "quality" teachers. Marom and Ruitenberg (2018) posit that "under the neoliberal push to standardize teaching and break it into measurable tasks, professional norms increasingly take on the appearance of universality and neutrality" (p. 372). This presumption is problematic because it assumes that once a teacher is "trained" then that teacher has a complete set of skills and knowledge to be successful when working with and teaching students. If the teacher fails to be successful, as determined by the measure and evaluation of student learning, then it is a failure within the individual rather than the system in which teachers work. In neoliberal education reform "coercive policies continue to

vilify teachers and educators, which are demonstrated through standardization, privatization, and 'reforms' that reduce the teaching profession to one that is both technicist and rote" (de Saxe et al., 2020, p. 51). Neoliberalism's "gross oversimplification" of the complexities and nuances of teaching set up the teacher to fail within a market-based system that demands accountability from the individual while ignoring the numerous mitigating factors that contribute to barriers for both teaching and student learning (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Public schooling no longer exists for the collective public good, a democratic, ethical, and inclusive society, when success is defined only by subjective scoring systems and harmful teacher competence standards. A reductive and technical conception of the teacher denies the intersubjectivity that is inherent to becoming teacher as well as the daily and countless social interactions between teachers and others who are entangled in the work of becoming teaching.

Professional Identity

Throughout the literature related to early career teachers, identity is examined from a variety of theoretical perspectives. There are distinctions made between professional identity (e.g., Schapp et al, 2021) and conceptions of teacher identity(ies) as co-constructed and situated within socio-historical contexts (e.g., Pucheggar & Bruce, 2021). Despite the significant work on teacher identity over the last several decades, there is little consensus across the literature for definitions of professional identity or teacher identity (Solari & Martín Ortega, 2022). Professional identity often references the skills, knowledge, goals, and competencies of a teacher, conflating the knowledge, roles, and responsibilities of a teacher with their identity (Zeichner, 2014). Professional identity reflects being teacher "teacher-as-technician" (Zeichner, 2014), in specific and prescriptive ways that are outlined by external bodies, such as governments. The neoliberal standards for "good" or "effective" teaching become equated with

professional identity (Churchward & Willis, 2022). The concept of professional identity is problematic because it becomes a rigid, and narrow understanding of the teacher by only attending to the work of teaching in fragmented ways. Professional identity is reductive and static whereas conceptions of teacher identity(ies) are generative, ongoing, and partial—open to possibilities.

Professional identity cannot be compartmentalized or partitioned from the identity of the teacher. A professional identity does not "exist" outside of or unattached from a subject's identity. In attempting to distinguish professional identity as a separate entity from the subject's identity, professional identity may be better characterized as "the role and function of the teacher," because they, "are not synonymous with identity; whereas role can be assigned, the taking up of an identity is a constant social negotiation" (Britzman, 1992, p. 24). Conceptions of professional identity diminish the entanglement and ongoing-ness that is inherent to notions of identity that are conceptualized as a negotiation of dynamic complications and contradictions. Identity is an essential facet of learning to teach and becoming teacher but remains obscured and tacit without critical engagement or recognition. Part of the ongoing work of becoming teacher involves critical reflection and interrogation of identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022; Beijaard, 2019; Pillen et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 2021). Professional identity dissolves into accountability and becomes an exercise in maintaining the desired expectations of the "good (neoliberal) teacher". Recasting professional identity as a discourse of professionalism allows for recognition of the constitutive force of norms, manifesting as expectations, that the early career teacher encounters and subsequently must either embrace, disrupt, or resist.

Transition to In-service Teaching

Early career teachers are quickly, and unforgivingly, forced into the frenetic pace of classroom life and are confronted with the demands of teaching whether they are "ready" for it or not. This common experience amongst early career teachers, the clash of expectations and realities, is referred to as "praxis shock" (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017), "reality shock" (Veenman, 1984; Voss & Kunter, 2020), or "discourses of disappointment" (Perryman, 2022). The experiences of becoming teacher are not compartmentalized and isolated to the teacher as teaching is a relational, intersubjective, and socially situated endeavour (Strom & Martin, 2017). Early career teachers are shaped through and by their interactions with not only the people they encounter (e.g., students, colleagues, parents, and administrators) but through their encounters with impressions, ideas, policies, discourses, experiences, confusions, norms, and uncertainties. Strom and Martin (2017) posit that "*becoming-teacher* necessarily implicates not just the individual teacher, but all the elements, forces, bodies, and ideas that make up the teaching-assemblage" (p. 8). Becoming teacher encompasses clashes between experiences of the past and the present, with desires for the future (Britzman, 2003; Pitt & Britzman, 2003), such as the tacit ways in which assumptions and understandings are constituted through past school experiences of the teaching subject's school biography (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022; Britzman, 2003). The contextual particularity of teaching reflects vast differences across spaces and places in education. Many of the complexities of teaching may remain hidden when they are not taken up in a critical manner. Additionally, many of the intricacies are overlapping and interconnected even though they may be understood to be discrete.

Learning to Teach vs. Teacher Development

Within the literature on early career teachers, there are differing positions on conceptualizing or understanding learning to teach. Some researchers and theorists regard learning to teach as a linear and chronological manner of progressively developing to arrive at being a teacher (e.g., Earley, 2024; Kocabaş & Deniz, 2023; Salazar, 2022). The further accumulation of experiences is understood to support an early career teacher in becoming a "good" or "expert" teacher; knowledgeable and equipped with the quick fix solutions of "best practices" (Churchward & Willis, 2022). These conceptualizations of learning to teach are problematic because of the reductive perspective and attention to outcomes that privilege the accumulation of time and equate this to increased knowledge, mastery, or expertise of teaching (Britzman, 2003). The literature that regards learning to teach as linear often reduces teaching to the performative, a narrow focus on skills and knowledge; predominantly the *doing* of teaching rather than the *being* of teacher. The absence of consideration for the uneven and uncertain "development" of learning to teach fails to consider the numerous ways in which early career teachers experience interference and tensions manifesting from the tacit but prevailing discourses that permeate becoming teacher. As Britzman (2003) states:

> Learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or of mirroring predetermined images; it is time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become. (p. 31)

Becoming teacher is a multifaceted, dynamic, and ceaseless struggle that is continually complicated through social constructions, interactions, contradictions, tensions, and instabilities.

Conceptualizing learning to teach as development suggests certainty and predictability for the work of teaching, a linear movement from beginner to expert. This is an illusion that merely produces disappointment when early career teachers expect to accumulate the right tools and methods that are rendered inadequate in spontaneous moments that demand more than a discrete strategy. The unpredictable and shifting realities of teaching evade containment through "inadequate ideas [that] limit our actions" (Shann et al., 2015, p. 461). When teaching is reduced to a decontextualized technical practice, it fails to recognize "the multifaceted nature of the contexts in which education unfolds and the non-transparency of all of us as human beings, for these factors underscore the inherent complexity and ultimate contestability of the questions that confront us in education." (Clarke & Phelan, 2017, p. 122). Expectations of development can be recast as a discourse of development that presumes teaching to be linear, simplistic, and technical. When teaching is characterized through a discourse of development, then the solutions to challenges in learning to teach become simple fixes of decontextualized practice that allow the early career teacher to continue their progression. The concept of becoming teacher disrupts discourses of development and allows for an openness to that which has not been encountered or contemplated. Learning to teach, when understood as becoming, "allows for both a more textured view of multiple, seemingly contradictory identity enactments, as well as insight in the processes of becoming-different over time" (Strom & Martin, 2017, p. 106). Becoming teacher is an ongoing struggle that is rife with uncertainties and confusions. The struggles that early career teachers contend with are not problems of the individual teaching subject, rather, they are part of the dynamics of learning to teach and becoming teacher in situated contexts.

Becoming Teacher: Conceptualizing Learning to Teach

The concept of becoming teacher is used to conceptualize the ongoing and dynamic process of learning to teach and of forming teacher identity(ies) (Ovens, et al. 2016; Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Strom & Martin, 2017). Becoming teacher is taken up across the literature related to teacher education programs (also referred to as Initial Teacher Education [e.g., Beck & Kosnik, 2019]) and early career teachers (Britzman, 2003; Janzen, 2013, 2014, 2015; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016; Ovens et al., 2016; Pillen et al., 2013; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). The literature on becoming teacher often places becoming in conversation with emotions, struggles, and tensions (e.g., Janzen, 2014; Zembylas, 2023). Becoming teacher provides an alternative to conceptualizations that define learning to teach as a linear, chronological, and progressive process, implying that being a teacher merely requires technical and practice-oriented training and knowledge (Janzen, 2014).

Neoliberalism's exaltation of the self-producing and self-contained individual, reminiscent of modernist conceptions, detracts from comprehending learning to teach as a situated becoming (e.g., Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Rigas & Kuchapski, 2018; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). The concept of becoming teacher "contradicts the notion of the teacher as an isolated, encapsulated body/mind acting completely of her own volition, presupposing the notion of 'being,' or the rational concept of a being existing in and of itself" (Strom & Martin, 2017, p. 8). Becoming teacher acknowledges the recursive, non-linear, fluid, and indeterminate process of learning to teach that is perpetually unfinished but always constant (Britzman, 2003; Webb, 2013). Becoming teacher is the hidden work that early career teachers contend with when recognizing that the journey is neither linear or certain, or, perhaps, even a journey at all (Petersen, 2019). Becoming teacher is movement. Movement that seeks myriad directions,

within layered complexities, forces, temporal pulls, and paradoxical entanglements (Webb, 2013). Davies (2022) emphasizes that "the implication of this movement in-between is that each moment of any encounter matters; the ethics of it cannot be pre-defined or managed solely by rules and regulations. Our responsiveness to others is what matters" (p. 318). Becoming teacher is a constant and shifting process of negotiating and navigating the uncertainties and confusions of becoming teacher, with others, in a world that is already given. Across much of the literature on early career teachers, there is a resounding understanding that teaching, and becoming teacher, is rife with uncertainties and contradictions while being, "*unforgivingly complex*" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 4). Teaching is an intellectual entanglement of theory and practice that is never perfected and always unfinished—always becoming.

Remedying the Ills of Teaching: "Fixing" Teachers

Becoming teacher is acknowledged to be a complex and difficult endeavour across much of the literature on early career teachers (e.g., Puchegger & Bruce, 2021). Despite this recognition, many examples in the literature diminish this assertion through the provision of simplistic and prescriptive solutions to the "problems" experienced by early career teachers (e.g., Chen, 2019). Studies that offer quick fixes to the struggles of becoming teacher, collapse the complexities and contradictions by positioning the individual teacher as the source of the difficulties. Within this perspective, the teacher is fragmented from the contexts they are situated within and the becoming teacher is reduced to being teacher. Being teacher speaks to a static, pre-determined, and specifically defined conception of teaching that is predicated upon certainty and predictability. Similar to neoliberal understandings of teacher, being teacher maintains an overreliance on practice that is disconnected from intellectual engagement that is integral, but often unrecognized, in learning to teach. Johnson and Down (2013) critically take up the idea of

teacher resilience in relation to social, cultural, and political contexts with the intention of re-conceptualizing the struggles of early career teachers, shifting away from viewing the cause as a flaw in the individual, towards the recognition of contextual and systemic issues that pervade education and teaching. Throughout the literature on early career teachers, there is a continual desire for creating certainty, predictability, and uniformity through the development of teaching standards, competencies, best practices, and over simplistic prescriptive solutions. For example, the current national and global trend of teacher competence standards are established as mechanisms of control, accountability, and standardization (e.g., Norman, 2023). This is attributed to "neo-liberalism and the audit culture; that is, promoting certitude works as a strategy for bringing a sense of predictability to a fundamentally uncontrollable world and disavowing the inevitable contingency of human life" (Clarke & Phelan, 2017, p. 12). Neoliberalism's decontextualized constructions of teacher, and learning to teach, diminish the situatedness of the teacher within contexts and systems that are tenuous and problematic. The struggles of learning to teach cannot simply be taken at face value to be insularly attributed to flaws, failures, and faults of the teacher.

Discourses that position the individual as the cause and problem to becoming teacher, negates the myriad factors that constitute and restrain a teacher's becoming. Conceptualizing learning to teach as an individual endeavour creates a fragile existence for the early career teacher. When the early career teacher is expected to be "self-made" (Britzman, 2003, p. 31), they are seen as the only reason for their success or failure. Discourses of the self-made teacher, aligning with neoliberal notions of teacher, support research that aims to determine the problems of early career teachers and offer solutions. This understanding of teaching also oversimplifies and decontextualizes the work of teaching, suggesting that there only specific "effective" ways to

teach. Stacey (2019) considers how recognition of the teacher within socio-historical contexts "brings into question whether the issue is what is 'wrong' with individual teachers in particular schooling systems, or whether it may be an issue of what is 'wrong' with such systems themselves" (p. 413). The literature that shifts the blame away from individual teachers (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Stacey, 2019) and teacher education programs (Britzman & Dippo, 2000) draws attention to the situatedness of the teacher, the complexities and contradictions of learning to teach, and the inherent struggles that are part of the work in becoming teacher (Janzen, 2014). Implying that teachers must "deepen their commitment to teaching" (Schaap et al., 2021), perpetuates a false impression of the control the teacher has over their becoming. Resiliency, self-efficacy, and well-being are presented as irrefutable concepts but are rendered problematic when considered to be discursively constituted and, therefore, contestable. Directing focus to the individual teacher does not negate the intensities of the educational landscape that early career teachers are situated within. But the distraction obscures the ethical, relational, and intellectual aspects of becoming teacher.

Conclusion

This literature review considered the prevalence of practice-oriented research that is entangled with the aims and expectations of neoliberal policies that seek to standardize teaching in an apolitical manner while making attempts to neutralize differences through decontextualized conceptions of teacher (Davies & Bansel, 2007). 420 search results provided a comprehensive survey of the themes and topics that reside within the research on early career teachers while demonstrating that there are gaps in the field of educational research for continued inquiry into the complexities of the situated work of becoming teacher. It will continue to be important to challenge conceptualizations of teaching that attribute the problems of education to the

individual teacher. Recognizing the complexities and contradictions of the teacher's becoming, including their identities and the work of teaching, influences how we think about educating pre-service teachers and supporting early career teachers. It is important for pre-service teacher education programs, as well as the profession of teaching, to consider how they utilize and are informed by the research on early career teachers. The breadth of research on early career teachers is vast. Engaging only with isolated islands of research may establish misleading boundaries that prevent recognition for the critical work that looks beyond issues of practice. Just as becoming teacher is an unfinished project, so is the study of teaching.

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Appendix A

Themes and Topics in the Research on Early Career Teachers

- **accounts, beliefs, challenges, concerns, experiences, narratives, perceptions, and stories of early career teachers** (Aarts et al., 2020; Admiraal et al., 2023; Anderson et al., 2018; Antonsen et al., 2024; Audley, 2020; Aus et al., 2017; Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Bauer et al., 2021; Bertram, 2023; Bettini & Park, 2021; Bjorklund Jr, 2023; Broemmel & Swaggerty, 2017; Burrow et al., 2020; Carter & Manuel, 2018; Choy et al., 2013; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Crowhurst, 2015; Dell'Angelo & DeGenova, 2018; Emstad, 2019; Ergunay & Adiguzel, 2019; French et al., 2023; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Lavigne, 2014; Linqvist et al., 2020; Maher & Toledo, 2022; Manuel & Carter, 2016; Miles & Knipe, 2018; Miller, 2017; Reid et al., 2019; Ro, 2018; Rozema & Ellis, 2015; Simpson Steele et al., 2020; Sosa, 2022; Uitto et al., 2021; Wexler et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2023)
- **adaptability, burnout, coping, emotions, resilience, self-efficacy, stress, well-being** (Bernay, 2014; Björk et al., 2019; Bjørndal et al., 2022; Bleakley et al., 2020; Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2013; Burger et al., 2021; Burrow et al., 2020; Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Cheng et al., 2023; Cobb, 2022; Damico et al., 2018; Dicke et al., 2015; Duan et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2021; Fitchett et al., 2018; Flushman et al., 2021; George et al., 2018; Gordon, 2020; Harmsen et al., 2023; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2013; Hepburn et al., 2021; Herbert et al., 2018; Hobson & Maxwell, 2017; Hollis & Price, 2019; Hong et al., 2018; Jerrim, 2021; Johnson & Down, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014, 2016; Kaplan, 2022; Kim et al., 2017; Klassen et al., 2018; Kutsyuruba, Walker, Stasel et al., 2019; Le Cornu, 2013; Linqvist et al., 2020; Lindqvist et al., 2021; Lindqvist et al., 2023; Longaretti & Toe, 2022; Ma et al., 2022; Mansfield et al., 2014; Manuel &

Carter, 2016; März & Kelchtermans, 2020; McLean et al., 2020; McLean, Bryce, et al., 2023, Mclean, Taylor, et al., 2023; McLean, Taylor, et al., 2023; Mennes et al., 2024; Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014; Mosley & McCarthy, 2023; Mullen-Williams, 2016; Nichols et al., 2017; Pillen et al., 2013; Pressley, 2024; Raymond-West & Rangel, 2020; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Schmidt et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2023; Sheridan et al., 2022; Sindu et al., 2018; Stacey, 2019; Stump & Newberry, 2021; Stump & Newberry, 2021; Tang et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023; Voss & Kunter, 2020; Wagner & Imanel-Noy, 2014; Yang et al., 2023)

- **agency** (Buchanan, 2015; Eteläpelto et al., 2015; Heikkilä et al., 2022; Heikonen et al., 2017; Kettle et al., 2022; Lane & Sweeny, 2019; Liyuan et al., 2022; Rushton & Bird, 2024; Schaefer et al., 2021)
- **anti-racism, diversity, cultural responsivity, inequity, injustice, oppression** (Dharan, 2015; Emstad, 2019; Jiang et al., 2016; Kettle et al., 2022; Kiramba et al., 2022; Lampert et al., 2020; Lazar & Reich, 2016; Mayer et al., 2017; Sosa, 2022; Valtierra & Whitaker, 2021)
- **attrition, retention, & turnover** (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Bettini & Park, 2021; Björk et al., 2019; Buchanan et al., 2013; Burke et al., 2013; Clandinin et al., 2015; Dai, 2023; Dell'Angelo & DeGenova, 2018; du Plessis, 2024; Elsayed & Roch, 2023; Falch, 2022; Forseille & Raptis, 2016; Gallant & Riley, 2014, 2017; Gore & Bowe, 2015; Han, 2023; Hanušová et al., 2020; Harfitt, 2015; Heikonen et al., 2017; Jerrim, 2021; Johnson et al., 2015; Kelchtermans, 2017; Kelly & Northrop, 2015; Kelly et al., 2019; Lambert & Gray, 2022; Larkin et al., 2022; Le Cornu, 2013; Maynes & Hatt, 2015; McDonald, 2019; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Mitani et al., 2022; Morris & Imms, 2021; Newbold et al., 2016;

Newburgh, 2019; Paris, 2013; Redding & Henry, 2019; Reid et al., 2023; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2019; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Schaefer, 2013; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019; Schaefer et al., 2021; Simos, 2013; Sims & Allen, 2018; Stapp et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2019; Thomas, Tuytens, Moolenaar, et al., 2019; Tiplic et al., 2015; Tricario et al., 2015; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Weldon, 2018; Whalen et al., 2019; Willis et al. , 2017; Yu et al., 2021; Zavelevsky et al., 2022)

- **classroom management** (Aus et al., 2017; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Dugas, 2016; Gray, 2021; Kwok & Svajda-Hardy, 2024; Lampert et al., 2020; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2013; Shank, 2023; Svajda-Hardy & Kwok, 2024; Woodcock & Reupert, 2023)
- **colleagues and relationships** (Bauer et al., 2021; Emstad, 2019; Engvik, 2014; Hanušová et al., 2020; Lane & Sweeny, 2018, 2019; Le Cornu, 2013; Lindqvist et al., 2020; März & Kelchtermans, 2020; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Pogodzinski, 2014; Thomas, Tuytens, Devos, et al., 2019; Thomas, Tuytens, Moolenaar, et al., 2019; Vanderline & Kelchtermans, 2013)
- **critical & philosophical perspectives on the complexities of learning to teach** (Alsup, 2019; Burgess, 2016; Burns, 2016; Churchward & Willis, 2023; Clandinin et al., 2015; Clarke & Sheridan, 2017; Duarte, 2019; Hernandez & Endo, 2017; Jakhelln et al., 2021; Johnson, 2016; Johnson & Down, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014, 2016; Kemmis et al., 2014; Kvam et al., 2024; Lambert, 2023; Lambert & Gray, 2020; Luke & Gourd, 2018; Magudu & Gumbo, 2017; Marent et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2020; Moore & Clarke, 2016; Newburgh, 2019; Owen, 2019; Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Reid et al., 2019; Rushton & Bird, 2024; Santoro & Cain, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019; Skog & Andersson, 2015; Spicksley, 2022; Stacey, 2020, 2022; Strom, 2015; Strom & Martin, 2017; Strom,

Martin, et al., 2018; Strom, Dailey, et al., 2018; Strom & Martin, 2022; Sullivan et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2013; Towers, 2013; Uitto et al., 2021; Watson & Drew, 2015; Webb, 2013; Woodfine & Warner, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023; Zimmerman, 2019, 2021)

- **curriculum & curriculum theory** (Antonsen et al., 2024; Brownell, 2017; Curcio et al., 2023; Foster, 2023; Poulton & Mockler, 2024; Rushton & Bird, 2024; Sosa, 2022)
- **effects and impacts of education reform, neoliberal policies, performance/professional standards, standardization, teacher quality & effectiveness** (Broemmel & Swaggerty, 2017; Brown & Stern, 2018; Brown, 2015; Brown et al., 2015; Buchanan, 2015; Burns, 2016; Burrow et al., 2020; Churchward & Willis, 2023; Damico et al., 2018; Duarte, 2019; Earley, 2024; Fecho et al., 2021; Frank et al., 2020; Fransson et al., 2018; Gray & Seiki, 2020; Hunter & Springer, 2022; Lambert & Gray, 2020, 2022; Luke & Gourd, 2018; Martin et al., 2020; Maulana et al., 2015; Moore & Clarke, 2016; Owen, 2019; Poulton & Mockler, 2024; Ro, 2018; Stacey, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2021; Sydnor, 2017; Watson & Drew, 2015)
- **first-year teachers** (Adams-Budde et al., 2021; Bernay, 2014; Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Ensign et al., 2018; Ergunay & Adiguzel, 2019; Fitchett et al., 2018; Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Guenther et al., 2024; Han, 2023; Kozikoglu, 2018; Lahey, 2024; Larkin et al., 2022; Liang & Zhang, 2023; Losano et al., 2018; Maher & Toledo, 2022; Martinez, 2019; Poom-Valickis, 2014; Richter et al., 2022; Simpson Steele et al., 2020; Sosa, 2022; Stringham & Snell, 2019; Strom, 2015; Strom & Martin, 2017; Strom, Martin, et al., 2018; Strom Dailey, et al., 2018; Svajda-Hardy & Kwok, 2024; Sydnor, 2017; Unwin, 2015; Wexler, 2020; Wexler et al., 2023; Wilhelm et al., 2020; Woodcock & Reupert, 2023; Yang et al., 2023; Zhou, 2018)

- **gender identities & learning to teach** (Brown & Stern, 2018; Maher & Toledo, 2022; Wrench & Garrett, 2017)
- **identity** (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Brown et al., 2015; Buchanan, 2015; Burgess, 2016; Clandinin et al., 2015; Cobb, 2022; Dugas, 2016; Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020; Harfitt, 2015; Hong et al., 2018; Jones, 2019; Kastner, 2020; Katz et al., 2013; Lambert & Gray, 2020, 2022; Li et al., 2022; Losano et al., 2018; Lu, 2022; Maher & Toledo, 2022; Marco-Bujosa et al., 2020; Miller, 2017; Morris & Imms, 2021; Nichols et al., 2017; Nickel & Crosby, 2022; Olsen, 2016; Pillen et al., 2013; Popper-Giveon & Shayshon, 2017; Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Schaefer, 2013; Schapp et al., 2022; Skog & Andersson, 2015; Strom & Martin, 2022; van der Wal et al., 2019; Webb, 2013; Whelen & Scott Webster, 2019; Woodfine & Warner, 2022; Yuan & Yung et al., 2022; Zaino et al., 2022; Zimmerman, 2019, 2021)
- **induction, mentoring, and support** (Anthony et al., 2019; Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Auletto, 2021; Bang & Luft, 2014; Banja, 2021; Brownell, 2017; Burger et al., 2021; Burke et al., 2015; Ceven McNally, 2016; Colognesi et al., 2020; Cottle, 2022; Curtis et al., 2024; DeAngelis et al., 2013; Desimone et al., 2014; Earley, 2024; Ensign et al., 2018; Ewing, 2021; Flushman et al., 2021; French et al., 2023; Forseille & Raptis, 2016; Gray, 2021; Hannan et al., 2015; Hanawalt, 2023; Harmsen et al., 2023; Helleve et al., 2019; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2013; Hickman, 2019; Howard et al., 2022; Howe, 2015; Jacobsen & Gunnulfsen, 2023; Kaplan, 2022; Kapon & Colton, 2020; Kearney, 2014; Kemmis et al., 2014; Knussen & Agnew, 2022; Kozikoglu, 2018; Kutsyuruba, B., & Walker, 2017; Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Godden, 2019; Kvam et al., 2023; Kvam et al., 2024; Kwok et al., 2022; Kwok & Cain, 2023; Kwok & Svajda-Hardy, 2024; Lahey,

2024; Langdon et al., 2019; Liang & Zhang, 2023; Lu et al., 2020; Luft & Dubois, 2015; Magudu & Gumbo, 2017; Mangione et al., 2016; Mansfield & Gu, 2019; Marent et al., 2020; März & Kelchtermans, 2020; Maulana et al., 2015; Maynes & Hatt, 2015; McColl et al., 2022; Mena & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b; Mercieca & McDonald, 2021; Milton et al., 2022; Moral & Zayas, 2022; Mosley & McCarthy, 2023; Nally & Ladden, 2020; Oberholzer & Boyle, 2023; Olsen et al., 2020; Ozturk & Hoard, 2018; Paris, 2013; Poom-Valickis, 2014; Redding & Smith, 2019; Richter et al., 2013; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Salazar, 2022; Schapp et al., 2021; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Sela & Harel, 2019; Shanks et al., 2022; Shann et al., 2014; Shernoff et al., 2016; Smith Washington, 2024; Soulen & Wine, 2018, ; Stapp et al., 2019; Stîngu, 2020; Svajda-Hardy & Kwok, 2024; Tammets et al., 2019; Terry, 2019; Thomas, Tuytens, Moolenaar, et al., 2019; Thomas, Tuytens, Devos, et al., 2019; Tricario et al., 2015; Tveitnes & Hvalby, 2024; Vaitzman Ben-David & Berkovich, 2021; Van den Borre et al., 2021; Van de Pers & Helms-Lorenz, 2021; van Ginkel et al., 2016; Voss & Kunter, 2020; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022; Wexler, 2020; Zhu et al., 2023)

- **influence or impacts of leadership** (school leaders, instructional leaders) (Anthony et al., 2019; Bjorklund Jr, 2023; Dai, 2023; Evert et al., 2022; Gawne, 2023; Kutsyuruba et al., 2020; Martinez, 2019; Mena & Clarke, 2021b; Newbold et al., 2016; Sullivan & Morrison, 2014; Thomas et al., 2020; Woodhouse & Pedder, 2017; Youngs et al., 2015; Zavelevsky et al., 2022)
- **learning to teach & becoming teacher** (Foster, 2023; Hernandez & Endo, 2017; Kocabaş, C., & Deniz, 2023; Olsen, 2016; Strom, 2015; Strom & Martin, 2017; Strom,

Martin, et al., 2018; Strom, Dailey, et al., 2018; Strom & Martin, 2022; Ulvik et al., 2023; Wexler, 2020)

- **novel events** (e.g., Covid-19 pandemic**)** (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020; Liang & Zhang, 2023; McLean, Bryce, et al., 2023; Paetsch et al., 2023; Pressley, 2024; Shah et al., 2023; Wexler et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023)
- **pathways to inservice teaching** (e.g., alternatively certified versus traditionally certified) (Anderson et al., 2018; Clement & Cochran, 2020; DiCicco et al., 2014; Gorard, 2017; Kwaah & Palojoki, 2018; Kwok & Cain, 2023; Mansell, 2024; Mitani et al., 2022; Raymond-West & Rangel, 2020; Redding & Smith, 2019; Richter et al., 2022)
- **pedagogical knowledge & skills** (Asirit et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2024; Choy et al., 2013; Davis & Palincsar, 2023; Griffith et al., 2021; Gudmundsdottir & Hatlevik et al., 2018; Hopkins & Spillane, 2014; Howard et al., 2021; König et al., 2015; Knussen & Agnew, 2022; Lahey, 2024; Lambert et al., 2023; Masoumi & Noroozi, 2023; Michalec & Wilson, 2022; Murray-Orr & Mitton-Kukner, 2017; Orlando & Attard, 2016; Paetsch et al., 2023; Pankow et al., 2016; Rawlins et al., 2020; Shongwe, 2021; Smith et al., 2018; van Leeuwen et al., 2024; Vásquez et al., 2017; Veliz & Véliz-Campos, 2023; Wang & Yao, 2023; Westbrook & Croft, 2015; Whyte, 2017)
- **perspectives and reflections on teacher education /initial teacher education programs and preparation** (Aspfors & Eklund, 2017; du Plessis et al., 2020; Emstad, 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2023; Gorard, 2017; Jakhelln et al., 2021; Jansen et al., 2020; Kang & Windschitl, 2018; Katz et al., 2013; König et al., 2015; Mayer et al., 2017; Meng & Goopy, 2023; Miles & Knipe, 2018; O'Neill & Stehpenson, 2013; Rodriguez et al.,

2017; Rowen et al., 2015; Rowan et al., 2017; Salazar Noguera & McCluskey, 2017; Shank, 2023; Towers, 2013; Whyte, 2017; Zaino et al., 2022)

- **professional contexts & school contexts/placements, school culture & climate** (Björk et al., 2019; Bruno et al., 2020; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Dharan, 2015; Furner & McCulla, 2019; Lazar & Reich, 2016; Marco-Bujosa et al., 2020; Martinez, 2014; McLean, Taylor, et al., 2023; Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014; Stacey, 2019; Van de Pers & Helms-Lorenz, 2021; Whyte, 2017)
- **professional development, professional learning, professional networks, and professional skills & knowledge** (Antonsen et al., 2024; Asirit et al., 2022; Athanases & Sanchez, 2020; Brunetti & Marston, 2018; Dvir, 2021; Engvik, 2014; Eshchar-Netz & Vedder-Weiss, 2021; Evans, 2017; Fecho et al., 2021; Furner & McCulla, 2019; Gore & Bowe, 2015; Guenther et al., 2024; Heikkinen, 2017; Helleve et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2018; Hopkins & Spillane, 2014; Jiang et al., 2016; Karlberg & Bezzina, 2022; Kelly et al., 2016; Lane & Sweeny, 2018, 2019; Magudu & Gumbo, 2017; Mansfield & Gu, 2019; Masoumi & Noroozi, 2023; Mercieca & McDonald, 2021; Milton et al., 2022; Na & Staudt Willet, 2024; O'Grady, 2015; Olsen, 2016; O'Neill & McLoughlin, 2023; Rowan et al., 2016; Salazar, 2022; Staudt Willet, 2024; Tammets et al., 2019; Ulvik et al., 2023; Unwin, 2015; Leeuwen et al., 2024; Wilhelm et al., 2020; Woodcock & Reupert, 2023; Yan, 2024; Zhukova, 2018)
- **reviews of the literature** (Bettini & Park, 2021; Bettini et al., 2022; Conway, 2015; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2017; Ma et al., 2022; Masoumi & Noroozi, 2023; Schaefer, 2013)
- **second career teachers** (Bauer et al., 2021; Green, 2015; Wagner & Imanel-Noy, 2014)

- **subject/discipline specific** (Bennion et al., 2022; Bismack et al., 2022; Conway, 2015; Cottle, 2022; Davis & Palincsar, 2023; Ensign et al., 2018; Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Gawne, 2023; Griffith et al., 2021; Hanawalt, 2023; Hickman, 2019; Isbell, 2023; Jansen et al., 2020; Kapon & Colton, 2020; Kastner, 2020; Katz et al., 2013; König et al., 2015; Losano et al.; Lu et al., 2020; Lu, 2022; Luft & Dubois, 2015; Mansell, 2024; Manuel & Carter, 2016; Marco-Bujosa et al., 2020; Meng & Goopy, 2023; Murray-Orr & Mitton-Kukner, 2017; Nixon et al., 2016; Nixon, Hill, et al., 2017; Nixon, Luft, et al., 2017; Oakley, 2018; O'Brien Braun et al., 2024; O'Neill & McLoughlin, 2023; Orlando & Attard, 2016; Owen, 2019; Pankow et al., 2016; Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Rawlins et al., 2020; Raymond-West & Rangel, 2020; Reid et al., 2023; Roberts-Harris, 2014; Rozema & Ellis, 2015; Shongwe, 2021; Skog & Andersson, 2015; Smith et al., 2018; Stringham & Snell, 2019; Thompson et al., 2013; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022; Wrench & Garrett, 2017)
- **Black teachers, Indigenous teachers, and teachers of Colour (**Bettini et al., 2021; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; McLean et al., 2023; Woodfine & Warner, 2022)
- **technology** (Curcio et al., 2023; Gudmundsdottir & Hatlevik, 2018; Knusson & Agnew, 2022; Orlando & Attard, 2016; Paetsch et al., 2023; Reid et al., 2019; Unwin. 2015; Veliz & Véliz-Campos, 2023; Wang & Yao, 2023)
- **transition to inservice teaching** (Adams-Budde et al., 2021; Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Cobb, 2022; Ewing, 2021; Flushman et al., 2021; Gillespie, 2021; Gordon, 2020; Gore & Bowe. 2015; Heikkinen, 2017; Hong et al., 2018; Jakhelln et al., 2021; Knussen & Agnew, 2022; Liang & Zhang, 2023; Lindqvist et al., 2021; Lindqvist et al., 2023; Marco-Bujosa et al., 2020; Mangione et al., 2016; McLean, Taylor, et al., 2023; Mena &

Clarke, 2021a, 2021b; Miles & Knipe, 2018; O'Grady, 2015; O'Neill & McLoughlin, 2023; Ovens et al., 2016; Paris, 2013; Pogodzinski, 2014; Poom-Valickis, 2014; Shank, 2023; Shanks et al., 2022; Sinner, 2013; Strom et al., 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019; Sydnor, 2017; Terry, 2019; Wexler, 2020)

- **unions** (Brown & Stern, 2018; Pogodzinski & Jones, 2015)

Reading Expectations:

A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Handbooks for Early Career Teachers

Abstract

In uneven and inconsistent ways, early career teachers enter the profession of teaching with and without structured or formalized supports. This paper engages with feminist critical discourse analysis to examine publicly available induction texts (e.g., handbooks or guides) written for early career teachers entering K to 12 public school systems in Canada. This research considers how these texts construct the early career teaching subject as well as how the work of the teacher is constructed. Feminist poststructuralism is used to theorize the findings from the critical discourse analysis in order to foreground the gendered power relations that are produced through dominant discourses. The manuscript concludes with insights from the critical analysis of the induction texts, a definition of induction that distinguishes it from mentoring, and consideration of how induction is a contested and problematic practice.

Keywords: feminist critical discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, feminist theory, early career teachers, induction, handbooks

Reading Expectations:

A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Handbooks for Early Career Teachers

In uneven and inconsistent ways, early career teachers enter the profession of teaching with and without structured or formal supports. Discussions of the transition of early career teachers into the profession often engage the concept of induction as they transition from pre-service to inservice teachers (e.g., Aarts et al., 2023; da Cruz et al., 2022; Earley, 2024; Howe, 2015; Kvam et al., 2024). Frequently, induction is positioned as a solution, alongside mentoring, to the widespread issues with teacher attrition and retention (e.g., Admiraal, 2025; Kutsyuruba et al., 2024; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017) that are often cited as most frequently occurring within the first five years in the profession (e.g., Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Within the literature on early career teachers, induction is a topic teeming with research about the practices, prevalence, and perceptions of transitioning early career teachers into the profession (e.g., Han, 2023; Kelchtermans et al., 2019; Luong, 2025). The study of induction and early career teachers has produced a body of research that seeks to understand a variety of aspects of the experiences, contexts, and structures of the transition from preservice to inservice teaching—commonly referred to as the *induction years* (e.g., Feng et al., 2025). In contrast, this paper seeks to consider the expectations that are discursively constructed through induction texts, such as handbooks and guides, and subsequently imposed upon early career teachers in order to critically consider the ways in which dominant discourses structure certain narratives and practices about learning to teach. These expectations contribute to the ways in which the teaching subject understands what it means to be a teacher, what the work of teaching includes (and does not include), and what it is to become teacher.

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

This paper seeks to critically inquire into a facet of the prevailing structures that endeavour to support the transition of pre-service teachers into early career teaching: induction texts. For the purposes of this research, induction texts are understood as handbooks or guides that an early career teacher might encounter as they enter the profession of teaching. The purpose of this study is to critically examine induction texts (handbooks and guides) produced for early career teachers, teachers considered "new" to the profession (zero to five years of experience), using feminist critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013, 2023; Lazar, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2014, 2018) to foreground the ways in which the gendered work of teaching discursively constructs the teaching subject and learning to teach, thereby producing implicit expectations for early career teachers through gendered and other problematic dominant discourses. Critical attention to dominant discourses allows for analysis and deconstruction of the obscured relations of power that discursively produce gendered expectations that constitute teacher identity(ies) and becoming.

Expectations placed upon early career teachers often position difficulties in learning to teach as individual failures, flaws, or faults, rather than recognizing the situatedness of a teacher's becoming within systems and relations of power (Weedon, 1997). In seeking to "fix" the perceived inadequacies of early career teachers, the teaching subject is positioned as the source of struggle rather than recognizing that learning to teach is an ongoing process of becoming teacher with a world that is given (Biesta, 2019) and occurs in contexts and structures outside of the teacher's control. The research questions for this study are:

1. How is the teaching subject, and the work of teaching, discursively constructed in texts written for early career teachers (i.e., induction handbooks and guides)?

2. How are expectations of early career teachers discursively constructed in these texts?

3. How are the implied expectations problematic for early career teachers and their becoming?

4. How might these expectations be deconstructed and re/considered in order to produce other ways of welcoming early career teachers into the profession?

This study sought to collect and analyze texts written for early career teachers, specifically handbooks and guides, to determine the ways in which the teaching subject and the work of teaching are discursively constructed, to consider the implicit expectations that are produced by the texts, and to determine the discourses that structure and inform the texts. Engaging with feminist poststructuralism, the analysis of the discourses will seek to foreground the gendered and asymmetrical power relations that reside within the profession of teaching, specifically within handbooks and guides written for early career teachers.

The Ongoing-ness of Knowing and Be(com)ing

This paper engaged with a theoretical lens of feminist poststructuralism to highlight discourse and the embedded relations of power that constitute subjectivities which are enacted by the teaching subject (Weedon, 1997). Feminist theory has taken significant influence from poststructural philosophy, particularly the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984). Poststructuralism is deliberate in its critical attention to the discursive techniques in which power relations are produced and the systems that perpetuate normative discourses that constitute subjectivity and knowledge (McLaren, 2002, 2013; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Poststructuralism's focus on relations of power is productive for feminist theory as it is a means to critically interrogate the practices and systems of oppression that subordinate women and other marginalized people, groups, and species (McLaren, 2002, 2013; St. Pierre, 2000). Poststructuralism maintains a particular attunement to the ways in which language produces and

obscures power. Identifying these power relations is accomplished by deconstructing the dominant discourses that constitute gendered expectations and norms that restrict and enable the shaping of forming identity(ies). Poststructuralism foregrounds the discursive gendered forces of language to convey that "discourses do not originate in the subject, yet each subject takes them up as her own, defends them, desires their maintenance, and understands herself in terms of them" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 314). Poststructuralism's critical attention to discourse invites productive capacities and possibilities through the method of deconstruction.

The poststructuralist method of deconstruction, developed in the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), is often misunderstood as annihilation (St. Pierre, 2000). However, deconstruction is a critical and generative practice that "is not about tearing down but about rebuilding; it is not about pointing out an error but about looking at how a structure has been constructed, what holds it together, and what it produces" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 482). Deconstruction is an analytical approach that critiques, problematizes, and unsettles normative discourses that are produced through power relations that authorize certain knowledge and subjectivities. Deconstruction allows for recognition of the relations of power that language grasps and provides a critical approach to stress the ways in which discursive forces constitute "the world as we know it" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 483). Deconstruction problematizes the taken-for-granted ways of knowing and being to make space for other transformative possibilities by re/considering and re/configuring knowledge and subjectivity.

Feminist theory's engagement with poststructuralism allows for "recognition that what have been experienced as personal failings are socially produced conflicts and contradictions shared by many women in similar social positions" (Weedon, 1997, p. 33). Feminist poststructuralism contends with the discursive ways in which power relations produce gendered

discourses, institutions and practices that delineate, regulate, and constrain the lives and identities of women. Davies (2000) states that "Feminist poststructuralist theorizing, in particular, has focused on the possibilities opened up when dominant language practices are made visible and revisable" (p. 179). Theorizing with feminist poststructuralism not only interrogates how subjects are socially situated within and constituted by dominant discourses, but it provides theoretical tools for critical analysis to create opportunities for resistance, disruption, and re/configuration.

Poststructuralism is often criticized for its apparent disconnection from the embodied subject due to the prioritization of language, its assumption of a neutral (masculine) subject, and its assumed foreclosure of opportunities for resistance or social change (McLaren, 2013). Feminist theory takes up poststructuralism in ways that include skepticism, hesitation, and critique. The relationship between feminist theory and poststructuralism, as McLaren argues, creates a productive and generative theoretical space to critically interrogate women's oppression and the relationships between power relations, knowledge, and subjectivity. McLaren asserts that feminist theory's engagement with poststructuralism extends and reconfigures concepts to include, and critically address, gendered subjectivity. In McLaren's work with poststructuralism, she addresses feminist theory's reconfiguration of poststructuralism's conception of subjectivity to be "an understanding of subjectivity as embodied and social . . . drawing on feminist insights about the importance of developing a theory of subjectivity out of the realities and diversity of lived experience" (p. 210). Feminist poststructuralism is a productive and generative approach for theorizing the complications and contradictions that saturate early career teachers' experiences. Feminist poststructuralism's attention to the dominant discourses allows for critical

understanding of the obscured relations of power that discursively produce gendered expectations that shape teacher identity(ies) and becoming.

Literature Review: The Induction of Early Career Teachers

Conducting a literature review about induction and early career teachers poses challenges due to the inconsistent use of the term *induction* and its conflation, or interchangeable use, with *mentoring* (Mosley & McCarthy, 2023). Luong (2025) cites the issue of "shifting terminology" as a barrier to establishing a "shared understanding in policy design and implementation of the support structures and their intended outcomes" (p. 1) for induction. Kearney (2014) states, "there has been and continues to be confusion as to what induction is and what it entails in the context of education" (p. 4), despite its presence in school systems over the last several decades and across many geographical regions. The term *induction* is utilized in myriad ways across the research literature on early career teachers. In some cases, induction is used simply as a synonym for entry into the profession of teaching (e.g., Mena & Clarke, 2021). In other instances, induction is used to label a program established to support early career teachers in their first or second year of inservice teaching.

Examples of how the term *induction* is used can be grouped into several categories according to purpose, such as, referring to an early career teacher in their first few years (e.g., *induction teachers* [Ensign et al., 2018]); identifying the initial "stage" of the early career teacher's entry into the profession and indicating the transition from pre-service to inservice teaching (e.g., *induction period* [Helleve et al., 2019]; *induction phase* [Ceven McNally, 2016; Ulvik et al., 2023]; *induction years* [Ceven McNally, 2016]); and describing the initial learning, experiences, and supports provided to early career teachers (e.g., *induction arrangement* [Helms-Lorenz et al., 2013]; *induction experiences* [Kwok et al., 2022]; *induction initiatives* [Fecho et

al., 2021]; *induction practices* [Kearney, 2014]; *induction process* [Kozikoglu, 2018]; *induction programs* [French et al., 2023; Han, 2023; Kapon & Colton, 2020; Kwok et al., 2022]; *induction scheme* [Shanks et al., 2022]; *induction supports* [Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Kvam et al., 2024]). Kearney (2014) proposed a definition for induction as "the primary phase in a continuum of professional development leading to the teacher's full integration into a professional community of practice and continuing professional learning throughout their career" (p. 5). This definition is anchored to professional development and its significance to the early career teacher as they enter and transition into the teaching profession. Maras et al. (2024) posit induction "as the crucial first step during the transition stage from a graduate teacher to a proficient level" (p. 2). In Maras et al., Ingersoll defines induction as, "introducing an ECT [early career teacher] into a school and its specific culture" (p. 2), the socialization of the early career teacher. Induction is the "the support, guidance, and orientation programs for new employees" (Ingersoll & Strong, 2012). Luong (2025), through a scoping literature review related to induction, determined that "the definitions for induction are relatively consistent, referring to a programme of support at a specific career stage" (p. 8). Luong also notes that the terms of mentoring and coaching are used with much less consistency than induction (p. 8).

In contrasting the definitions of induction and mentorship we see that induction is the overarching phase of learning that an early career teacher would engage in and a component of that learning may include establishing a relationship with a mentor. For example, Da Cruz (2022) suggests a definition of mentorship as the partnership of "a more experienced teacher who is an expert in teaching and in the discipline . . . and is responsible for monitoring and supporting the beginning teacher in their classroom" (da Cruz, 2022, p. 3). The definitions for induction and mentoring (see Appendices A and B for overviews of research topics related to induction and

mentoring) continue to give way to slippage and overlap within the literature, demonstrating the importance of establishing common understandings for terms that are used across the literature. Therefore, for this study, induction is recognized as the entry into the profession of teaching, a transitional time where the early career teacher has shifted from preservice to inservice teaching, where informal and formal experiences shape the teaching subject's teacher identities, becoming, and knowledge.

Early Career Teacher Induction Literature

The induction of early career teachers into the teaching profession is enacted in a variety of ways across different spaces and places (da Cruz et al., 2022). Induction programs are used inconsistently across countries, regions, jurisdictions, and districts and this is suggested to be the result of the variable ways responsibility for education is appointed (e.g., Kutsyuruba, 2024). Within the literature, there are examples of countries that have established countrywide induction programs mandated by government bodies (Howe, 2015). Examples of these programs can be found in Scotland (Day et al., 2023; McMahon et al., 2021), Ireland (Nally & Ladden, 2020), England (Hardman et al., 2023), Wales (Langdon et al., 2019; Milton et al., 2022), Australia (Kearney, 2014), New Zealand (Langdon et al., 2019), South Africa (Mabunda & McKay, 2024), Zimbabwe (Magudu & Gumbo, 2017), Italy (Mangione et al., 2016), Philippines (Moral & Zayas, 2022), Germany (Voss & Kunter, 2020), and Austria (Symeonidis et al., 2023) . For Canada, there was one example of a provincially mandated induction program in Ontario—the *New Teacher Induction Program* (NTIP) (Kutsyuruba et al., 2024). Howe's (2015) research briefly mentions "exemplary" (p. 23) and "excellent" (p. 24) provincial induction programs in Canada but provides not further detail or specific locations.

Across the current literature, attrition and retention of early career teachers is posited as a rationale for establishing induction programs (e.g., Admiraal, 2025; De Angelis et al., 2013; Ewing, 2021; Han, 2023; Howe, 2015; Kearney, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2024; Kutsyuruba, et al., 2025; Luong, 2025; Mena & Clarke, 2021; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022). Induction for early career teachers (i.e., supports, programs, mentoring, professional development) is claimed to have "promising" and "correlational" effects on attrition in the first five years in the profession (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Due to the inconsistent use of the term induction, and what is intended or included within its scope, it is challenging to determine what is in fact impacting early career teachers and their decisions to remain in the profession (Luong, 2025) and whether how, or if, that can be replicated. Additionally, numerous other factors are in play that can encourage or deter an early career teacher from staying in the profession. Despite the prevalence of induction programs being used by governments, teachers' unions, and school districts as a strategy to counteract attrition and support the retention of early career teachers, there is little research that determines that induction programs are an effective strategy to mitigate attrition, improve teacher effectiveness, and positively impact student achievement (e.g., Kearney, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2019; Luong, 2025).

Another motivation for the use of induction programs is the articulated desire to improve teacher quality and student achievement (e.g., Kearney, 2014; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2017; Mansfield & Gu, 2019; Maulana et al., 2015; McMahon et al., 2021; Tricarico et al., 2015). For example, Han (2023) highlights that some studies have indicated a correlation between "evidence-based teacher induction programs (TIPs) in enhancing the performance of new teachers and promoting positive student outcomes" (p. 1). Despite the claims made in the

research on the induction of early career teachers, Han argues that the correlation between such factors is further influenced by “mediators” (p. 2) that impact claims of self-efficacy, retention, and student achievement. In the aims to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness, we hear echoes of neoliberal education policy that seeks to equate teaching with learning—“learnification” (Biesta, 2017)—and measure the “effectiveness” of teaching or “teacher quality” through the measurement of student achievement by way of standardized assessments (Marom & Ruitenberg, 2018). In Luong’s (2025) scoping review of induction practices, there was no relationship determined between the presence of induction programs and perceived positive impacts on teaching practice or student achievement (pp. 7–8). Additionally, Luong’s review and analysis of the current literature on induction practices concluded that because of “the lack of common language . . . it is unclear what form of support ECTs [early career teachers] are receiving, and which practices are effective under which circumstances” (p. 9). Essential to the critical consideration of induction is the shared understanding of language and distinguishing between commonly used terminology. Within the study of early career teachers and their transition into the profession, the usefulness and effectiveness of induction programs is an area of research that requires further attention and critical consideration to inform policy and practices that seek to prioritize and support early career teachers.

Within the current research on induction and early career teachers, there are pockets of literature that attends to induction through critical perspectives that look beyond the structures and practices. For example, Daly et al. (2025) inquires into the racial tensions amongst early career teachers of colour and white mentors within induction programs, examining the experiences of racism from the perspectives of the early career teachers. Kvam et al. (2023) critically considers the ways in which the induction and support of early career teachers implies a

lack of knowledge and skill on the part of the early career teacher because of deficit thinking which fails to recognize the knowledge and experiences that early career teachers bring to their colleagues and to teaching. Kvam et al. (2024) engages with micro-political theory to critically consider early career teachers' access to, and quality of, supports received during their induction to the profession, as well as the power dynamics that may create barriers to support. Marent et al. (2020) critically considers the micro-politics that early career teachers navigate within the professional relationships established during their induction period. Mullen (2025) seeks to reconsider induction through the lens of equity regarding the transition of early career teachers into the profession. Webb and Shoffner (2025) draw on the work of Nel Noddings to reimagine teacher induction through a lens of care where the supports for early career teachers are grounded in an ethic of care that recognizes the complex challenges experienced during the initial years of teaching. These six examples demonstrate the critical ways in which the induction of early career teachers is being taken up to address the dynamic complexities and contradictions that are inherent to becoming teacher and learning to teach.

Discourse and the Teaching Subject

This paper's engagement with feminist poststructuralism, as a theoretical lens, and feminist critical discourse analysis, as a methodological approach, necessitates the discussion of the relationship between discourse and the teaching subject that is reflected within the literature. The study of discourse and teachers begins largely with the work of Deborah P. Britzman. In her landmark study, *Practice Makes Practice* (2003), Britzman critically engages with the:

> Polyphony of discourses that attempted to mobilize popular sentiments and to suppress, as well, their antagonistic meanings. . . [and is] . . . concerned with those meanings that refuse to be stabilized, the clashes between authoritative and internally persuasive

> discourses, and the constructed stories that are produced, embraced, and rejected as the real and the imaginary. (p. 175)

Discourse, according to Britzman, is the "reliance and dependence upon narrative convention, modes of reasoning, categories of thought, styles of meaning making, and implicit and taken-for-granted values" (p. 11). Dominant discourses are the regulating and normalizing structures that produce subjectivities that are subsequently enacted by the (teaching) subject. Britzman's work allows for critical engagement with the teaching subject beyond the surface of what is presumed to be the teacher and their work. Deconstructing the embedded assumptions, misconceptions, and confusions allows for address of the dynamic complexities that complicate the work of learning to teach and becoming teacher. Britzman's work invites the critical consideration of learning to teach as problematic and embedded within discursive forces that produce material and visceral consequences. Becoming teacher can be understood as ongoing and perpetually incomplete. In terms of this study, Britzman's work allows us to render induction texts as problematic as we deconstruct the dominant discourses to understand how certain teacher subjectivities are enacted by the teaching subject and subsequently reproduced. Through deconstruction, space is made for other ways of knowing and being. Furthermore, critical interrogation of dominant discourses provokes an unsettling of the expectations that are produced through gendered narratives that permeate induction texts.

Janet Alsup has also contributed to the critical conversations on discourse and teachers through her books *Teacher Identity Discourses* (2006) and *Millennial Teacher Identity Discourses* (2019) that focus on preservice teachers during teacher education. Alsup critically considers the tensions of personal and professional spaces in teaching, the overlapping boundaries of identities, and the discourses that shape teacher identity. Alsup's conceptualization

of teacher identity offers a critical alternative to notions of "professional identity" that are merely lists of attributes viewed as desirable for the "good teacher". The attention to the discursive constructions of teacher identities provides critical attention to the discourses that shape early career teachers and impact how preservice teachers learn to become teacher.

Alex Moore's *The Good Teacher: Dominant Discourses in Teaching and Teacher Education* (2004) builds on Britzman's work, identifying and critically considering three dominant discourses that shape the problematic narrative of "good teaching": *the competent craftsperson*, *the reflective practitioner*, and *the charismatic subject* (pp. 3–4). Britzman and Moore, grounded in poststructuralism and the work of Foucault, offer critical interrogations of the dominant discourses that impede and interfere with the teaching subject's becoming as they are learning to teach. Their research and theorizing are helpful in that it allows for the recognition of the ways in which a teacher's identity is shaped and informed, while acknowledging that the teaching subject is situated within socio-historical, cultural, and political contexts. Recognition for the situatedness of becoming teacher allows for critical consideration of the systems that inform, interfere, and impede how the teaching subject learns to teach, thereby acknowledging the power dynamics at play that are out of the control of the teaching subject but shape their identities. Theorizing with dominant discourses in mind allows for critical consideration of the obscured structures and assumptions that inform an early career teacher's becoming through the production of narratives that are gendered, reductive, and anti-intellectual.

The plentiful contemporary literature on induction and early career teachers offers expansive research and study of much of the practical aspects of induction. By way of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches, the study of induction has momentum in the current field of educational research. Throughout the research on induction and early career teachers, I

could find no examples that specifically and critically consider induction texts (i.e., handbooks or guides), especially through a theoretical lens of feminist poststructuralism. One example that is similar in methodology is Mooney Simmie's (2023) study of Irish policy texts that engages with feminist critical discourse analysis. In her work, Mooney Simmie examines "the gendered construction of teachers' identities and practices" (p. 282). As Mooney Simmie notes "fewer studies examine how gender is enabled, and how it is constrained, in the discursive construction of teachers' identities and work practices in policy texts" (p. 283). In this study, I aimed to problematize induction texts through critical analysis of the ways in which the teaching subject and their teaching are discursively constructed and how gendered expectations are produced through dominant discourses. This research will contribute a necessary critical perspective on the texts that contribute to the shaping of early career teachers and their identities during their induction into the profession.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

This study engaged with feminist critical discourse analysis as a mode of inquiry to analyze induction texts (handbooks and guides) written for early career teachers across Canadian contexts. Lazar (2007) articulates that the aim of feminist critical discourse analysis "is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities" (p. 142). Feminist critical discourse analysis "is a political perspective which investigates the complex and diverse ways by which gender ideologies that entrench power asymmetries become 'common sense' in particular communities and discourse contexts, and how they may be challenged" (Lazar, 2018, p. 372).

The methodology for this study draws on the works of Lazar and Fairclough to inform an approach to critical discourse analysis that maintains:

> A particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth). Critical social analysis can be understood as normative and explanatory critique. It is normative critique in that does not simply describe existing realities but also evaluates them, assesses the extent to which they match up to various values . . . It is explanatory critique in that it does not simply describe existing realities but seeks to explain them, for instance by showing them to be effects of structures or mechanisms or forces that the analyst postulates and whose reality s/he seeks to test out. (Fairclough, 2023, p. 9)

While other forms of critical discourse analysis attend to the syntax, lexicon, and sound (van Dijk, 1993), for the purposes of this study, feminist critical discourse analysis will be utilized to engage with the discourses that are embedded in seemingly innocuous texts—such as handbooks and guides for early career teachers—but upon critical scrutiny prove to be highly problematic. The theoretical framing of feminist poststructuralism aligns with feminist critical discourse analysis through the shared "focus on social justice and transformation" (Lazar, 2007, p. 144).

Through a pan-Canadian survey, I collected induction texts (handbooks and guides) written for early career teachers that were publicly available in English via Internet searches. These handbooks and guides were authored by provincial governments (including departments of education) and teachers' unions. I excluded texts specific to mentorship programs as they were written for mentors, school administrators, and superintendents, rather than for specifically early career teachers. I excluded any of the *Code of Ethics* texts in my analysis as these exist as

separate texts, for differing purposes, and are written for all teachers not just those new to the profession.

Critical discourse analysis involves the description, interpretation, and explanation of a text to determine how language functions to suggest or establish certain narratives and expectations (Machin & Mayr, 2023). Through repeated close readings, I analyzed each text for words, phrases, and sentences that spoke to the ways in which the teaching subject and the work of teaching, including learning to teach, were conceptualized or described (i.e., the research questions). After highlighting words, phrases, and sentences across the handbooks and guides, I began to sort the highlighted excerpts into the categories of descriptions of the teaching subject, descriptions of the work of teaching, and descriptions of learning to teach. In each of those categories I developed themes that reflected the dominant discourse(s) that were structuring the language. For example, I highlighted several adjectives across the handbooks and guides that provided descriptions of the expected behaviours of the teaching subject, such as smiling, being positive, friendly, and humble. From there, I analyzed the collection of descriptions and named the theme that reflected the dominant discourse. In this example, the theme was *the desired docile diligent daughter: neoliberalism's golden child*. The themes provide a textually descriptive glimpse of the discursive forces at play.

Grounded in feminist poststructuralism, I theorized how the dominant discourses construct and re/produce problematic subjectivities for the teaching subject. I critically considered the implications posed by dominant discourses, through the production of expectations, for an early career teachers' understandings of being a teacher, learning to teach, and the work of teaching. I used deconstruction as an analytical tool to trouble and unsettle the dominant discourses present throughout the induction texts. This means that I critically analyzed

the language that was used to characterize the teaching subject and how the embedded assumptions produce problematic expectations. As an analytical tool, deconstruction allowed me to critique, problematize, and unsettle the normative discourses that are produced through power relations that, in turn, authorize certain knowledge (ways of knowing) and subjectivities (ways of be(com)ing). Deconstruction allows for the recognition of the relations of power that language grasps and provides a critical approach to stress the ways in which discursive forces constitute "the world as we know it" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 483). The tool of deconstruction disquiets the taken-for-granted ways of knowing, and being, to make space for other transformative possibilities by re/considering and re/configuring knowledge and subjectivity.

Induction Handbooks and Guides

Through Internet searches I collected 10 induction texts that met the criteria of being Canadian, publicly available, written for the audience of early career teachers, and available in English (see Appendix C for a table of all texts collected and analyzed.) The documents ranged in length from eight to 110 pages. As this was a pan-Canadian survey, I intended to collect texts that provided representation for all the provinces and territories. However, Manitoba, Nunavut, and Yukon did not have any induction texts for early career teachers that were publicly available online. The collection of these texts was not an exhaustive search, and I acknowledge that additional induction texts for early career teachers may exist that are available to employees and not the public. This study did not include searches of across all digital spaces (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, websites [Teachers Pay Teachers]). Digital spaces, such as social media platforms, offer an overabundance of texts, understood here more broadly as social media posts, videos, memes, that have influence on becoming teacher and shaping the identities of the

teaching subject (e.g., Pittard, 2017). Although digital spaces are teeming with examples, these types of texts did not meet the criteria for inclusion in this particular study.

Teachers' labour unions wrote and published the majority of the texts (specifically in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan), while provincial governments wrote the texts for Northwest Territories and Ontario. For the handbook from PEI, the teachers' union and the provincial government collaborated on the publication. It is important to note the authoring organization as there will be differing agendas reflected in the content of the document. For instance, Ontario's handbook (written by the government) is the only example that has a significant portion of the document dedicated to teacher evaluation. This difference reflects the government's priorities of accountability and surveillance while labour unions would be (or expected to be) seeking to prioritize the safety, protection, and advocacy of its membership. Below is a descriptive list of the handbooks and guides that I collected and analyzed.

Alberta

Welcome to the Profession: A Quick Guide to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2023) is a 28-page document published by The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). The contents of the document are as follows: *Contacting the Association, Welcome to the Profession and to the Alberta Teachers' Association, What Are Your Professional Obligations and Rights?* (Code of Professional Conduct)*, Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities, What is the Alberta Teachers' Association?* (overview of services and structure)*, Association Structure and Organization, Government, Teacher Employment Services, Professional Development, Abbreviations Frequently Encounters, Key Terms,* and *Local Assignments to Geographic Districts.* The purpose of the document is to help early career teachers to, "familiarize yourself with rights and

responsibilities connected to the teaching profession in Alberta, as well as the programs and services that the Alberta Teachers' Association offers" (p. 7). It is stated that it is "not an exhaustive document, this guide will direct you to key programs and contacts" (p. 7). The guide is focused on informing early career teachers about the ATA and does not provide tips and tools for starting the school year.

British Columbia

The Practice of Teaching: A Handbook for New Teachers and TTOCs (2014) was written and published by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), the provincial labour union for teachers working in British Columbia. (TTOCs are the "teachers teaching on call", also referred to as substitute or supply teachers in other regions). The BCTF's mission states that the union "represents and advocates for social, professional, and economic goals of teachers and promotes a quality pluralistic public school system through leadership and advocacy, professional development, and collective bargaining" (p. 2). The 110-page document includes the following sections: *Setting the BC Context* (a historical overview of the establishment of the BCTF and evolution of policies)*, Jobs and Professional Responsibilities, The Job Search, Job Interviews, Professional Responsibility and BCTF Code of Ethics, Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in BC, Beginning Your Career as a TTOC* (pp. 21–36)*, Beginning Your Career as a Classroom Teacher, Planning, Classroom Management, Establishing a Positive Environment, Teaching Strategies and Classroom Complexity, Learning Resources, Communicating with Parents/Guardians, Students with Special Needs, Working with Education (Teacher) Assistants, Preparing for a TTOC, Parent Involvement in Schools, Working with Volunteers, Wellness, How the BC Teachers' Federation Helps, Others Who Can Help, Professional Development (PD), Evaluation of Teachers, Resources,* and *Membership.* The

BCTF handbook is a robust overview of many facets of the teaching profession, specific to the classroom context, school, district, and union. Distinguishing itself from most of the other documents, the BCTF handbook includes reference to research conducted with BC teachers and a reference list.

New Brunswick

The *Early Career Teachers' Handbook* (2023), published by the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA), is a 20-page document produced in conjunction with the POINT program (the Professional Orientation and Induction of New Teachers [a branch of NBTA and funded by NBTA dues]). The NBTA is part of the New Brunswick Teachers' Federation (NBFT), the provincial labour union for English and French teachers in New Brunswick. The handbook addresses the services offered by the NBTA, overview of the NBTF, professionalism, starting in the profession, being away from work, classroom management, reporting abuse or neglect of students, upgrading certification, salary, and additional resources. The handbook is intended to be read online as it includes many links for additional publications or websites related to, for example, policies and the code of conduct.

Newfoundland

The *NLTA Handbook for Beginning Teachers* (2021) is written and published by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA). It is a 30-page document that includes 12 sections: *Gaining Perspective, Gathering Information, Getting Ready for the First Day, Planning for Success, Managing Your Classroom, Beginning Teacher Conferences, Being Part of a Professional Community, NLTA Special Interest Councils, Planning for Instruction, Communicating with Parents and Guardians, Being Prepared...Even When You Are Not There,* and *Preparing for the Future* (wellness) (p. 1). The handbook includes a "welcome" page that

states the intent of the document, “The purpose of this handbook is to help you make the best of those early days so that you will have a healthy start to what we hope will be a long and successful career as a teacher” (p. 2). Interspersed throughout the document are “motivational” and “inspirational” quotes from a variety of curious sources, including Lee Iacocca (American, automobile executive, 1924–2019), Winston Churchill (British, political leader, 1874–1965), Lily Tomlin (American, actress, 1939–), Frank Smith (British, psycholinguist, 1928–2020), Ralph W. Emerson (American, essayist and poet, 1803–1882), and Will Rogers (American, actor, 1879–1935).

Northwest Territories

Teaching in the Northwest Territories: Induction Package for New Educators (2018) is a 96-page document published by the Government of Northwest Territories. The document is divided into four main sections: *NWT JK-Grade 12 Education Renewal*, *NWT Educational Directives*, *NWT Educator Induction*, and *Resources*. After the table of contents, the first few pages provide definitions of terms included throughout the text; a helpful resource for the reader. Information about the government, culture, peoples, and history reflects the unique knowledge and considerations necessary for teaching in the NWT. Links for additional documents and policies are included throughout the document. The third section, *NWT Educator Induction*, details the induction, orientation, and mentorship practices that are in place to support early career teachers. A template for a mentorship plan, and sample plans, are provided. Bulleted lists of advice from NWT teachers are included near the end of the document.

Nova Scotia

The *Handbook for Early Career Teachers* (2023) is written and published by The Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU). The 79-page document is divided into six sections: *Welcome to*

the NSTU, Personal & Professional Growth, Surviving & Thriving in the Classroom, Educational Partners, Information for Substitute Teachers, and Appendices. The *Code of Ethics* and *Nove Scotia Teaching Standards* are also included in the handbook. Several checklists are provided as tools to assist early career teachers in planning and preparing for the school year. Several other documents are referenced throughout the handbook, such as policies and curricula. Unique to this document is the acknowledgement that "Teachers have the right to be treated with respect and to work in an environment free from harassment and abuse. If you feel you are not receiving adequate help elsewhere, your Union will advise you, and if necessary, intercede on your behalf" (p. 43). This document acknowledges its use of material published by the BCTF.

Ontario

A Resource Handbook for New Teachers (2010) is written and published by the Ontario Ministry of Education as part of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). (When visiting the related website, the 2010 documents are referred to, thus assumed to be the most recent versions in use). The 51-page document outlines the components of the program and what new teachers can expect from the NTIP, including: support, orientation, professional development, mentoring, teacher performance appraisal, and the role of the principal (p. 1). Additionally, document includes monthly planning templates for reflections and next steps that are intended for use with a new teacher and their mentor (pp. 8–17). It is important to note that the New Teacher Induction Program is mandatory, and new teachers will "complete" the program "once they receive two *Satisfactory* ratings in their performance appraisals" (p. 2). The appendices include detailed lists of what professional development and training should include related to different topics. Additionally, lists of questions are included for the new teacher to use as self-reflection tools.

Prince Edward Island

The *Beginning Teachers Induction Program Handbook* (2017) is a 34-page document produced through collaboration between several organizations, including the government of Prince Edward Island's Department of Education and the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation (PEITF) (p. 1). The document includes 14 sections: *Beginning Your Career as a Classroom Teacher, Helpful Hints for Classroom Organization, The First Day & Getting Started, Some Strategies for Effective Teaching, Planning, Daily Reflections for Ongoing Professional Development, Classroom Management, Communication with Parents, Establishing a Positive Environment, Teaching Strategies and Classroom Complexity, Taking Care of Yourself, Preparing for a Substitute, and Action Plan.* An introductory section on the development of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) is included, as well as an appendix with information related to employee assistance. Section two (*Helpful Hints for Classroom Organization*) provides questions to guide an early career teacher's planning for procedures and routines. The last section (*Action Plan*) provides a template for the early career teacher to work through with their mentor to establish a plan to improve an area within their teaching.

Quebec

The *Handbook for New Teachers* (2021) is written and published by the teachers' labour union in Quebec, the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT). QPAT defines their work as the "mission to promote and develop the professional, social, and economic interests of teachers" (p. 6). The 20-page document is written for "new teachers working in English-language public schools in the province of Quebec" (p. 1). The documents states that "this handbook is designed to help any teacher who is new to the teaching profession in Quebec," and to, "support teachers as they embark on their journey into this noble profession" (p. 3). The handbook is

divided into four sections that detail the role of the labour union (QPAT), teachers' rights (contract details), starting in the profession (curriculum, parent communication, wellness), and teacher resources (p. 5). The resources include mentoring topics (approaches, definitions, principles, suggestions), social media recommendations, and contact information for the union.

The QPAT *Handbook for New Teachers* (2021) is primarily focused on communicating the general pragmatics of entering the teaching profession. Tips related to a variety of topics, such as classroom management, are provided throughout the document. The handbook is written for an audience of new teachers, the QPAT recognizes that new teachers not only include recent graduates, but teachers who are new to teaching in Quebec or teachers who have made career changes such as changing schools or grades (p. 15). Under the section of mentoring, the document states, "It is not uncommon for teachers to find themselves in the role of 'new teacher' several times throughout their career or simply to find themselves at a point in their career needing support" (p. 15). The QPAT's broad understanding of "new teachers" provides recognition for professional learning and support to be available throughout a teacher's career (p. 15).

Saskatchewan

Welcome to the Teaching Profession (2023) is written and published by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), the provincial labour union for teachers in Saskatchewan. The STF states that their purpose is "promoting the interests of teachers and striving for excellence in public education" (p. 2). The intention of the document is to "enhance the well-being and success of both teachers and their students" (p. 2). The eight-page document provides information on *Programs, Services, and Resources* (pp. 3–4), *Pension and Benefit Plans* (pp. 5–7), and *STF*

Online Services (p. 7). The focus of the document is to inform new teachers about the STF specifically rather than speaking more broadly about entering the profession of teaching.

Findings and Discussion

Using feminist poststructuralism as a theoretical lens, the following discussion critically considers the discourses that produce various, often competing, subjectivities (Weedon, 1997) within the induction of early career teachers into the teaching profession. These discourses are not spelled out for the readers of these handbooks, rather, they exist within the assumptions and stereotypes that are embedded within and structure the language, as well as the narratives and expectations reflected in the content of what has been included and what has been excluded. The discourses normalize certain ways of being and becoming teacher while silencing other ways. It is through critical analysis that we recognize the constitutive power of discourse in shaping subjectivities and knowledge so that we may make space to seek out and shape other ways of becoming. The following discussion will consider three discourses prevalent in the induction texts: *the ~~Non~~-Gendered Teacher, the Desired Docile Diligent Daughter,* and *Discovering How to Teach.*

The ~~Non~~-Gendered Teacher

On the surface, the language in the texts of the handbooks and guides refrains from identifying the reader as having any gender, seemingly presenting a non-gendered teaching subject. The nescient perspective towards gender attempts to present a "gender-neutral" teaching subject. The assumed gender-neutral teaching subject is problematic and stands in contrast to the discourses implicit in the texts. Scattered throughout the handbooks are words and phrases that describe and characterize the teaching subject—the early career teacher—in stereotypically feminized ways. For example, in the BCTF (2014) guidebook, the teacher is described as

"welcoming" (p. 40), "friendly" (pp. 40, 42), "grounded" (p. 40), "truthful, sincere, and objective" (p. 57), "attentive listener" (p. 57), and having a "low-key, consistent, and matter-of-fact manner" (p. 43). While in the Ontario handbook, the teacher is described as "respectful" (Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 6), "trusting" (p. 6), "positive and optimistic" (p. 6). In the handbook from Nova Scotia, the teacher is characterized as "giving" (NSTU, 2023, p. 30) and "dedicated" (p. 30). In the New Brunswick handbook, the teacher is described as "warm and inviting" (NBTA, 2023, p. 10). In Quebec's handbook, the teacher is described as, "humble, loving, courageous, tolerant, and decisive" (QPAT, 2021, p. 4). At first glance, these adjectives seem unproblematic and perhaps even desirable for those in the teaching profession. But these adjectives describe a subject that is stereotypically gendered as female on account of being pleasing to others by providing attention, care, and consideration to those around them (i.e., students, parents, admin). The example from QPAT's handbook offers an interesting tension by including "courageous" (p. 4) only to temper it with a reminder to be "humble" (p. 4). These descriptions begin to shape a certain type of compliant and docile gendered teaching subject.

Women in early career teaching encounter and contend with the effects of the ways in which they, conceptualized as the teaching subject, are discursively constituted through normative discourses. Normative discourses structure ways of knowing and being that create certain expectations of the teaching subject. Discourses such as niceness (Castagno, 2019), (e.g., "warm and inviting" [NBTA, 2023, p. 10]), caring (Noddings, 2012), (e.g., "giving" [NSTU, 2023, p. 30], mothering (Forrester, 2005), (e.g., "dedicated" [NSTU, 2023, p. 30]), happiness (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018), (e.g., "positive and optimistic" [Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 6]), and femininity (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018), (e.g., "humble, loving" [QPAT, 2021, p. 4]) constitute the teaching subject through reductive binary logic. This problematic

conceptualization is predicated upon the assumption that because of a women's gender they inherently possess the "stereotypical feminine qualities of nurturing, care, and self-sacrifice" (McLaren, 2013, p. 217). This assumption functions to reinforce heteronormativity (McLaren, 2012; Ruti, 2018) and perpetuate social norms about the roles of women in the workplace.

The adjectives speak to a gendered teaching subject that is constituted as female. Others benefit from the teaching subject embodying the above characteristics. These descriptions set up expectations for what a "good" teacher is like so that when a teacher is not seen as, for example, "warm and inviting" (NBTA, 2023, p. 10), then they may be presumed to be a "bad" teacher. There is little to no space for becoming a teacher in other ways when binary paradigms are used to establish what it means to be a "good" teacher. Many of the adjectives included above tend to be associated with women as they relate to care, devotion, selflessness, and niceness. It is problematic for induction texts to be written for a non-gendered reader but then enact expectations that speak to a stereotypically feminized teaching subject because characteristics such as niceness, respectful, positive, and humble are problematic and limiting to the teaching subject. A preoccupation with the aforementioned characteristics constrains the expression of affects and the shifting, layered identities of the teaching subject. Outlining a pre-determined image of the teaching subject begins to create a "one size fits all" version of becoming teacher that leaves little to no room for diversity (including and beyond gender) in many regards. Additionally, conceptualizing a feminized teaching subject that is grounded in stereotypes and gendered expectations creates an illusion that complaint, conflict, and concern are undesirable and therefore, unwanted or unwelcomed.

In Canada, approximately 75% of teachers in the kindergarten to grade 12 public education sectors are women (Statistics Canada, 2024a). Additionally, women report higher

incidence of harassment, violence, and sexual assault in the workplace as compared to men (Statistics Canada, 2024b). Recognizing the gravity of these two statistics, it would seem necessary to provide information about workplace safety that addresses sexual harassment, assault, and violence in the workplace, specifically, how a teacher would go about reporting any concerns or incidents. Presenting a non-gendered teaching subject is problematic because the text is attempting to be "gender blind" (Mooney Simmie, 2023) in a troubling manner. Evading the address of gender, and attempting to establish a position of neutrality, is harmful due to the historical presence of the male default where women are constituted in response to men—an androcentric conceptualization. Gender blindness is an oppressive practice that appears to be unconcerned with gender but in fact reifies the gender binary of man/woman, thereby limiting the actual fluidity of gender. Butler (1990/2007) posits that "the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed" (p. 19). Neutrality intentionally omits and avoids recognition that "Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time" (Butler, 1990/2007, p. 22). The oppressive practice of gender neutrality denies the socio-cultural and historical situatedness of teaching as gendered work. This is troubling because of the (inevitable) potential to enact, re/produce, and maintain stereotypically gendered subjectivities of the teaching subject.

When the induction texts construct a feminized teaching subject, the essentializing binary of man/woman is invoked. The dualistic categorization of gender limits the subjectivities of the teaching subject. The universalizing binary of man/woman is problematic for all as it institutes rigid and prescribed categories of gender, producing expectations of who the teaching subject should be, how they should look, and how they should function as a teacher. For example,

women in teaching are expected to be motherly, caring, nice, and happy simply because of gender. Weedon (1997) explains, “Behind the general unwillingness . . . to rethink the sexual division of labour and its implications for the equality of women and men lies a fundamental patriarchal assumption that women’s biological difference from men fits them for different social tasks” (p. 2). Constituting the teaching subject through narrow and rigid categories of gender limits and forecloses their becoming and the possibilities to be teacher in way that is not known.

The NSTU (2023) handbook provides partial acknowledgement that harassment occurs in the workplaces of teachers. In the *Handbook for Early Career Teachers* (2023), by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the section about working with parents states that “Teachers have a right to be treated with respect and to work in an environment free from harassment and abuse. If you feel you are not receiving adequate help elsewhere, your union will advise you, and, if necessary, intercede on your behalf” (p. 43). Due to the section this statement is situated within, there is an implication that this references incidents with parents, but it is known that sexual harassment, assault, and violence can also occur between a student and teacher, a teacher and teacher, an administrator or teacher, or a support staff and teacher. Informing new staff, whether it be early career teachers or staff that are new to a division or district, allows for informed responses to difficult situations that tend to create feelings of isolation within a victim. Providing a pathway for seeking out help instills confidence in the teaching subject to feel seen and heard in times where one’s voice may need the support of others.

The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation’s handbook, *The Practice of Teaching* (2014), discusses gender identity within the section on discrimination in the workplace. The handbook states that:

> This language [referring to gender identity] was negotiated by the BCTF locals on behalf of their members so that teachers could be themselves in their workplaces without being subjected to sexism, homophobia, transphobia, racism, ableism, or other forms of discrimination. ... LGBTQ teachers should expect to be safely 'out' at work, acknowledge their families and loved ones without fear of reprisals or discrimination.
>
> (p. 90)

In addressing the rights of teachers, it is critical to also include the responsibilities that the union, school, district or division have in maintaining or protecting those rights. The procedures and protocols for reporting incidents of harassment, violence, or discrimination are necessary to ensure that when rights of teachers are violated, they are provided with an established route for seeking out support and intervention.

Teachers are gendered and embodied beings that engage with others in relational, ethical, and complex encounters. Suggesting that the teaching subject is nongendered, but constituting a feminized teaching subject, negates recognition and acknowledgment of the experiences of gendered bodies within the profession of teaching.

The Desired Docile Diligent Daughter: Neoliberalism's Golden Child

The examples provided in the previous section demonstrate a conceptualization of becoming teacher through a feminized teaching subject rather than a non-gendered teaching subject. Throughout the handbooks there are many additional phrases and words that are utilized to characterize the feminized teaching subject. The following excerpts describe the "desired" behaviours of the teaching subject, quoted directly from the induction texts. The handbook from Nova Scotia encourages the early career teacher to, "try to keep thoughts as positive as possible," and, "maintain a positive attitude" (NSTU, 2023, p. 29). The teacher is also reminded to use a

“friendly voice (p. 43). A similar sentiment is captured in the BCTF (2014) handbook, “use a quiet, friendly tone of voice” (pp. 43, 57). The BCTF handbook also reminds early career teachers to be someone that “cares” (p. 42). The handbook from PEI instructs early career teachers to “make your classroom a warm and inviting environment” (PEI Department of Education, 2017, p. 10). The NLTA (2021) handbook states that early career teachers should “care more than others think wise” (p. 1). While in the NBTA (2023) handbook, early career teachers are instructed to be a ““positive influence” (p. 9), a “role model” (p. 9), and to “Smile!” (p. 12). Much like the characteristics previously listed, these behaviours establish problematic expectations of how a teacher will teach and become teacher. When quiet, positive, and friendly are the preferred behaviours, little space is left to be critical, intelligent, ethical, and assertive as a gendered and embodied teaching subject. When a teacher does not fit the expectations that are constructed by the discourses embedded in the handbook, then they may perceive themselves as failing or unfit to be a teacher, especially when there is only a singular and preferred teacher identity.

Women are often expected to be nurturing, caring, and self-sacrificing, due to their gender, and those qualities are quite easily imposed upon women in teaching. The vision of the ideal mother is transcribed onto the teaching subject. Additionally, because the “motherly” teacher is expected to be self-sacrificing (McLaren, 2013), this can materialize as expectations to contribute limitless time and energy to the work of becoming teacher and teaching. We hear this in the comment, “care more than others think wise” (NLTA, 2021, p. 1). Again, these traits are often assumed to be desirable but are in fact problematic on account of the gendered and sexist stereotypes they adhere to. Many of these feminized attributes work to maintain a docile, diligent, passive, and compliant worker, the teaching subject, and neoliberalism’s golden child.

Ruti (2018) argues that the "system of performance, productivity, self-improvement, and enforced cheerfulness . . . *neoliberalism*, is impressive at dexterously suppressing the bad feelings that heteropatriarchy generates" (p. xxvi). Neoliberalism is understood to pursue and value success, cheerfulness, and self-actualization at the cost of the subject's quality of life (Ruti, 2017). The individual, as opposed to the collective, retains centrality in neoliberalism while lessening recognition of the relationality and intersubjectivity that is inherent to the human experience. The neoliberal expectations, manifested in education policy, for teachers to demonstrate professionalism, effectiveness, quality, and excellence in their teaching, which is evaluated through the measurement of student learning, constructs problematic conceptions of the good teacher. These words speak to the surveillance, accountability, and discipline that are essential to neoliberal education policies that ensnare teachers through impossible expectations that position faults, flaws, and failures and problems of the individual teaching subject rather than problems of the systems that teachers work within.

Thinking with Ruti, we recognize the performative element in the directive to "smile" (NBTA, 2023, p. 12), self-improvement in the instruction to be a "role model" (p. 9), and enforced cheerfulness in the numerous commands to "keep thoughts as positive as possible" (NSTU, 2023, p. 29), "maintain a positive attitude" (p. 29), "friendly voice" (p. 43), "positive influence" (NBTA, 2023, p. 9), and, of course, "Smile!" (p. 9). A thread of productivity runs throughout all the directives, commands, and instructions for the desired behaviours of the teaching subject. In isolated excerpts, they begin to sound like admonishments from a controlling and authoritarian parent (father). The diligent and docile worker (the teaching subject) is neoliberalism's desired golden child because to exhibit emotion other than cheerfulness or happiness (i.e., sadness, anger, fear) would threaten the expectations of the work and

productivity. Refraining from (or reframing) self-improvement will open the teaching subject to recognize the problems of the systems rather than locating them as problems of the self. Characterizing neoliberalism through Ruti's conceptualization of self-improvement, performance, productivity, and enforced cheerfulness helps us to recognize that teachers are continually expected to be teacher for others. But in becoming teacher, one must be taught to teach and learn from teachers, thereby learning to teach is not drawn from the learning of students (Biesta, 2021).

The feminized teaching subject is enmeshed within neoliberalism's invidious intentions, magnifying the patriarchal and deficit discursive forces. The assumptions that early career teachers need to be instructed on behaviour such as smiling (NBTA, 2023, p. 9), caring (BCTF, 2014, p. 42), and being friendly (NSTU, 2023, p. 29), assumes that the teaching subject needs to be told and reminded, reflecting a deficit approach (Kvam et al., 2023; Mooney Simmie, 2023). The deficit approach further reinforces the patriarchal tone of the handbooks and establishes a hierarchical order that positions the (feminized) teaching subject as the unknowing child—the "new" teacher. The behaviour directives in the handbooks and guides, yet again, do not speak to ethical, relational, and intellectual engagements with education and teaching.

Another statement that may leave the reader pondering is found in the NWT's handbook. It states, "Do not look for love in the classroom. Look for respect. ...The new teacher who is looking for love is vulnerable and erodes the authority needed to lead a class" (NWT, 2018) p. 92). When we consider traits that are stereotypically associated with a specific gender, one may assume that this comment is directed at women in early career teaching. It speaks to ideas of refraining from providing too much care, or "mothering", and, instead, implies that one should be leading and strong "like a man" would be expected to be. Reeking of patriarchal residue, this

comment is problematic as it dictates becoming, and being, teacher in a certain gendered way. Control and power must prevail over care and compassion. Additionally, this excerpt is paradoxical to the ways in which the induction texts constitute the teaching subject as female. Constructing stereotypically gendered expectations of the teaching subject, while faulting the teaching subject for those gendered qualities, demonstrates how "Certain political practices institute identities on a contingent basis in order to accomplish whatever aims are in view" (Butler, 1990/2007, p. 22). The double bind (Chowdhury, 2025; Hirji, 2021) of care becomes evident when care is understood as the work of women while also being the flaw of women's work. Within the same document, another problematic directive is included, "Do not get married the week before school starts" (NWT, 2018, p. 92). This off-putting directive is drenched in a patriarchal tone where teachers may control students but are then expected to *be* controlled by the principal or other administrators. As echoed by Grumet (1988), "The ideal teacher was one who could control the children and be controlled by her superiors" (p. 43). The directive harkens back to the times when women in teaching had strict, controlling, and sexist rules about how they must live, who they may live with, or how they could dress (Grumet, 1988; Prentice & Theobold, 1991). We must ask how this is supportive or welcoming to teachers who are new to the profession and begin to question how the language is in fact deeply problematic.

In the QPAT's (2021) handbook, readers are told that they are "part of a big family" (p. 4). The use of family to characterize workplaces extends beyond education. But no matter the context, describing a place of work as a family is problematic because characterizing workplaces in this way allows employers to use the idea of family as a justification for asking for more than what an employee should expect to contribute or agree to. The discourse of the "family" workplace establishes expectations that may compromise the well-being of employees by taking

advantage of them and putting employees in positions where they feel an obligation, but the favour will never be returned. The rhetoric of family also imposes and reinforces gendered expectations that are commonly associated within a patriarchal and heteronormative model of family (e.g., the father will lead the family and be responsible for discipline and income, while a mother will provide care, manage domestic responsibilities, and support all family members). Rather, describing a workplace as a community still encompasses ideas of relationality, care, and ethical obligation while avoiding the problematic expectations of the gendered family rhetoric.

Experience Delivers Mastery: "Discovering" How to Teach

Throughout the handbooks, experience is positioned as the most valuable place for learning to take place in order to be a teacher. The handbook from the Government of Ontario (2010) states, "We don't learn to teach. Rather, we learn from our teaching" (p. 2). This bold statement negates the learning that takes place in teacher education programs and university coursework and the theory included in the courses. It is a fallacy to claim that "we don't learn to teach," because if we only needed to, "learn from our teaching," then this implies that anyone could walk into a classroom and figure out teaching from merely doing. Biesta (2021) posits that:

> What is distinctive about education is *not* the phenomenon of learning—which, after all, can also happen outside of education and can occur without teaching—but precisely the presence of and the encounter with teaching. Whereas *learning* is accidental to education, teaching, so I wish to suggest, is *essential* to education. (p. 62)

The reductive, overly simplistic, and problematic characterization of learning to teach as doing it and "figuring it out" obscures the hidden work (Petersen, 2019) of teaching that stretches far beyond what is observable. It is also misleading to early career teachers when a handbook argues that practice is regarded as more valuable than theory when the two are entangled, whether the

theoretical aspects of learning to teach can be recognized or comprehended. Moreover, arguing that we do not learn to teach elicits notions of teaching being "natural" to some, particularly women due to their gender. Women are often characterized as being "natural teachers" merely because of gender. Many care-oriented professions are described as "natural" work for women, and this notion discounts the intellectual work of teaching. Teaching has a history of being a gendered, or feminized, profession. Certain qualities are assumed, and expected, to be "naturally" present in women on account of their gender. Teaching as natural work for women assumes that women are suitable for the profession of teaching simply due to their gender. When care is understood to be the duty and responsibility of women, the assumption reinforces the notion that teaching is a gendered profession—a job for women. Social constructions of "gender norms are pervasive; they structure modes of dress, self-expression, types of work, and social responsibilities" (McLaren, 2013, p. 215). The natural teacher is assumed then to be "self-made" (Britzman, 2003, p. 31) because it is their inherent qualities that determines their fit for the profession. This dominant discourse is problematic in its assumption that gender equates women with suitability or aptitude for certain professions. This assumption is based on expectations that women will provide the care in society, releasing men from any of the responsibility or expectations of care. The motherly teacher delineates very specific expectations of the teacher and, yet again, it implies that because teaching is a "natural" profession for women, there is insignificant work that is required to learn how to teach. This discourse privileges the notion of being teacher (arriving at an endpoint of mastery) rather than becoming teacher.

The notion of the natural teacher diminishes the intellectual work that is required in becoming teacher by presuming that one can be a teacher by being a woman. This discourse is reductive and works to trivialize the complexities of becoming teacher. The natural teacher is

also assumed to be, rather than becoming. Presuming that women are natural teachers positions difficulties in teaching as the problem of the individual early career teaching subject rather than a problem within the system or socio-historical contexts. When women in early career teaching realize that they do not know or cannot do, in relation to the unpredictability of teaching, then the difficulty is viewed as a personal lack or inadequacy. They are just not "made" to be a teacher. The "natural teacher" perpetuates assumptions of women in teaching that hinder possibilities, creating disillusionment and disempowerment.

Throughout the handbooks, experience is positioned as the pathway to mastery; an endpoint where the teaching subject arrives at expertise. Britzman (2007) emphasizes that "We are likely to forget that all of us are subject to the radical uncertainty of being with others in common and uncommon history and, this being with other beings makes development uneven and uncertain" (p. 1). In the Government of Ontario's handbook, the reader is reminded that "It is important to keep in mind, as you begin your career as a teacher, that proficiency comes with practice" (ON, 2010, p. 2). Reiterated in the handbook from Quebec, it is stated that, "Experience is truly a great teacher" (QPAT, 2021, p. 12). Experience has a place in learning and is important, but learning cannot come from experience alone. Critical engagement with experience allows for reflexive practice that creates space for transformation, movement, and re/consideration. Experience can be misleading. Britzman (2003) cautions that "Experience, then, feels as if it comes too soon for understanding, not soon enough for help, filled with obstacles that frustrate and so devoid of that primal experience: the experience of satisfaction" (p. 13). A teacher can do many things, have many experiences, but without critical inquiry beyond the surface, the remnants of these experiences can remain superficial, trivial, and lacking. Not all experience is educative, and many experiences can be miseducative (Dewey, 1938/1997).

And what then should a teacher do when experience and practice—the doing of teaching—does not deliver understanding and mastery? Expectations for experience to deliver are met with disappointment and confusion when a teacher is left to feel that they have not arrived at the endpoint, that they have not become "great". Learning to teach is intentional, critical, and intellectual work that oscillates within the entanglement of theory and practice. Even when the focus is on practice, theory abounds. Learning to teach is not an organic and spontaneous accident. It is a thoughtful, recursive, and continually shifting endeavour that requires the teaching subject to negotiate and navigate the complexities and contradictions the punctuate becoming teacher.

Curious Inclusions, Oddities, & Afterthoughts

NLTA's (2021) handbook included many quotations from random figures in film and television, history, business, and literature. For example, a quote from Lee Iacocca, American businessman, is quoted as saying "In a completely rational society, the best of us would aspire to be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have" (p. 7). First, it is an odd choice to include a quote from an American business figure in a Canadian handbook for early career teachers. Second, although this quote seems to herald the profession of teaching as noble and respectable, the statement is implying that in the actual society that we live in, as opposed to the "rational" one, the best does not aspire to be teachers. In fact, the profession, using Iacocca's words, must "settle for something less" (p. 7). Third, and this is comical coming from a businessman, Iacocca seems to imply that those who seek out teaching should do it for the honour and responsibility that they take on to transfer "civilization from one generation to the next" (p. 7), and not for the

compensation. The belief that teaching is a noble profession, and that the immaterial rewards should outweigh the monetary rewards, is problematic because it sets up expectations of teachers to be self-less, willing, and generous (in time, energy, and patience). When teachers resist these expectations by establishing boundaries, prioritizing their well-being or health over work, and advocating for fair compensation, they are characterized as selfish, self-serving, and undedicated to their work. Additionally, teaching is far more than the socialization and transmission of a civilization. Education can be democratic, generative, and transformational for teachers, students, and the world they are situated within.

In several of the handbooks, there are components and statements that may create pause for the reader. For example, in the BCTF's handbook, in the section about TTOCs (teachers teaching on call, or substitute teachers), the following statement is used to characterize TTOCs, "Few explorers have set out to conquer the unknown with more uncertainty than teachers teaching on call" (BCTF, 2014). In a time when reconciliation is at the forefront of Canadian education, including metaphors that are reflective of the atrocities of Canada's colonial history and contemporary impacts is strange and insensitive. The metaphor implies that TTOC's are akin to explorers in the desire to seize, or "conquer", the land and people (i.e., classrooms and students). This careless and unpalatable choice of words reinforces the need for attention to language because, as demonstrated here, language has power and is imbued with the reverberations of histories.

Induction Texts as a Contested Practice

The analysis of induction texts for early career teachers demonstrates that what appears to be an innocuous and commonplace resource can in fact be quite problematic due to the implicit narratives and expectations that are conveyed to the early career teacher about becoming teacher

and the work of teaching. Through critical analysis and deconstruction of the discourses that shape the handbooks and guides, we can begin to understand how certain patriarchal, gendered, and neoliberal expectations of early career teachers take shape and impact teacher becoming. Induction, including the texts, can be understood as a "contested practice" (Kemmis et al., 2014). Induction is presumed to be positive and helpful but there is no guarantee of that due to the inconsistencies between policies, practices, and implementation (Luong, 2025). The multiple definitions and applications of induction practices create issues for the interpretation of what constitutes induction and how it is deemed effective (Luong, 2025). Thinking with Kemmis et al. (2014), we can acknowledge that due to "cultural-discursive," "material-economic," and "social political arrangements," that induction practices are a contested site of power relations, enactments of certain subjectivities, and multiple meanings (p. 155). The complexities of induction give way to the necessity for further study and critical consideration to address the material impacts on early career teachers and their becoming. Additionally, induction texts can be conceptualized as indirect mentoring. Rather than presuming mentoring to be within the limits of the relationship/s of teachers, and through direct means, *indirect mentorship* speaks to the ways in which objects function to influence, inform, and impact the early career teacher's becoming. Indirect mentoring recognizes the relationships between the early career teacher and objects (such as texts) that they may interact with and which may in turn shape their identities through discursive force.

If we return to the definition of induction, we recognize that it is a way of "leading in" (originating from the Latin, inducere) or "introducing". Handbooks and guides for early career teachers contribute to the introduction to the profession and lead the teaching subject from preservice to inservice teaching. Understanding the power and influence of induction texts

necessitates the critical and intentional writing of such texts. As early career teachers are welcomed into the profession, induction texts must reflect the ethical, relational, and intellectual complexities of the work of teaching and learning to teach. The writing of such texts should speak to a reader that is a colleague entering the profession, rather than a patriarchal lecture on how to behave and be nice to others. Additionally, it is imperative that induction texts, and any text that is part of the induction of an early career teacher into the profession, indicate their purpose, for example orientation, policy, professional learning, or for reference (i.e., logistical information).

Biesta (2009) argues that there are three functions of education: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. If we consider the induction of early career teachers, many aspects of induction seek to satisfy these functions. The orientation of early career teachers to school systems, schools, and classrooms provides socialization and supports teachers in adapting and learning how to navigate the complexities of teaching. Professional development attempts to address the function of qualification by providing opportunities for early career teachers to continue their learning, grow their knowledge, and broaden their skills. Identity work "takes the form of personal development, professional learning and teacher activism, each of which results in enhanced engagement and understanding of the self, the field of practice or the political sphere" (Mockler, 2011, p. 522). Beauchamp and Thomas (2022) describe this as teacher identity learning that "involves having a sense of self within a given context [Gee, 2001] that permits one to act in decisive, professional ways" (p. 786). Identity work, or identity learning, is significant for early career teachers:

> As the challenges faced by beginning teachers in particular are more likely to be related to feeling competent in their multiple roles . . . The construction of an identity by teachers

> is generally considered to be an ongoing dynamic process that involves making sense of past experience, interpreting current experience, and even looking forward to possible or expected future situation. (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022, p. 786)

In the description of identity work, we hear echoes of what Britzman (2003) would refer to as school biography, the memories of being a student observing the teachers at work. Identity work, or identity learning, understood as education's function of subjectivation, is an aspect of becoming teacher, transitioning into the profession, and part of induction that receives little to no attention despite the aforementioned experiences having direct impacts in shaping, constraining, and suppressing the early career teacher's identities. Engaging in the hidden work (Petersen, 2019) of identity learning is a necessary and critical aspect of teacher education and learning to teach once a teacher has transitioned from preservice to inservice teaching. Failure to acknowledge and recognize the significance of subjectivation results in the re/production and enactment of teacher subjectivities that are problematic and constraining. The induction of early career teachers, and the subsequent induction programs and supports, must include explicit and critical consideration of teacher identity. This proves to be an area of early career teacher induction that requires further attention and research.

Conclusion

By engaging with feminist poststructuralism and feminist critical discourse analysis, this paper sought to critically interrogate Canadian examples of induction texts (i.e., handbooks or guides). Through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from the induction texts, three discourses emerged from the themes in the data: *the ~~non~~-gendered teacher, the desired docile diligent daughter,* and *the discovery of learning to teach.* Unsettling these discourses allowed for a critical consideration of the ways in which knowledge, subjectivity, and power

relations are discursively constructed, as well as drawing attention to the ways in which expectations of early career teachers are re/produced. The expectations, constructed by gendered norms, and discursively produced in the handbooks, shape (and limit) the early career teacher's becoming by eliciting certain teaching identities for the teaching subject. The delineation of rigid and specific teacher identities welcomes some early career teachers into the profession while sending the message to other early career teachers that they are unwelcome because they do not, or cannot, conform to certain gendered expectations. Providing early career teachers, during their pre-service teacher education program, with opportunities to critically engage with texts, such as handbooks, allows for the acquisition of theoretical tools (e.g., deconstruction) and provides experiences to cultivate critical perspectives that interrogate and inquire into the seemingly innocuous. Thus, emboldening early career teachers to question and challenge the gendered and prescribed norms of being and becoming teacher by making space for transformation and radical possibilities (St. Pierre, 2000).

Although this study was limited to a Canadian context, researchers in other countries may benefit from the findings of this research to consider the ways in which handbooks and guides are written, decisions about the content that is included (or excluded), what is implied, and how early career teachers are interacting with such texts. As with the other papers in this collection, this manuscript seeks to render the taken-for-granted as problematic in order to unsettle the complexities and contradictions that are embedded within the work of learning to teach. Unsettling the tacit assumptions and expectations of the teaching subject opens to possibilities of understanding how teachers and teaching are being shaped, constrained, and limited in their becoming. Through critical analysis, opportunities open up for becoming teacher in other ways rather than unknowingly re/producing or maintaining problematic expectations. Recognizing the

identities and expectations that are discursively constructed and imposed upon early career teachers to enact teacher and teaching in specific and defined ways allows for re/consideration of the possibilities of becoming teacher.

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Appendix A

Themes and Topics in the Literature on Induction and Early Career Teachers

- **Approaches, challenges, characteristics, frameworks, initiatives, models, programs, structures, supports** (Aarts et al., 2020, 2023; Admiraal, 2025; Burger et al., 2021; Conway, 2015; Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020; Fecho et al., 2021; Howe, 2015; Kaplan, 2022; Kapon & Colton, 2020; Kwok et al., 2022; Luft & Dubois, 2015; Mangione et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2021; Mullen, 2025; Neal & Freeman, 2023; Stîngu, 2020; Svajda-Hardy & Kwok, 2024; Symeonidis et al., 2023)
- **Attrition and retention** (Admiraal, 2025; Björk et al., 2019; DeAngelis et al., 2013; Han, 2023; Kelchtermans et al., 2019; Kelchtermans, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2025; McDonald, 2019; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017)
- **Canadian contexts** (Kutsyuruba et al., 2024; Howe, 2015)
- **Care, emotions, stress, and well-being** (Harmsen et al., 2019; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2013; Sela & Harel, 2019; Voss & Kunter, 2020; Webb & Shoffner, 2024)
- **Context and factors impacting induction** (Benoliel et al., 2025; Daly et al., 2025; Han, 2023; Van der Pers & Helms-Lorenz, 2021)
- **Contexts outside of Canada** (Day et al., 2023; Hardman et al., 2023; Howe, 2015; Kapon & Colton, 2020; Kearney, 2014; Kozikoglu, 2018; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Kvam et al., 2023; Langdon et al., 2019; Liang & Zhang, 2023; Mabunda & McKay, 2024; Magudu & Gumbo, 2017; Mangione et al., 2016; Mansfield & Gu, 2019; McMahon et al., 2021; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Milton et al., 2022; Moral & Zayas, 2022; Nally & Ladden, 2020; Neal & Freeman, 2023; Olsen et al., 2020; Ozturk & Hoard, 2018; Shanks et al., 2022; Stîngu, 2020;

Symeonidis et al., 2023; Thomas et al., 2019; Ulvik et al., 2019; Voss & Kunter, 2020; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023)

- **Critical approaches and perspectives** (Daly et al., 2025; Kvam et al., 2023, 2024; Marent et al., 2020; Mullen, 2025; Webb & Shoffner, 2024)
- **Context and factors impacting induction** (Benoliel et al., 2025; Daly et al., 2025)
- **Effectiveness, impacts, and significance** (Feng et al., 2025; Han, 2023; Harmsen et al., 2019; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2019; Luong, 2025; Mansfield & Gu, 2019; Marent et al., 2020; März & Kelchtermans, 2020; Maulana et al., 2015)
- **Experiences and perceptions** (Aarts et al., 2020; Arviv Elyashiv et al., 2024; Bang & Luft, 2014; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019b; Kvam et al., 2024; Kwok & Cain, 2023; Kwok et al., 2022; Stone et al., 2020; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023)
- **Mentoring** (Bang & Luft, 2014; Mena & Clarke, 2021a; Moral & Zayas, 2022; Nally & Ladden, 2020; Wexler, 2020)
- **Participation** (Benoliel et al., 2025; Kwok & Cain, 2023)
- **Professional development, professional learning communities, and professional learning** (Admiraal et al., 2023; Mabunda & McKay, 2024; Milton et al., 2022; Poom-Valickis, 2014; Tammets et al., 2019; Ulvik et al., 2023; Wexler, 2020)
- **Professional identity** (Schapp et al, 2021; van der Wal et al., 2019)
- **Role of principals and school leaders** (Anthony et al., 2019; Kozikoglu, 2018; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2020; Svajda-hardy & Kwok, 2024)
- **Self-Efficacy** (Arviv Elyashiv et al., 2024; Feng et al., 2025; Han, 2023; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2013; Poom-Valickis, 2014; Pressley, 2024; Thomas et al., 2019)

- **Transition from preservice to inservice teaching** (Arviv Elyashiv et al., 2024; Björk et al., 2019; Liang & Zhang, 2023; Mabunda & McKay, 2024; Poom-Valickis, 2014)

Appendix B

Themes and Topics in the Literature on Mentoring and Early Career Teachers

- **Attrition and retention** (Adoniou, 2016a, 2016b; Banville, 2015; Clandinin et al., 2015; Du Plessis, 2024; Gallant & Riley, 2018; Gunn & McRae, 2021; Johnson, 2023; Kelly et al., 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2018; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022; Long et al., 2012; Maready et al., 2021; Maynes & Hatt, 2015; Newbold et al., 2016; Paris, 2013; Pivovarova & Powers, 2022; Redding & Smith, 2019; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Shanks et al., 2022; Struyve et al., 2016; Trent, 2019; Wang, 2019; Whalen et al., 2019; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021)
- **Canadian contexts** (Kutsyuruba, 2012; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2018; Kutsyuruba, Walker, et al., 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022; Maynes & Hatt, 2015)
- **Contexts Outside of Canada** (Olsen et al., 2020; Paris, 2013; Penikett et al., 2019; Pennanen et al., 2016; Pivovarova & Powers, 2022; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Schuck et al., 2018; See, 2014; Shanks et al., 2022; Spencer et al., 2018; Struyve et al., 2016; Topliss, 2020; Trent, 2019; Vaitzman Ben-David & Berkovich, 2022; Wang, 2019; Willis et al., 2019; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021)
- **Critical, cultural, ethical and political dimensions of mentoring** (Adoniou, 2016a, 2016b; Cobb, 2022; Devos, 2010; Gallant & Riley, 2018; Goodwin et al., 2021; Hanawalt & Hosfess, 2020, 2023; Hosfess & Hanawalt, 2020; Howley & Trube, 2015; Kemmis et al., 2014; Kochan et al., 2015; Larsen, Curtis, et al., 2023; Larsen, Nguyen, et al., 2023; März et al., 2016; Mercado & Trumbull, 2018; Moody et al., 2022; Mooney Simmie, 2020; Mosley Wetzel et al., 2023; Newbold et al., 2016; Ozturk & Hoard, 2018; Pennanen et al., 2016; Willis et al., 2019)

- **Education for mentors** (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Gakonga, 2019)
- **Effects, influence, and impacts of mentors/mentoring** (Corwin, 2013; Hong & Matsko, 2019; Kaplan, 2022; Kutsyuruba et al., 2022; Maloch et al., 2022; Marcelo & Lopez Ferreira, 2020; Mokoena & van Tonder, 2024; Morettini et al., 2020; Mosley & McCarthy, 2023; Mosley Wetzel et al., 2023; Richter et al., 2013; Spooner-Lane, 2017; Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021; Yan, 2024)
- **Emotions and wellbeing** (Cobb et al., 2021; Ng, 2023; Richter et al., 2013)
- **Informal and formal mentorship** (Auletto, 2021; Desimone et al., 2014; Johson, 2023)
- **Mentors** (Betteney et al., 2018; Brooks, 2022; Crooks et al., 2024; Eady et al., 2022; Jaspers et al., 2014; Kerry & Mayes, 2014; Malderez, 2023; McColl et al., 2022; Moody et al., 2022; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017)
- **Mentoring beyond the first five years** (Bressman et al., 2018; Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Oberholzer & Boyle, 2023)
- **Mentor qualities** (Ewing, 2021; Jimerson et al., 2015)
- **Mentoring relationships** (Eisenschmidt & Oder, 2018; Haidusek-Niazy & Carpenter, 2023; Hudson, 2016; Larsen, Nguyen, et al., 2023; Papatraianoy & Le Cornu, 2014; Penikett et al., 2019; Vaitzman Ben-David & Berkovich, 2022; Wang, 2019; Wold et al., 2023)
- **Models, approaches, paradigms, programs, policies, and practices** (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Albert et al., 2023; Burger, 2024; Burger et al., 2021; Ceven McNally, 2016; Crooks, 2024; da Cruz et al., 2022; Day & Shanks, 2023; Desimone et al., 2014; Ewing, 2021; Fyall et al., 2020; Gakonga, 2019; Gardiner, 2016; Golder et al., 2019; Haas et al., 2022; Hanawalt & Hosfess, 2023; Hobson, 2020; Hong & Matsko, 2019; Howe, 2015; Hudson & Hudson, 2016; Hunt et al., 2013; Irby, 2020; Irby et al., 2020; Jacobsen & Gunnulfsen, 2023;

Kutsyuruba, 2012; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Larsen, Jensen-Clayton, et al., 2023; Larsen, Curtis, et al., 2023; Mellor, 2019; Mena & Clarke, 2021; Moloney et al., 2023; Olsen et al., 2020; Paris, 2013; Qureshi et al., 2021; Richter et al., 2013; Stapp et al., 2019; Topliss, 2020; Winson, 2020; Yan, 2024)

- **Perceptions, perspectives, expectations, and experiences of mentoring** (Auletto, 2021; Curtis et al., 2024; Du & Wang, 2017; Fyall et al., 2020; Helleve et al., 2019; Kent & Green, 2018; Kutsyurba et al., 2019; Maher & Toledo, 2022; Schuck et al., 2018; Smith Washington, 2024; Stringham & Snell, 2019)
- **Professional communities, communities of practice, support networks** (Arslan et al., 2022; Du Plessis, 2024; Llyod, 2013; März & Kelchtermans, 2020; McCann & Llyod, 2013; Mercieca & McDonald, 2021; Spencer et al., 2018; Struyve et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2019)
- **Professional learning** (Beckett, 2020; Kerry & Mayes, 2014; Livingston, 2018; Zhukova et al., 2018)
- **Reflective practices** (Bell et al., 2022)
- **Role of principals in mentorship** (Auletto, 2021; Kutsyuruba, 2021; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Sullivan & Morrison, 2014; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014; Walker & Kutsyuruba, 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2020)
- **Subject, level, or pedagogy specific** (Arslan et al., 2022; Banville, 2015; Ceven McNally, 2016; Chambers, 2015; Crooks et al., 2024; Desimone et al., 2014; Everley, 2019; Gallo, 2018; Golder et al., 2019; Granger, 2024; Gray, 2021; Hanawalt & Hosfess, 2020, 2023; Healy et al., 2022; Henning et al., 2019; Hosfess & Hanawalt, 2020; Hopkins & Spillane, 2014; Howells, et al., 2020; Kapon & Colton, 2020; Knussen & Agnew, 2022; Lawson & Wood-Griffiths, 2019; Lisenbee & Tan, 2019; Lu., 2022; Lu et al., 2020; Maor & McConney,

2015; Masoumi & Noroozi, 2023; Matherne, 2024; Mellor, 2019; Qureshi et a;., 2021; See, 2014; Stanulis & Bell, 2017; Stanulis et al., 2014; Stringham & Snell, 2019; Surrette, 2020)

- **Supports for Early Career Teachers** (Aarts et al., 2023; Adoniou, 2016; Auletto, 2021; Soulen & Wine, 2018; Stapp et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2019; Zuljan & Požarnik, 2014)
- **Support for early career teachers who were alternatively certified** (Redding & Smith, 2019)
- **System review** (Noorkõiv, 2018)
- **Teaching standards** (Larsen et al., 2023)
- **Transition from pre-service to inservice teaching** (Cobb, 2022; Deangelis et al., 2013; Goodwin et al., 2021; Gordon, 2020; Heikkinen, 2017; Kelly et al., 2019; Knussen & Agnew, 2022; Ma et al., 2022; MacMath et al., 2021; Mokoena & van Tonder, 2024; Stapp et al., 2019; Wexler, 2020; Zuljan & Požarnik, 2014)

Appendix C

Source Information for Induction Texts

Publication Year	Province/ Territory	Title	Author	Pages
2014	BC	*The Practice of Teaching: A handbook for new teachers and TTOCs*	British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF)	110
2018	NWT	*Teaching in the Northwest Territories: Induction Package for New Educators*	Government of Northwest Territories	96
2023	NS	*Handbook for Early Career Teachers*	Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU)	79
2010	ON	*A Resource Handbook for New Teachers*	Government of Ontario	51
2017	PEI	*Beginning Teachers Induction Program Handbook*	PEI Department of Education	34
2021	NL	*NLTA Handbook for Beginning Teachers*	Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA)	30
2023	NB	*Early Career Teachers' Handbook*	New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA)	20
2021	QC	*Handbook for New Teachers*	Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT)	20
2023	SK	*Welcome to the Teaching Profession*	Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF)	8
2023	AB	*Welcome to the Profession: A Quick Guide to the Alberta Teachers' Association*	Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)	15

*Handbooks or guides were not publicly available for Manitoba, Nunavut, and Yukon.

Interrupting Expectations:

A Critical Analysis of the Dominant Discourses of Women in Early Career Teaching

Abstract

The tenuous transition into the profession of teaching is fraught with uncertainties, difficulties, and perplexities that structure the ongoing struggle of learning to teach—becoming teacher. Early career teachers (those with zero to five years of experience) strive and stumble to make sense of becoming teacher while encountering affective forces that shape their continually shifting teacher identities. Affective experiences can be understood as contested sites that are situated within power relations and produced through socio-historically constructed normative discourses, in this case, of women in early career teaching. This paper will engage with the theoretical works of Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, and Mari Ruti to conduct a critical analysis of the dominant discourses that produce some of the bad feelings experienced by women in early career teaching. This critical analysis will engage with the productive relationships between feminist and affect theory to render the dominant discourses as problematic through deconstruction of the assumptions and gendered stereotypes. Rather than presuming bad feelings as inevitable or uncomplicated, feminist and affect theory troubles their socio-historical constructions and underlying assumptions by critically interrogating the discursive structures and practices that perpetuate their normative presence and force. The identification, naming, and critical analysis of the dominant discourses encountered by women in early career teaching provides a conceptual argument that creates space to re/conceptualize bad feelings in order to invigorate the work of becoming teacher.

Keywords: feminist theory, early career teachers, affect theory, teacher identity, becoming

Interrupting Expectations:

A Critical Analysis of the Dominant Discourses of Women in Early Career Teaching

The tenuous transition from pre-service to in-service teacher is fraught with uncertainties, difficulties, and perplexities that structure the ongoing struggle of learning to teach—becoming teacher. Early career teachers strive, and stumble, to make sense of becoming teacher while encountering affective forces that shape their continually shifting teacher identities (Strom & Martin, 2017). In Canada, approximately 75% of teachers in the kindergarten to grade 12 public education sector are women (Statistics Canada, 2024). The disproportionate representation of women within the education profession calls upon researchers to look beyond considerations of teachers' work as neutral, apolitical, or ungendered.

Looking specifically at the work of women (understood as anyone who identifies or lives as) in early career teaching, defined as zero to five years in the profession (e.g., Lavigne, 2014; Morris & Imms, 2021; Owens, 2019; Weldon, 2018), affective experiences become contested sites that are situated within power relations and produced through socio-historically constructed normative discourses. This paper will re/conceptualize the "bad feelings" experienced by women in early career teaching through engagement with the productive relationships between feminist and affect theory. Bad feelings are socially constructed and established through a binary paradigm of good/bad feelings. Good feelings are held in high regard, seen as desirable, valuable, productive, while bad feelings, understood as diametrically opposed, signal a lacking and are viewed as something to be ameliorated. The theoretical works of Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, and Mari Ruti, who engage with affect theory to consider the social constructions of "bad feelings" (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018), will inform the critical reading and analysis of the dominant discourses that infuse and possibly impede an early career teacher's becoming. The

critical analysis will propose, name, and, through deconstruction, problematize several dominant discourses that perpetuate certain identities of, and for, women in early career teaching. Feminist theory and affect theory provide a flexible theoretical space for critically contemplating and deconstructing the structures of bad feelings that constitute gendered and constraining expectations for women as they enter teaching. Rather than presuming bad feelings as inevitable or uncomplicated, feminist and affect theory troubles their socio-historical constructions and underlying intentions by critically interrogating the discursive structures and practices that perpetuate their normative presence and force. Critical engagement with bad feelings provides a shift away from the blaming and shaming (Ahmed, 2010; Weedon, 1997) that becomes a response when bad feelings emerge in the public spaces of teaching. Bad feelings are manifestations of power relations that permit patriarchy and neoliberalism to deflect problems, of and in the system of education, onto individual teachers and their conceptions of self. In the context of women in early career teaching, bad feelings can interfere, inform, and impede teacher becoming. But within the dissonance of affective forces, space can be made to recognize the potential of bad feelings as sites of resistance to invigorate the work of becoming teacher by creating spaces to become and know in ways that are not pre-defined and fixed.

Purpose & Rationale

This manuscript will take up the topic of women in early career teaching and the affective forces that shape and inform their teaching identity(ies) through the presence of dominant discourses. I will engage with feminist theory and affect theory to deconstruct the experiences of women in early career teaching to re/conceptualize the “bad feelings” that are encountered. This paper will offer a conceptualization that names and engages with the dominant discourses that generate meaning in the experiences of early career teachers. The dominant discourses will be

critically considered separately and together to understand how they are discursively produced and the ways in which they function to impose certain narratives—manifesting as expectations—of learning to teach and becoming teacher. The purpose of this manuscript will be to foreground the dominant discourses that construct "bad feelings" in the experiences of early career teachers in order to deconstruct the underlying assumptions, render the discourses as problematic, and provide a critical analysis of the ways in which dominant discourses limit an early career teacher's becoming. The questions explored in this manuscript include:

1. Where do the "bad feelings" experienced by early career teachers come from? In what ways are they discursively produced? In what ways do the discursive expectations of early career teachers produce "bad feelings" for the individual teaching subject?
2. How might we understand the material and embodied manifestations of "bad feelings"?
3. How might we re/consider the ways in which "bad feelings" are produced and experienced by women in early career teaching?

Feminist theory and affect theory provide theoretical tools to deconstruct and interrogate the tacit power relations that are structured through dominant discourses. Critical recognition generates possibilities for reconfiguring our understandings of bad feelings as something other than a failure, flaw, or fault within the individual.

The Interrelationships Between Feminist and Affect Theories

The interrelationships between feminist and affect theories resonate within the works of theorists such as Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, and Mari Ruti. Feminist theory has a history of engaging with affect, knowledge, and power (Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012). Together, feminist and affect theory work "to challenge the patriarchal binaries of emotion/reason that silence and dismiss emotions within realms of learning and knowledge creation" (Boler as cited in Zembylas

& Schutz, 2016, p. 22). Affect is recognized as a site of knowledge production. Critical engagement with affect identifies how affect is contingent upon the social and historical contexts that it is situated and constructed within—an entanglement. Within the expansive theoretical and philosophical field of affect theory, certain orientations critically attend to the social and historical normative constructions of affect and their regulating capacities; the ways in which power relations direct affect through discourse (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). Feminist theory has "employed affect in examining both oppression and political solidarity and change. Simultaneously, just as affects can reproduce practices of hierarchy and control, they can also generate resistance and collectivity" (Liljeström, 2016, p. 33). The collaborations between feminist and affect theory create generative theoretical spaces to critically interrogate the work of becoming teacher, seeking out the spaces for disruption and resistance.

Feminist Theory

Women in early career teaching encounter and contend with the effects of the ways in which they, conceptualized as the teaching subject, are discursively constituted through normative discourses. Normative discourses structure ways of knowing and being that create certain expectations of the teaching subject. Discourses such as niceness (Castagno, 2019), caring (Noddings, 2012), mothering (Forrester, 2005), happiness (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018), and femininity (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018) constitute the teaching subject through reductive binary logic. Feminist theory critically attends to the tacit ways in which gendered discourses constitute the teaching subject in predetermined, rigid, and restrictive ways. Theorizing with feminist theory counters assumptions of neutrality by critiquing gendered ways of knowing and being with the intention of re/configuring systems of oppression that are discursively produced through power relations and manifest in ways that hinder the embodied, situated, and material

experiences of women. Feminist theory attends to the intersectional particularities of gendered identity and resists unified generalizations of what constitutes the category and experiences of woman. Through the work of Black feminist thought, feminist theory acknowledges the intersectional systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990/2022; hooks, 1984/2015). As McLaren (2013) reminds us "focusing solely on gender neglects the complexity of the multiple social identities each person holds and ignores social context and history" (p. 222).

Feminist theory draws attention to the taken-for-granted ways of knowing and be(com)ing that are positioned as objective universal "truths" established through essentialism, binaries or dualisms, and hierarchical structures that negate the ways in which knowledge and subjectivity are gendered (McLaren, 2013). Through the deconstruction of normative and dominant discourses, feminist theory brings attention to the hidden and relational mechanisms of power that circulate through politics, affects, institutions, systems, and practices (McLaren, 2013). Feminist theorizing decenters androcentric conceptualizations of knowledge and subjectivities and foregrounds the gendered, embodied, affective experiences of those who are oppressed and subordinated (McLaren, 2013). Within feminist theory, identity and knowledge are recognized as plural, incomplete, and shifting, understanding that subjectivity and knowledge are socially and historically constructed, thus, contingent, situated, and contestable. Through feminist theory "you make sense of wrongs; you realize that you are not in the wrong" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 38). The interplay between feminist and affect theory creates opportunities to re/configure the world by realizing the fragility of dominant discourses.

Affect Theory

Seemingly familiar and common affects can evade our knowing. When affect is recognized as a socially constructed public feeling (Stewart, 2007), it allows for consideration of the tacit relations in which affects confine ways of becoming and knowing. Theorizing with affect theory critically attends to the affective forces that resonate within the dissonant ongoing-ness of embodied, interdependent, relational subjectivity that is situated within social and historical contexts (McLaren, 2013). The field of affect theory encompasses a variety of diverse theoretical and philosophical perspectives, resisting a bounded or specific characterization. Gregg and Seigworth (2010) state that:

> There is no single, generalizable theory of affect: not yet, and (thankfully) there never will be. If anything, it is more tempting to imagine that there can only ever be infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect: theories as diverse and singularly delineated as their own highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds.
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> (pp. 3–4).

Affect theory embraces plurality, uncertainty, and incompleteness as its intentions are generative rather than definitive. Affect can signal the intrapersonal emotions or feelings but for this paper, affect will be taken up with the understanding that "that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, drama, and social worldings of all kinds. Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible" (Stewart, 2007, p. 3). Affect theory offers a critical engagement with "ordinary affects" (Stewart, 2007) that feel as though they originate and reside within the subject but are produced through affective, discursive, and material forces. Drawing affect and feminist theory into conversation with one another helps us to recognize that "the affective processes—*both between and within bodies*—are already social . . . [and] . . . has everything to do with gender. This is because gender plays a

fundamental role in how our social worlds work" (Åhäll, 2018, p. 41). The works of Ahmed, Berlant, and Ruti will be considered for the ways in which affect is critically taken up to critique phenomena of the contemporary world and the limitations of happiness.

Bad Feelings

Affect is socially and historically constructed, ambiguous, partial, and problematic. Bad feelings are a social construct established through a binary paradigm of good/bad feelings. Good feelings are held in high regard, seen as desirable and valuable, while bad feelings, understood as diametrically opposed, signal a lacking and are viewed as something to be ameliorated (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018). Ahmed (2010) elaborates by expressing that "Bad feelings are seen as oriented toward the past, as a kind of stubbornness that 'stops' the subject from embracing the future. Good feelings are associated with moving up, as creating the very promise of a future" (Ahmed, 2010, pp. 216–217). Bad feelings are deemed unhelpful, a hinderance to living a good life. Therefore, those who experience bad feelings are made to feel shameful, and try to mask bad feelings with happiness, ignoring any consideration for making sense of bad feelings as something more than an individual flaw or failing. Binary conceptualizations reinforce hierarchies that support dominant groups in maintaining systems of oppression related to gender, sexual orientation, race, class, and ability. Affects such as anger, unhappiness, shame, or guilt are cast as bad feelings because they do not serve the dominating systems of patriarchy, capitalism, or neoliberalism (Ruti, 2018). Ruti emphasizes that "our society shuns bad feelings because it wants us to work harder, faster, longer, and better" (p. xxv). Casting out bad feelings, because they are determined by oppressive systems to be unproductive, deflects the recognition that the systems may in fact be the cause of bad feelings.

Affects are constructed within gendered norms that reinforce stereotypes of women as emotional, weak, and irrational. Emotions are viewed as the binary opposite of rationality, thereby, equating women with emotions (bad) and men with rationality (good). When affect is not taken up as socially constructed, then emotions are positioned as natural, needing no consideration for how they are constituted and subsequently bound within the subject, expected to be *corrected* by the subject—a private and individual problem. It is in this way that bad feelings are a means of controlling and defining which affects are acceptable in the public sphere and which should be shuttered within the private sphere (Boler, 1999). Socially constructed "happy" affects are often static, limiting, and insubstantial as they create unidimensional impressions of affect that are far more complex and contradictory, easily collapsing when the "scripts" are not followed. Affects are far more fragile and tenuous than they appear, such as "the promise of happiness" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 14), meaning that happiness can be felt as elusive as it presents as an endpoint for one to arrive at, but the arrival never comes. Constructions of happiness are an illusion built upon expectations and desires that do not, and cannot, deliver. Good feelings continually project us into the future, disjointed from the present, with hope that happiness, for example, will rescue, relieve, and revive us. Additionally, good feelings imply that the subject has full control of their self, others, and the conditions they are situated within. Socially constructed affects are entangled in the work of becoming teacher as gendered scripts produce certain emulations of teacher.

Becoming Teacher

Becoming teacher is a theoretical way to re/conceptualize learning to teach and provides an alternative to the developmental conceptualizations that view learning to teach as a linear progression (Britzman, 2003; Strom & Martin, 2017). The clash between assumptions,

misperceptions, and lived experiences creates confounding, contradictory, and confusing confrontations that result in the questioning of what it means to *become* and *be* a teacher with others (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017). On a day-to-day basis, early career teachers encounter numerous disruptions, paradoxes, and conflicts that require them to navigate and negotiate their subjectivities and knowledge as they are continually becoming teacher through constant re/shaping of their teacher identity(ies) (Britzman, 2003; Janzen, 2014; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). The teaching subject is situated within the affective, discursive, and material forces of the socio-historical contexts. Normative discourses constitute the teaching subject through the constraint of possibilities for knowing and becoming. Teaching, although often portrayed as a technical and practice-oriented profession under the light of neoliberal education reform (Ball, 2003; Clarke & Phelan, 2017; Rigas & Kuchapski, 2018), is an intellectual and ethical entanglement of theory and practice that is never perfected and always unfinished—always becoming.

Affect, Emotions, and Teacher Identity

In the last few decades, research on teachers and emotions (including preservice teachers) has seen an increase in representation across the literature (Zembylas & Schutz, 2016). A notable contributor to the literature on teachers and affect is Michalinos Zembylas. Zembylas has significantly influenced the ways in which emotions and affect have been critically conceptualized and taken up across the study of teachers and teaching (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009; Zembylas, 2003, 2005, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023; Zembylas & Schutz, 2016). Zembylas' theorizing about affect and emotions, aligns with how this paper positions itself within affect theory. That is, understanding affect as "entangled with emotion and feeling, paying attention to how this entanglement constitutes social, cultural, political and ethical relations, and

subjectivities. . . . affect as a corporeal experience that is not separated from its linguistic representation or socially constructed emotion" (Zembylas, 2023, p. 285). Zembylas' (2023) recent work has contended with neoliberalism and how the "the policy instrument of best practice . . . operates as an affective regime" to understand the ways in which socially constructed affects reinforce relations of power (p. 286).

Across the literature, educational research frequently limits the considerations of affect to emotions that are contained to intrapersonal struggles of the teaching subject, while providing simplistic suggestions on how to be "happier" (e.g., Chen, 2019; Rahm & Heise, 2019). The emotions of the teaching subject are often conceptualized through a psychological perspective and discussed in relation, and suggested to be corollary or causational, to the emotions of students, self-efficacy, resiliency, and attrition (e.g., Johnson & Down, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Uncritical perspectives on affect are problematic as they negate the tenuous complexities within normative constructions. In contrast, there is a growing presence of scholarship that takes up affect and teachers in far more critical and contextual ways through acknowledgement of the social situatedness of affects and their normative expectations (e.g., Clarke & Phelan, 2017; Teng, 2017; Zembylas, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023). There are a few examples of recent studies that critique the limitations of happiness and the problematic repercussions that negatively impact teaching in relation to racism, privilege, climate crisis, and settler colonization (e.g., Jackson & Bingham, 2018; Lie, 2022; Martusewicz, 2018; Stump & Newberry, 2021). Furthermore, it is important to note that most of the research about affect and teachers does not acknowledge the gendered constructions of affect and, specifically, how women in teaching are impacted. When educational researchers turn to other theoretical bodies of work, such as affect theory and

feminist theory, generative possibilities open to consider teachers and teaching through different perspectives and language that unsettles the taken-for-granted aspects of becoming teacher.

Mode of Inquiry

This theoretical paper seeks to critically analyze and develop a conceptual argument about the power of dominant discourses to produce problematic expectations of women in early career teaching. Critiquing dominant discourses allows for an analytical reading of experience that attends to the embedded structures that inform, maintain, and re/produce certain subjectivities. The theoretical works of Ahmed, Berlant, and Ruti are used to render bad feelings in teaching as problematic by critically considering how commonly perceived "negative feelings" (i.e., unhappiness or disappointment) uphold dominant and hegemonic constructs of women teachers and, in so doing, provide spaces for other ways of knowing and be(com)ing. Critical analysis and deconstruction of the power of dominant discourses opens up spaces for the teaching subject to cultivate a critical awareness of the ways in which their identity(ies) are shaped and constrained. This critical awareness creates possibilities to interrogate the systems that produce discourses so as to critique the gendered and problematic expectations that manifest.

The dominant discourses included in this paper are neither comprehensive nor static. Language gives the impression of apprehending an experience or affect in its fullest by providing a glimpse and glimmer of the fleeting encounters that are imbued with—and impart—affective, material, and discursive force. The dominant discourses included in this paper will shift and sway with the passage of time, over different spaces and places. Ahmed, Berlant, and Ruti help us to critically consider dominant discourses that circulate within teaching by providing critical perspectives of the potential that is inherent to what are commonly perceived as "bad feelings". By turning towards the "bad feelings", turning toward the discomfort, frustration, and shame, I

seek to deconstruct and articulate the ways in which dominant discourses produce certain gendered expectations thereby providing an alternative critical perspective of the ways in which affective encounters that permeate the experiences of women in early career teaching can be productive, generative, and act as sites of resistance.

Disturbing and Deconstructing Discourses

Within teacher becoming there are myriad encounters that resonate with affective force. For an early career teacher, affective experiences may register as incommensurate with anticipations and expectations of good feelings that are met with innumerable (and seemingly) bad feelings (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Perryman, 2022). Women in early career teaching find themselves left to contend with feelings of disappointment, shame, and unhappiness in isolation. The intensity of "bad feelings" accumulates and gains force by drawing attention to the "problems" of becoming teacher. Problems such as feeling unprepared to enter the profession, expecting to behave or look a certain way, or the guilt of not being able to do it all with a smile on their face. Bad feelings can produce material consequences for early career teachers and lead to decisions, such as leaving the profession, that alleviate the desire for escape from what appears to be personal flaws (Santoro, 2011, 2013). It is recognized across the research on early career teachers that becoming teacher is "*unforgivingly complex*" (Cochran-Smith, 2003). This is due in part to the hidden work of teaching (Petersen, 2019) that is not knowable in its intensities and contradictions until the teaching subject enters the profession. Becoming teacher is non-linear, recursive, and contradictory, feeling like a perpetually unfinished project. In that becoming, the teaching subject is continually navigating and negotiating impassable moments of obligation (Phelan & Janzen, 2024), frustration, and confusion to feel no further ahead and often deeply behind where they *expect* to be.

Neoliberal Misery

Over the last few decades, neoliberal ideology has permeated and penetrated education, manifesting in ways such as "measurement culture" (Biesta, 2009) where value is only placed upon that which can be quantified. Davies et al. (2005) assert that "neoliberalism is characterized by the 'death of society' and the rise of 'individuals' who are in need of a new kind of management, surveillance and control" (p. 344). The dominant discourses of early career teachers are situated within education systems that are blighted by neoliberalism through education policy that produces certain expectations of teachers and teaching that emphasize and value performance, productivity, and happiness (Ruti, 2018). Neoliberalism "is characterized by the removal of the locus of power from the knowledge of practising professionals to auditors, policymakers and statisticians, none of whom need know anything about the profession in questions" (Davies et al., 2005, p. 344). Neoliberal ideology is problematic because it attempts to render the work of the teacher as neutral (fragmented from contexts of gender, politics, race, or class) and views success—measured by student achievement that is based on standardized test scores—as the responsibility (and fault) of the individual teacher. Neoliberalism aims to standardize the profession and impose a formulaic approach in order to minimize the perceived complexities and dilemmas of teaching, and in so doing, the teacher is constructed as a technical practitioner who requires training on technique rather than an education that fosters professional judgement. Teaching framed within ideas of training presumes that teachers are being given the "right" knowledge and skills that will undoubtedly make them into "effective" or "quality" teachers. Marom and Ruitenberg (2018) posit that "under the neoliberal push to standardize teaching and break it into measurable tasks, professional norms increasingly take on the appearance of universality and neutrality" (p. 372). This presumption is problematic because it

assumes that once a teacher is "trained" then that teacher has a complete set of skills and knowledge to be successful when working with and teaching students. If the teacher fails to be successful, as determined by the measure and evaluation of student learning, then it is a failure within the individual rather than the system in which teachers work. In neoliberal education reform "coercive policies continue to vilify teachers and educators, which are demonstrated through standardization, privatization, and 'reforms' that reduce the teaching profession to one that is both technicist and rote" (de Saxe et al., 2020, p. 51). Neoliberalism's "gross oversimplification" of the complexities and nuances of teaching set up the teacher to fail within a market-based system that demands accountability from the individual while ignoring the numerous mitigating factors that contribute to barriers for both teaching and student learning (Davies & Bansel, 2007). A reductive and technical conception of the teacher denies the intersubjectivity that is inherent to becoming teacher and the daily and countless social interactions between teachers and others who are entangled in the work of becoming teaching.

But rather than accepting bad feelings as undesirable, unwanted, and unproductive, critically interrogating affects offers possibilities for other ways of understanding and experiencing teacher becoming. The affective experiences of early career teachers cannot simply be taken at face value and assumed to be insularly produced by flaws, failures, and faults of the teaching subject. The following discussion will theorize about and reframe the bad feelings that are encountered by women in early career teaching to consider the ways in which affects are constructed through dominant discourses. Although these dominant discourses are not new and have been previously identified as circulating within the realm of teachers' lives, they are reinforced and magnified by the insidious influence of economically driven neoliberal ideals that

rally around individualism, competition, accountability, and surveillance. Constructs of the teacher to be explored in this paper include:

- *The Ready-made Teacher*: This conceptualization of the early career teaching subject presumes a developmental and linear progression of learning to teach that reaches an endpoint in the completion of the teacher education program.
- *The Competent Teacher*: This conceptualization is informed by the ideology of neoliberalism in which teaching is conceptualized as simple, technical, and instrumental. The predominant focus is on practice, training, effectiveness, performance, productivity, standardization, and compliance.
- *The Happy Teacher*: This conceptualization presumes that a good teacher is a happy teacher, and that happiness is unproblematic. The teacher is expected to display happiness while also being responsible for the happiness of others.
- *The Natural Teacher*: This conceptualization assumes that women are suitable for the profession of teaching on account of their gender—"self-made". Care is understood as the duty and responsibility of women.
- *The Motherly Teacher*: This conceptualization is situated within assumptions of social norms that expect women to be inherently motherly, nurturing, and self-sacrificing due to their gender and equating the socially constructed role of mother as interchangeable with teacher.

The following discussion names each discourse in compartmentalized ways that attempt to explain or characterize the defining features, but further consideration is provided for the ways in which these discourses intertwine and resist being known. The discursive entanglements obscure the power structures and ideological frameworks that give shape to the dominant discourses.

The Ready-made Teacher: Desire for Certainty in Being Teacher

Early career teachers enter the profession of teaching with hopeful aspirations of being ready to be teacher. They have witnessed, observed, practiced, and prepared. The "newly formed teacher" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011, p. 6) is equipped with their toolbox of strategies, tips, and best practices to *be* teacher. This conceptualization of the early career teaching subject presumes a developmental and linear progression of learning to teach that reaches an endpoint in the completion of the teacher education program. It is assumed that the student (teacher) has become the teacher. When the early career teacher is confronted by uncertainty and paradox, the certitude of being teacher is called into question (Britzman, 2003). The clash of expectations and realities is characterized in several ways: "reality shock" (Voss & Kunter, 2020); "praxis shock" (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017); and "discourse of disappointment" (Perryman, 2022). The expectations of predictability and certainty are produced through normative discourses that assume the teacher to be complete and finished, capable of doing the job—doing teaching—once the teacher education program has concluded.

Upon entering the profession, the early career teaching subject experiences ruptures and tensions that begin, and continually materialize, in the complications and contradictions that are inherent to becoming teacher. The discourse of the *ready-made teacher* diminishes the intellectual complexity in the work of becoming teacher and tries to render learning to teach as a simple acquisition of practices that will be "effective" regardless of the contexts or students. The ready-made teacher discourse also presumes a certain path to becoming teacher—completing the course work and practicum—that will lead to a specific outcome—being teacher. Berlant's (2011) concept of cruel optimism, "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (p. 1), captures the expectations that are produced through the ready-made teacher

discourse. Trying to be teacher in a certain way limits the possibilities for becoming teacher in ways that are not yet anticipated or considered. The fantasies of being teacher are confined to an inaccessible future. Clinging to illusions of what a teacher *should be* and *should do* impedes the early career teaching subject from remaining in the present to contend with the embodied and material realities of the day-to-day classroom—what a teacher *needs to do*. Preoccupation with the future, and attachments to unidimensional fantasies, stifle the work of becoming teacher and negate the situated ongoing-ness of shaping teacher identity(ies). The ready-made teacher discourse, often bound in gendered expectations of happiness, creates a crisis of self when the path has been followed but does not produce the objects of desire (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Britzman, 2003). When you cannot be the teacher you imagined, or expected, it seems as though you cannot be a teacher at all. In the next section, the discourse of the *competent teacher* will be considered within the entanglement of the ready-made teacher and how together they reinforce certainty within the unpredictable and undulating work of becoming teacher.

The Competent Teacher: Neoliberalism's (Elusive) Star Student

Neoliberal education reform casts a shadow of productivity and accountability over the work of becoming teacher. Neoliberalism's preoccupation with "effective" and "quality" teaching implies that there are good and bad ways to teach, and be a teacher, reducing teaching to a technical practice (Clarke & Phelan, 2017). As a result of neoliberalism's focus on authority and compliance, managerial norms of standardization, efficiency, competition, and evaluation consume the space of teaching. Teaching is isolated to the "doing"—the technical practice– without regard for a larger purpose or motivation, negating the relationality, intersubjectivity, and ethical responsibility or obligation that are integral to the work of becoming teacher (Moore & Clarke, 2016). Additionally, depoliticizing and neutralizing the work of teaching diminishes the

situatedness of becoming teacher, denying the social and historical contexts that constitute subjectivity and knowledge (Clarke & Phelan, 2017). Neoliberalism's sterile and instrumentalist conception of teaching ignores the intensities and unpredictability of the contemporary educational landscape that requires recognition and ethical engagement with relationality, interconnectedness, and criticality. When teaching and education are reductively rendered to be seemingly unproblematic and certain, "dissent regarding the *purposes* of education becomes off-limits" (Clarke & Phelan, 2017, p. 3). Certainty relies on the binary conceptions of right and wrong, good and bad, effective and ineffective.

The ideology of neoliberal education reform produces the discourse of the *competent teacher*. Within this discourse, the teacher is assumed to be fully capable of effectively and competently teaching by using the incontestable "best practices" to elicit "good" or "quality" teaching. In other words, the teaching subject is expected (and assumed) to have full control over how they teach and what students learn. Biesta (2017) refers to this as the "learnification" (p. 23) of teaching, whereby teaching and learning are conflated, and the evaluation of teaching is conducted through measures of student performance. Although seemingly commonsense, terms of "good", "quality", "effective", "best", and "competent" are problematic and limiting. Clarke & Phelan (2017) argue that "officially sanctioned representations of the teacher and teaching are presented as natural and irrefutable" (p. 5). The effective teacher discourse is predicated on neoliberalism's interpretation of what qualifies as good or effective within priorities that place value on individual success (generally defined through metrics of power and wealth), growth of the economy, and relentless positivity (Ruti, 2017, 2018). The discourse of the effective teacher excludes ethics, plurality, and possibilities for being and knowing as it dictates—and thus, regulates—certain ways of being teacher. Intertwined with the discourse of the ready-made

teacher, the competent teacher discourse creates conditions where early career teachers face the unsettling beliefs that once their "training" has been completed, they *should* be a "good" teacher because they have received the knowledge and skills—they are in control of achieving "success". Undoubtedly, the assumptions within the discourses of the competent and ready-made teacher position the teaching subject within the binary logic of good teacher/bad teacher as there is seemingly a "right" way to teach. The binary logic removes any space to consider learning to teach, and becoming teacher, as dynamic, constant, recursive, and partial. These discourses negate recognition of an early career teacher's becoming through the conception of teacher and teaching as fixed, prescribed, and uniform. It is reduced to merely being teacher or not.

The Happy Teacher: Gendered Happiness Scripts

Images of teaching are often imbued with "good feelings" such as happiness. Women in early career teaching enter the (gendered) profession of teaching with their own expectations as well as the expectations of others. Trouble ensues when happiness is recognized to be problematic and unable to be perpetually maintained or even desired. Ruti (2018) states that when "having to admit that our trust in specific happiness scripts has misguided us, that what was supposed to make us happy hasn't done so," then the subject turns inward to locate the problem as a problem within herself (p. 10). When happiness becomes the default then bad feelings, such as unhappiness, are viewed as a problem to overcome rather than to re/consider (Ahmed, 2010). Ahmed (2010) argues that "happiness becomes a technology of self-production, which can intensify bad feelings by keeping them on hold" (p. 43). Unsettling happiness allows for recognition of the limiting ways in which happiness functions as a social construct. In this discussion "Happiness means here living a certain kind of life, one that reaches certain points, and which, in reaching those points, creates happiness for others" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 48).

Happiness is constructed in precise and normative ways that restrict what gets included, how it can be directed, and who gets to experience it. “Relentless cheerfulness” (Ruti, 2018, p. 1) obscures the struggles of becoming teacher and masks the frustrations of unanticipated confrontations, confusions, and concerns. Happiness is socially accepted, lauded, and encouraged in public spheres (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2018). Bad feelings, because they are assumed to be a problem within the individual, are relegated to private spheres so as not to cause discomfort in others (Ahmed, 2010; Ruti, 2017, 2018). Ruti (2018) argues that “the doctrine of positivity arguably functions as a manic defense against bad feelings. Those who are grinning may be weeping inside . . . It’s easier to simulate positive feelings than to suppress negative ones” (p. 32). Happiness is simultaneously the desire—the behaved class, the right lesson, the pleased parents—and the cause of frustration when the happiness scripts are followed but happiness is not delivered (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Ruti, 2018).

The discourse of the *happy teacher* functions in several ways to produce social norms that specify how women in early career teaching engage with happiness. The happy teacher discourse is structured by assumptions that women will show happiness in certain ways (i.e., perpetual smiling) and be responsible for the happiness of others (Ahmed, 2010). In other words, the teaching subject is understood as being responsible for the happiness of her students, she is in control of their happiness. Happiness, like niceness and nurturing, are accepted as a “natural” quality of women. When happiness is not produced by women, they are subjected to criticism that positions them as the cause of their unhappiness (Ahmed, 2010). A discourse of happiness attempts to establish that happiness is a consequence of gender, in that living or identifying as a woman carries an expectation to maintain a disposition of happiness. The strictly defined binary of man/woman creates a reductive and oversimplified “foundation” for ideas, such as gender,

that are far more nuanced, fluid, multifaceted, and contradictory. Binary concepts also suggest a naturalization of the knowledge that extends from and gives the appearance of immutability. Consequently, when women push back against the normative discourses of happiness, they are often characterized as unhappy individuals, causing unhappiness for others, and consequently labelled as troublemakers, killjoys, or the problem (Ahmed, 2010; Butler, 1990/2007; Ruti, 2018). Happiness tries to lock in certain conditions that predicates happiness through normative and gendered discourses.

The discourse of the happy teacher presumes that good teachers will be happy and display happiness in socially acceptable ways. The discourse also assumes that happiness is productive while unhappiness does not offer any value and is undesirable. Feminist theorists reconceptualize the gendered happiness scripts to disrupt the normative and cultural ideals of happiness that limit and foreclose possibilities. Unhappiness, as argued by Ahmed (2010), is a generative feminist move that allows the teaching subject to remain within the situated present, to bring recognition to the urgency of material, affective, and embodied realities of being with others in the classroom and in the world. Through unhappiness, and the recognition of wrongs, we can be moved to recognize and respond, working towards re/considering the world that is at hand. Unhappiness can allow for "opening up the world, or expanding one's horizon . . . becoming more conscious of just how much there is to be unhappy about" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 70). The discourse of the happy teacher bolsters assumptions of teacher and teaching as apolitical because to be political is to be critical, dissenting, advocating, questioning, and confronting—none of which creates happiness and none of which are regarded to adhere to the gendered norms of femininity. Happiness can silence "the political situatedness and ethical thought processes of

teaching" (Clarke & Phelan, 2017, p. 259) by turning away from the difficulties and discomforts in becoming teacher.

The Natural Teacher: Teaching as a Gendered Profession

Teaching has a history of being a gendered, or feminized, profession. Certain qualities, such as caring and maternalism, are understood to be "naturally" present in women on account of their gender. The discourse of the *natural teacher* assumes that women are suitable for the profession of teaching simply due to their gender. When care is accepted to be the duty and responsibility of women, this assumption reinforces the notion that teaching is a gendered profession—a job for women. Social constructions of "gender norms are pervasive; they structure modes of dress, self-expression, types of work, and social responsibilities" (McLaren, 2013, p. 215). The natural teacher is assumed then to be "self-made" (Britzman, 2003, p. 31) because it is their inherent gendered qualities that determines their fit for the profession. This dominant discourse is problematic in its assumption that gender equates women with certain professions. This assumption is based on expectations that women will provide the care in society, releasing men from any of the responsibility or expectations of care.

The discourse of the natural teacher diminishes the intellectual work that is required in becoming teacher by presuming that one can be a teacher by being a woman. This discourse is reductive and works to trivialize the complexities of becoming teacher. The natural teacher is also assumed to *be*, rather than *becoming*. Similar to the previous dominant discourse, the natural teacher discourse locates difficulties in teaching as the problem of the individual early career teaching subject rather than a problem within the system or socio-historical contexts. When women in early career teaching realize that they do not know, or cannot do, in relation to the unpredictability of teaching, then the difficulty is viewed as a personal lack or inadequacy. They

are just not “made” to be a teacher. The discourse of the natural teacher perpetuates assumptions of women in teaching that hinder possibilities, creating disillusionment and disempowerment. In the vein of Berlant’s (2011) concept of cruel optimism, expectations that teaching will “come naturally” projects the teaching subject into promises that are held in the future, which will never be realized. The expectation that teaching will “come naturally” jeopardizes learning to teach for women in early career teaching because it distracts and obscures the entanglement between theory and practice. Bad feelings are produced when what is expected does not arrive.

The Motherly Teacher: The (M)othering of Women in Teaching

Following the discourse of the natural teacher, the discourse of the *motherly teacher* is also situated within assumptions between the gender of women and the social roles they are “suited” for. Teaching is positioned as a profession that is a “natural” option for women. This problematic understanding is predicated upon the assumption that because women are mothers, or can be mothers, that they inherently possess the “stereotypical feminine qualities of nurturing, care, and self-sacrifice” (McLaren, 2013, p. 217). This assumption functions to reinforce heteronormativity (McLaren, 2012; Ruti, 2018) and perpetuate social norms about the roles of women and mothers. When women, as mothers, are expected to be nurturing, caring, and self-sacrificing, due to their gender, then those qualities are quite easily imposed upon women in teaching. The vision of the ideal mother is transcribed onto the teaching subject. The discourse of the motherly teacher delineates very specific expectations of the teacher and, yet again, it implies that because teaching is a “natural” profession for women, there is insignificant work that is required to learn how to teach. This discourse privileges the notion of being teacher rather than becoming teacher. Additionally, because the motherly teacher is expected to be self-sacrificing (McLaren, 2013), this can materialize as expectations to contribute limitless time and energy to

the work of becoming teacher and teaching. Bad feelings are produced through the motherly discourse because it limits the possibilities for becoming teacher, imposes gendered norms, and positions struggles to become teacher as shortcomings within the teaching subject.

Neoliberalism's Insidious Interjections and Invocations

Education has been ravaged by the pragmatic ambitions of neoliberal agendas that incite demand for "good performance, high productivity, constant self-improvement, and relentless cheerfulness" (Ruti, 2018, p. 1). The expectation for "relentless cheerfulness" denies teachers the space to critically engage with the difficult work of becoming teacher and contend with bad feelings in ways that are productive or allow for the troubling of normative discourses that construct affective forces. Neoliberalism's fixation on performance and productivity "keeps us so breathlessly focused on our goals that we feel like we can't afford to stop to think about why we're feeling bad" (Ruti, 2018, p. xxvi). Additionally, cheerfulness implies gendered expectations of how happiness should look and be enacted. Ruti helps us to attend to the gendered norms that are produced through neoliberal discourses that neutralize considerations for the constructions of social categories. The problems of happiness, and the ways in which happiness becomes the responsibility of women in teaching, to the detriment of the teaching subject herself, are produced through, and by, a "system of performance, productivity, and self-improvement, and enforced cheerfulness... *neoliberalism*..., impressive at dexterously suppressing the bad feelings that heteropatriarchy generates" (Ruti, 2018, p. xxvi). Leaving feelings of disappointment or incompetence to be the problem of the early career teaching subject disregards the situatedness of socially constructed affect and the power relations that operate through them.

There is no time to pause and reflect as the reading assessments must be completed, emails answered, and the endless lists of curricular outcomes must be checked off. Teachers are left to feel as though their struggle to become teacher is an individual problem (Britzman, 2003) that neither the profession, their colleagues, or administrators have any part in or responsibility for. Uncertainty is troubling, upsetting, and frustrating. Adhering to a familiar or certain, albeit, illusory, vision of teaching seems to offer a promise of stabilization for the dissonance of becoming teacher (Berlant, 2011; Britzman, 2003). But the illusions fail to deliver, always ensnared in the unreachable future. The fixed position of suffering, as opposed to the movement within struggle, continually directs the early career teacher to locate fault, failure, and flaw within herself.

When teaching and be(com)ing teacher are depicted through neoliberal discourses of instrumentalism, technicism, and professionalism, bad feelings abound. Early career teachers are becoming teacher but are expected to be "fully formed" and complete—ready and competent. Isolating teaching practice as decontextualized, anti-intellectual, and purely rational, surrenders the openness that is necessary for generating possibilities and responding to that which is unpredictable. Discourses of the competent and ready-made teacher are disjointed from the embodied and material realties that the teaching subject is situated within, constantly in relation to others. The problematic discourses, previously discussed, are further intensified by the insidious aims of neoliberal ideology. When flaw, faults, and failures are assumed to be produced and remedied by the individual teaching subject, the expectations of the early career teacher are magnified and felt more intensely as surveillance, accountability, and measurement, making a private struggle public.

Bad Feelings: A Problem of ~~Self~~ Normative Constructs

The socially constructed "bad feelings" (Ruti, 2018) that women in teaching encounter place additional burdens upon the already complex and difficult work of learning to teach and becoming teacher. When teaching is expected to be technical, joyful, natural, and easily achieved, early career teachers will struggle to make sense of encounters that produce bad feelings. Becoming teacher is a difficult, confounding, and dynamic struggle. Dominant discourses construct social norms and expectations of gender that delineate the "acceptable" roles, affects, and identities of women in early career teaching. Throughout the literature on early career teachers, "problems" of teaching are decontextualized and often situated within the teaching subject as personal issue or inadequacy (e.g., Freedman et al., 1983; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Stacey, 2019). Theorizing with feminist theory allows for critical interrogation of the taken-for-granted ways of understanding and making sense of teaching while foregrounding normative constructions of gender (Mooney Simmie, 2023).

Cultivating a critical orientation to how the "discourses of femininity often circumscribe women's options" (McLaren, 2013, p. 238), allows for critical engagement with the ways in which the becoming of early career teachers is constituted through dominant discourses, opening up spaces to disrupt, resist, and re/configure how we make sense of becoming teacher. Through the re/conceptualization of bad feelings, we can learn that:

> We might need to attend to bad feelings not in order to overcome them but *to learn by how we are affected by what comes near*, which means achieving a different relationship to all our wanted and unwanted feelings as an ethical resource. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 216)

Recognizing the problematic social constructions of bad feelings allows for re/consideration of the productive and generative capacities of affects, such as unhappiness, to awaken a teacher's

becoming in a manner that sustains an ethical relationality with the world and those in it. Affective encounters direct attention to the injustices, oppression, and inequities. Early career teachers can locate relationality (McLeod, 2017) and intersubjectivity in their responses to others that are generated through affective forces.

Bad Feelings as Sites of Resistance and Transformation

Interrogating, and unsettling, the normative discourses that structure bad feelings provide possibilities for re/conceptualizing socially constructed affects. Affective dissonance (Åhäll, 2018, p. 38) provides openings to consider socio-historical constructions of affects in productive and generative ways. For example, when unhappiness is disengaged from binary logic, that structures bad feelings, it creates recognition for unhappiness' productive and generative capacity to remain tethered to the present embodied and material world. Unhappiness "unsettles the comfortable stance of the given order of things" (Clarke & Phelan, 2017, p. 15). Taken-for-granted ways of knowing and being obscure the complexities of oppression, injustice, and inequities. Unhappiness can be a site of resistance and transformation (Zembylas, 2005). When the early career teacher becomes conscious that her lack of "mastery" is not a matter of her ineffectiveness but a symptom of the expectation to be a finished or complete teacher at the conclusion of a teacher education program, then the possibility of recognizing becoming as ongoing opens up to re/contextualizing the understanding of learning to teach. Ahmed (2010) argues that unhappiness allows for "opening up possibilities that are negated by the very demand that we live our lives in the right way" (p. 222). The prescribed, or "right", ways of being teacher obstructs the possibilities for becoming teacher in ways that are not yet known or needed. Becoming teacher demands a critical stance that recognizes the relationality and reflexivity that is integral to the work of becoming teacher. A critical and reflexive orientation holds "the future

open as a place where unexpected things can happen" (Ruti, 2017, p. 175). Cultivating a critical stance to the work of teaching begins with teacher education programs so that early career teachers enter the profession with theoretical tools, experiences, and critical perspectives to question, pushing back against the prescribed teacher identities that limit possibilities for transformation.

Conclusion

Bad feelings burden the work of women in early career teaching, constructed through social norms, gendered stereotypes, and the overreliance on binary logics that produce reductive conceptualizations of teaching and becoming teacher. Feminist theory provides critical and productive engagement with the complex encounters of women in early career teaching through critical interrogation of socially constructed affects. Interrogating discursive constructions of the teaching subject problematizes and unsettles the reproductive tendencies of gendered expectations and social norms. The dominant discourses of the *ready-made*, *competent*, *happy*, *natural*, and *motherly teacher* compound one another in reinforcing the power relations embedded within neoliberal and patriarchal systems. Theorizing with feminist and affect theory "reveals crevices and fissures that launch new worlds and open us up to multiple possibilities . . . all the while attuning us to affect's promise, threat, shimmers, and splutters" (Dernikos et al., 2020, p. 3). Feminist theory considers the affective, discursive, and material forces (Ringrose et al., 2019) that constitute and constrain subjectivity while remaining tethered to an embodied world. Theorizing with feminist theory generates a critical consideration of the affective forces that are encountered by women in early career teaching and opens up to possibilities for other ways of knowing and be(com)ing. The struggles and dilemmas of learning to teach can be understood as inherent to becoming teacher rather than a failing of the teaching subject. This

critical reading and conceptual argument of dominant discourses provides the language and tools with which early career teachers can engage with to be active in their becoming rather than passive in being the teacher that is expected.

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A Year In:

A Fictional Impression of Becoming Teacher

Abstract

Experiences in early career teaching are complex, confounding, and contradictory. How can space be created for early career teachers to engage with and critically consider the uncertainties of becoming teacher and learning to teach? This manuscript will provide a fictional first-person narrative of the experiences, expectations, and emotions encountered in the first year in the teaching profession. The fictional writing piece will include a preface and afterword that will engage with theory and research to establish a context for the narrative, serving as a means for bringing the study of early career teachers to life. This manuscript will consider the ways in which narratives, dominant discourses, expectations, and "bad feelings" manifest within the teaching subject as internal dilemmas of shame, frustration, and disappointment that exert power on their teacher becoming. The fictional writing piece will be offered as an object of study, a pedagogical tool, for teacher educators, or mentors, to use with pre-service and inservice teachers, particularly early career teachers, to critically consider the ways in which expectations of early career teachers are produced and maintained through discursive, material, and affective forces in order to re/consider what it means to learn to teach.

Keywords: fiction, academic fiction, narrative, early career teachers, becoming teacher, pre-service teachers

A Year In: A Fictional Consideration of Becoming Teacher

Preface

The study of early career teachers is the inquiry into the ongoing-ness of learning to teach and becoming teacher. An exploration of the messiness that abounds in not only the lived experiences of teaching but the reverberations across discursive, affective, and material forces. The paradoxical nature of learning to teach is fashioned through expectations of becoming teacher that confront irresolvable complexities and contradictions in the relational aporetic encounters (Janzen, 2013) and obligations of teaching (Phelan & Janzen, 2024). The desire for a linear unfolding of teaching is met with uncertainty, unpredictability, and the enduring partiality of what it is to become teacher. Britzman (2003) argues that as teaching experience is amassed "the more experience seems lost. Experience, then, feels as if it comes too soon for understanding, not soon enough for help, filled with obstacles that frustrate and so devoid of that primal experience: the experience of satisfaction" (p. 13). The desire to *be* teacher entices the teaching subject to expect that they will arrive at a certain feeling or place that will deliver relief and knowing. Berlant (2011) would characterize this as "cruel optimism" where the sought-after point is neither achievable, nor desirable, as it will be void of the imagined promise of happiness, completeness, or fulfilment. The teaching subject will never arrive at being a teacher; it is a continual struggle and becoming. Often criticized for, teacher education programs are unable to completely, or fully, prepare pre-service teachers for the work of becoming teacher as it is an impossibility to predict what a teacher may encounter or to anticipate the complexities that these encounters are situated within (e.g., Clarke & Phelan, 2017). Placing an expectation on teacher education programs to "fully" train or prepare pre-service teachers is an impossible task and seemingly undesirable. By recognizing the limits of what it means to educate or "prepare" students to become teachers, and that learning to teach does not conclude at the completion of a

teaching degree, allows for us to re/consider how we think about and approach the work of learning to teach (Strom & Martin, 2022).

I have an intimate relationship with the teaching profession as I come to this work with nearly twenty years of teaching experience in a Canadian kindergarten to grade 12 public school system, situated within a major city in a prairie province. I also come to this work with over ten years of graduate studies of inquiring into teachers and teaching, particularly early career teachers. From these different vantage points, experiences, and understandings, I seek to create an object of study that offers the potential to invigorate conversations of teaching and learning to teach. This paper offers a fictionalized narrative, or short story, that is an assemblage of my impressions, research, and theoretical explorations of learning to teach. The short story can be utilized in myriad ways to deconstruct and disrupt the assumptions, expectations, and misunderstandings of learning to teach. This paper invites consideration for the ways in which we ask early career teachers to engage critically with the messiness of becoming teacher. How might fictional narratives of early career teachers, as an object of study, allow for engagement with lived experience, theory, philosophy, and deconstruction of the layered complexities and conundrums to produce ways for thinking about the work of learning to teach that is not solely encumbered by best practices, school biography (Britzman, 2003), and an "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975). Fictional narrative writing, as an object of study, is a method of inquiry that remains open to the dynamic and indeterminate qualities of lived experience that are situated within socio-cultural and historical contexts, constituted by discursive, material, and affective forces.

Introduction

Rationale and Purpose

The purpose of this manuscript is to articulate the experiences of early career teachers within an interrelated and entangled context through fictional narrative writing. The fictional writing piece will function as on object of study for teachers (pre-service and early career) to critically consider experiences of early career teaching through critical engagement with the moments of unknowability, bad feelings, and unattainable expectations. This paper will challenge conventions of academic writing by using a first-person fictional narrative to inquire into the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of an early career teacher as she enters the teaching profession. I will consider the following questions:

1. How do expectations of early career teachers compound and complicate the work of becoming teacher?
2. How might an arts-based approach, such as narrative fictional writing, create conceptual spaces to engage with and re/consider the hidden dilemmas produced through expectations of becoming teacher?

This fictionalized narrative offers a "textual representation" (Tummons, 2014) of early career teaching that is emotive in its embodiment of the complexities and frustrations that punctuate the work of learning to teach. The entanglement and compounding force of unanticipated encounters, and their paradoxical complexities, will reverberate throughout the fictional narrative in moments of impasse and frustration. Expectations of early career teachers complicate and control the work of learning to teach. In order to situate the short story within an academic context, this paper will include discussions that detail the theory and research that are embedded within the fictionalized narrative.

Feminist Theory and Affect

The following fictionalized narrative will aim to evoke the complexities of the ongoing, ambiguous, partial, recursive, and contradictory qualities of the experiences in learning to teach and becoming teacher. Feminist poststructuralism will be used to theoretically frame this manuscript to conceptualize the slippage and plurality of identities and knowledge (Weedon, 1997). Additionally, feminist poststructuralism will be used to foreground the power relations that are embedded in discourses that permeate and constitute learning to teach. Feminist poststructuralism "proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). The fictionalized narrative will make and leave space for the fragility of identity and knowledge by resisting "the trap of treating words as a transparent window onto an uncontested reality" (Fitzpatrick & Mullen, 2019, p. 74). In contrast, the narrative will continually work to complicate learning to teach and becoming teacher by eschewing predictable plots, stereotyped characters, or reductive animations of conflict. Ultimately, the narrative's ending will be an ending only in the context of this piece of writing. The ending of the story will be without finality, resolution, or closure, as if it is an interruption. Feminist poststructuralism will be taken up in the preface and afterword to establish the epistemological and ontological assumptions that are woven throughout the fictionalized narrative. Consideration will be given for the ways in which feminist poststructuralism structures the conceptualizations of subjectivity and knowledge within the premise of the fictionalized narrative and how it influences the crafting of the narrative.

Expectations and Feminist Poststructuralism

Expectations of early career teachers are discursively produced and constitute teacher subjectivities in particular ways. For example, teaching may be viewed as a "natural" profession

for women on account of their gender, dismissing the intellectual, ethical, and relational aspects that are inherent to the work of the teaching. Without a critical stance, tacit expectations can be absorbed as a normalized part of the work of learning to teach and the subsequent bad feelings that teachers experience can seem as though they signal a failure, flaw, or fault within the individual teaching subject. Feminist poststructuralism allows for:

> The collective discussion of personal problems and conflicts, often previously understood as the result of personal inadequacies and neuroses, leads to a recognition that what have been experienced as personal failings are socially produced conflicts and contradictions shared by many women in similar social positions. This process of discovery can lead to a rewriting of personal experience in terms which give it social, changeable causes. (Weedon, 1997, p. 33)

Theorizing expectations of early career teachers through the theoretical lens of feminist poststructuralism unsettles the structures and practices that discursively constitute the teaching subject. Through feminist poststructuralism's deconstruction of structures and practices, possibilities emerge to re/consider how we come to understand what it means to learn to teach and become teacher.

Affect and Feminist Poststructuralism

The expectations that are produced by, and through, dominant discourses, manifest as bad feelings that reside within the teaching subject. Weedon (1997) argues that "as the subject of a range of conflicting discourses, she is *subjected* to their contradictions at great emotional cost" (p. 33). Recognition for the socio-cultural constructions of bad feelings allows for possibilities to re/consider and re/conceptualize how social constructions of affect are produced. The affective manifestations of shame, unhappiness, anger, disappointment, and frustration appear to signal

that the cause is found within the teaching subject but, in theorizing with feminist poststructuralism, affect can be understood to be manifestations of dominant discourses that aim to control and maintain certain conceptualizations of being and becoming teacher (Weedon, 1997). Bad feelings can be understood as, in Foucault's work, "technologies of the self" whereby the subject has internalized the dominant discourses, manifesting as an individual reaction to their own perceived shortcomings or lack. Thinking with feminist poststructuralism repositions the production of bad feelings, or social constructions of affect, as a product of dominant discourses that functions to control and regulate, exerting power for idealized, often unattainable, ways of becoming.

Fictionalized Narratives and Feminist Poststructuralism

The crafting of the fictionalized narrative aims to embody poststructuralism's conceptualization of knowledge and identity as fluid, partial, and contradictory. The story is rife with incoherence and contradiction as it tends to the shifting and competing subjectivities of the teaching subject, constituted through relations and practices (Weedon, 1997). The focus of the fictionalized narrative is to explore the subjectivity of the main character and the ways in which they attempt to make sense of experiences, expectations, encounters, and emotions. Problematizing the work of teaching, and becoming teacher, allows for the unsettling of assumptions that are generated through "social and cultural practices which constitute, reproduce and contest gender power relations" (Weedon, 1997, p. vi). The fictionalized narrative, although captured through words, resists "fixed notions of identity" (Weedon, 1997, p. vi) and essentializing or universal truths. Depending on the reader, and how they are situated, the readings will resonate in different ways and will mean different things.

Situating Becoming Teacher in the Literature

Within the literature on early career teachers, there is a growing body of work that addresses the complexities of becoming teacher and shifts the focus from diagnosing the ills of the individual teacher to critically considering the ways in which the teaching subject, and teacher identity, is situated within complex and contradictory contexts (Ball, 2016; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Gannon, 2018; Johnson & Down, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Pucheggar & Bruce, 2021; Stacey, 2019). What is significant here is the recognition that "developing a concerted focus on the socio-cultural contexts in which teachers' work takes place is important because much of the extant research on teachers, and particularly early career teachers, elides the significance of such contexts" (Stacey, 2019, p. 405). The literature that refrains from problematizing concepts throughout the research on early career teachers (e.g., attrition, self-efficacy, resilience, quality teaching), and presenting them as "objective", risks diminishing the dilemmas that are inherent to the ways in which the concepts have been constituted within social and historical contexts. In the research of early career teachers, fragmenting phenomena from its situatedness presents a reductive impression of becoming teacher that simultaneously positions the individual teaching subject as the solution and the problem (Johnson & Down, 2013). The teaching subject is understood to be responsible for, and in control of, their successes and their failures. Decontextualized accounts of early career teachers serve the aims of neoliberal education reform, apparent in studies that focus on accountability by blaming the individual teacher for failures rather than taking the systems and contexts into account (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Johnson & Down, 2013). The lack of consideration for the social and historical situatedness of the teaching subject is important because, as the literature shows, there is a significant absence across the research about how early career teachers are becoming teacher

alongside, and in relation to, inequity, colonization (past and current implications), climate crisis and numerous other exigent realities of the embodied and material world. Furthermore, decontextualizing the work of becoming teacher overlooks the intersubjective and relational dynamics that are enmeshed within the struggle that is inherent to becoming teacher (Janzen, 2014).

Becoming teacher is a theoretical way to re/conceptualize learning to teach and provides an alternative to the developmental conceptualizations that view learning to teach as a linear progression (Britzman, 2003; Strom & Martin, 2017). The clash between assumptions, misperceptions, and lived experiences creates confounding, contradictory, and confusing confrontations that result in the questioning of what it means to become and be a teacher with others (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017). On a day-to-day basis, early career teachers encounter numerous disruptions, paradoxes, and conflicts that require them to navigate and negotiate their subjectivities and knowledge as they are continually becoming teacher through constant shaping of their teacher identity(ies) (Britzman, 2003; Janzen, 2014; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). The teaching subject is situated within the affective, discursive, and material forces of the socio-historical contexts. Normative discourses constitute the teaching subject through constraint of possibilities for knowing and becoming. Teaching, although often portrayed as a technical and practice-oriented profession under the light of neoliberal education reform (Ball, 2003; Clarke & Phelan, 2017; Rigas & Kuchapski, 2018), is an intellectual entanglement of theory and practice that is never perfected and always unfinished—always becoming. In that constant multidirectional movement, there are spaces for resisting and disrupting the performative enactments of teacher in order to become teacher in other ways.

Being and becoming teacher is often portrayed as an unproblematic progression of acquiring the "right" skills and practices to produce effective teaching, a seemingly self-contained and unproblematic endeavour. Learning to teach is presumed to be independent of the shifting particularities and the multifaceted contexts that one is situated within. This reductive and simplistic perspective negates the inherent complexities and contradictions of becoming teacher, with others, in an uncertain world (Britzman, 2003; Strom & Martin, 2017) that is already given (Biesta, 2019). Conceptualizing learning to teach as *becoming* creates space to critically reconsider the experiences of early career teachers by reconceptualizing the tacit paradoxes and tensions of teacher becoming and identity.

Becoming teacher conceptualizes the experiences of learning to teach by proposing that it is a continually unfinished and complex experience, rife with contradictions (Britzman, 2003; Clarke & Phelan, 2017; MacLure, 2003; Strom & Martin, 2017; Webb, 2013). Teacher identity and becoming are *not* insular endeavours that are self-contained, self-produced, and controlled by the teaching subject. Nor is learning to teach a linear and accumulative progression of simply acquiring discrete knowledge and skills. Rather, becoming teacher is an ongoing process of negotiating and navigating innumerable experiences, discourses, knowledge, and affects that contribute to the co-construction and shaping of teacher identity(ies). Identity is understood to be plural, continually in flux, partial, and gendered (Britzman, 2003; McLaren, 2013). Teaching identities are shaped by and through dominant discourses that produce norms and legitimize pre-determined and fixed notions of teacher identity— "dominant identities" (McLaren, 2013, p. 221). Prescriptive and pre-determined teacher identities limit and discourage *certain* ways of knowing and becoming as well as foreclose possibilities for *other* ways of knowing and becoming (Ahmed, 2010; Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Identity formation is an ongoing process of

mediation between expectations and experience, fantasies and failings, norms and improvisations. Early career teachers may haphazardly contend with the unanticipated confusions of becoming teacher when they have not had the opportunities to critically consider the ways in which their forming teacher identity(ies) are partial and fragile, taking shape again and again, through the forces of socially constructed dominant discourses. Intentionally cultivating critically oriented understandings and perspectives for the forces that constitute teachers in specific ways affords early career teachers the opportunities to critically engage with and make sense of what it means to be and become teacher. Critical understanding provides opportunities for teachers to deconstruct discourses that constrain teacher becoming, opening the possibilities for identities that are "not-yet-known" and "noy-yet-understandable" (Davies & Gannon, 2005). Conceptualizing teacher identity and becoming in this way creates resistance to the assumptions of learning to teach that adhere to illusions of progression through experience, to reach an endpoint of completion. Engaging with feminist theory will help us to consider "how gender, power, and knowledge, circulate to make possible and limit" possibilities for teacher identities and becoming (Hurst & Smith, 2020, p. 708) that often go unconsidered when the teaching subject is presumed to be "neutral".

Becoming-with: The Ongoing-ness of Teacher Identity

In conceptualizing learning to teach as becoming-with, teacher identity is implicated in the assumption of becoming as an unfinished project. Part of the work in the constant project for becoming teacher is making sense of forming teacher identity(ies). Drawing on feminist poststructuralism, identity is understood to be "non-dualistic, it develops within historical and social contexts, and it emerges from the nexus of individual and social practices . . . bodies as materially and culturally inscribed serve as the basis for subjectivity" (McLaren, 2013, p. 224).

Teacher identity(ies) are fluid, multiplicitous, and fraught with contradictions. Early career teachers often desire becoming teacher in a manner that evokes a simplistic and reductive conception of teacher, produced through dominant discourses that perpetuate teacher becoming as a relatively uncomplicated and technical-oriented practice. The imagined teacher identity is often informed by one's school biography (Britzman, 2003), images from television and film, and gendered social norms. These constructions of teacher are permeated by dominant discourses that shape, confuse, and inhibit the forming identities. Countering the static notion of being teaching, becoming teacher creates opportunities to resist the narrowly defined conceptions of teacher to create sites of resistance. Becoming-with recognizes the myriad complexities and contradictions that early career teachers are becoming alongside as the teaching subject is shaped by and situated within the embodied and material world. In becoming-with, the teaching subject is immersed in the conditions of their becoming. Becoming-with is becoming teacher with memories, emotions, crises, desires, misconceptions, illusions, others, theories, practices, histories, and stories. Becoming-with resists notions of teacher identity(ies) as pre-determined and opens the early career teacher up to possibilities of re/considering and re/configuring what it means to be(come) teacher in a world with others. Becoming, and becoming-with, recognize that a teacher identity is never fully formed and complete; it continues becoming as fragmented, disjointed, and incomplete.

Becoming teacher, as becoming-with, recognizes the temporal the pulls that are inherent to becoming teacher. Becoming-with necessitates an intentionality to witness the present realities and contexts of education that early career teachers are situated within. Several temptations of fantasy attempt to draw the early career teacher into future-oriented positions that neglect the contemporary context, imagining a future teacher-self that has all the answers and solutions,

longing for a different situation that would make teaching easier, or clinging to illusions of certainty for a world that remains resolutely uncertain. Conceptualizing learning to teach as becoming-with helps to remain within the present, as the teacher is becoming-with in the present material, affective, and discursive contexts that shape and constitute the forming teacher identity(ies). Desire for futurity neglects the embodied, lived, and affective realities that structure the educational landscapes that early career teachers are situated within. There is urgency for, and evoked by, remaining in relation to the present. A present that calls for recognition of the inequity, contemporary manifestations of colonization, climate crisis, and perils of neoliberal education reform. Becoming-with opens possibilities for the early career teacher to (re)consider and explore other ways of be(com)ing and knowing with the world—the human and more-than-human world. Futures become a promise of certainty, and happiness "intended to give confidence and trust that an expectation will be met" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 29). Instead of desiring to be a teacher within an illusion of a certain future, that is *certain* to be unactualized, the multifaceted affective, material, and discursive forces of becoming-with open up generative possibilities for resistance and disruption of the injustices and oppressions that permeate the world. Becoming-with is a becoming that recognizes the socially constructed and co-constituting affective forces that "intra-act" with the material and discursive forces (Ringrose et al., 2019, p. 13). Becoming-with is entangled with ethical responsibility for others in the human and more-than-human world.

Becoming-With and the Contemporary Educational Landscape

Becoming-with augments the theoretical understandings of becoming teacher to further consider the ways in which early career teachers are learning to become teacher within, through, and in relation to the myriad embodied and material intensities of the lifeworld. Becoming-with

connects a teacher's becoming to the material realities that speak to how they are becoming teacher within a world with others (Biesta, 2019; Haraway, 2016). The teaching subject that is becoming-with is in relation to the inequity, oppression, injustices, and violence that continues to endure, manifesting in the physical and abstract educational spaces that early career teachers negotiate and navigate. Feminist poststructuralism theorizes how "our identities are thus partly given yet they are also something that has to be achieved, offering a potential site of agency within the inevitably social process of becoming" (Clarke, 2009, p. 187). Deconstructing the taken-for-granted and normative conceptions of knowledge and subjectivity create spaces for resistance to re/consider and re/configure possibilities for other ways of knowing and becoming-with. Contending with affective, discursive, and material forces that constitute the early career teaching subject allows for a recognition of critical hope (Ahmed, 2010; Duarte, 2019) in the productive and generative possibilities that emerge when there is a turning towards the world and all its intensities, ambiguities, and difficulties.

Becoming-With

Teacher becoming and teacher identity provides productive and transformational possibilities for re/configuring the assumptions and norms constructed through critical analysis of the dominant discourses. Early career teachers are bombarded by uncertainty, complexity, and incongruity as they struggle to make sense of how they are becoming teacher, while they are becoming teacher. Becoming teacher is a continual re/negotiation of identity(ies) that requires critical and theoretical consideration. Augmenting the notion of becoming teacher as becoming-with, further emphasizes the situated becoming that teachers encounter through affective, discursive, and material forces. Feminist theory problematizes the work of becoming teacher by critically attending to the nuanced complexities of the seemingly ordinary and banal aspects that

inform the struggle to become teacher. Utilizing feminist poststructural theory to conceptualize teacher identity and becoming, as becoming-with, invites and embraces the confusions, hesitations, and difficulties that structure the hidden work of the teacher.

Throughout *A Year In*, the fictionalized narrative draws upon the themes that are represented throughout the contemporary research concerning early career teachers. These include but are not limited to: early career teachers' perceptions of teacher education programs (e.g., Aspfors & Eklund, 2017); school biography (e.g., Britzman, 2003); praxis shock (e.g., Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017); colleagues and relationships (e.g., Bauer et al., 2021); bad feelings (e.g., Stump & Newberry, 2021); cultural myths (e.g., Britzman, 2003); expectations (e.g., Churchward & Willis, 2023); isolation (e.g., Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022) assumptions of learning to teach (e.g., Burgess, 2016); disappointment (e.g., Kozikoglu, 2018); becoming (e.g., Britzman, 2003); failure (e.g., Dell'Angelo & DeGenova, 2018); the hidden work of teaching (Petersen, 2019); ethical obligations (Phelan & Janzen, 2024); neoliberal agendas (e.g., Ball, 2016; Lambert & Gray, 2022); and teaching as gendered work (e.g., Galman & Mallozzi, 2020). Becoming teacher necessitates recognition of the relationality (Andrews et al., 2019; Martusewicz, 2018; Ostertag, 2018; Shann et al., 2015; Todd, 2003), significance of identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022; Beijaard, 2019; Clarke, 2009; Gore & Bowe, 2015; Marom et al., 2021; Nichols et al., 2017; Schaefer, 2013), reflexivity (Grushka et al., 2005; Kerr & Andreotti, 2020), and a philosophical orientation (Christou & Bullock, 2014; Colgan & Maxwell, 2020; Strom & Martin, 2017; Todd, 2003) that is necessary to the work of learning to teach as an ongoing transformational project of possibilities and openness with others in a precarious world. Teacher becoming requires a critical and philosophical orientation to sustain a productive, rather

than re/productive (Clarke & Phelan, 2017), orientation to the perpetually incomplete project of learning to become teacher.

Fictionalized Narratives as a Mode of Inquiry

In this manuscript, the use of fictionalized narrative writing resides within liminal spaces between narrative inquiry, phenomenology, ethnography, and critical life writing as an arts-based research method (Ungar, 2011). The main character of this narrative is not a characterization of my own teaching experiences or any singular person. It is a culmination of the experiences I have had in researching and studying early career teachers over the last decade through course work, texts, presentations, conversations, and research projects. I used the research of early career teachers, informal conversations, memories of early career teaching, interviews with early career teachers, and myriad other experiences, to create a fictional assemblage of the first year as an early career teacher. In writing, and rewriting, the fictionalized narrative, it was "a process of *doing* writing, a process of crafting narratives of practice with care and rigour. It is a process of coming to know" (Fitzpatrick & Mullen, 2019, p. 90). The writing of this fictionalized narrative included several iterations as it is an intentional piece that is seeking to include several ideas, conceptualizations, and theories that are within the contexts of early career teachers while also being crafted with certain intentions of complexity, contradiction, messiness, partiality, and plurality.

Utilizing fictional writing in an academic context aims to seek out other ways for inquiring into the lived experience of early career teachers (Ungar, 2011). Fitzpatrick and Mullen (2019) state that "writing as a method of inquiry sits within the qualitative arts-based research paradigm and is used as an important method of generating, analysing and presenting stories" (p. 74). Fictional writing "utilizes the embodied self, making use of affective experiences, senses

and emotions . . . to disrupt dominant narratives that persist" (Fitzpatrick & Mullen, 2019, p. 74). The audience of the short story—the reader—is presented with opportunities to make connections, consider departures, and trouble their assumptions. The fictionalized narrative continually works towards "revealing the potential for things to be otherwise (Fitzpatrick & Mullen, 2019, p. 87). Fictional writing, as inquiry, allows for opportunities to render the taken-for-granted, obscured, and seemingly inevitable aspects of becoming teacher as significant and worthy (Fitzpatrick & Mullen, 2019, p. 89). For the purposes of engaging pre-service and early career teachers in critical consideration of their becoming through the lens of another, the intention is in "the cultivation of a teacher self who can dwell with these antinomies" (Furman, 2021, p. 317). Engaging with the messy complexities and contradictions that reside within learning to teach presents opportunities to develop a critical mindset that will resist the reductive, simplistic, and illusory conceptions that seek to narrate the work of teaching.

This paper includes a preface and afterword to frame the fictionalized narrative—*A Year In*. The preface introduces the narrative and establishes an understanding of the concepts that reside within and create context for the story. The fictional narrative short story has a first-person narrator, seeks to be perplexing and emotive, and engages with fictionalized representations of lived experience of the research on early career teachers. The story is told through the protagonist's perspective and internal dialogue. The afterword will consider how the narrative explicates the experiences of an early career teacher, how the text might be used, and who the audiences might include.

A Year In

I fish out a crumpled tissue from the pocket of the car door and try to pat away the sweat that is pouring from my face. I can see the sweat bead on my forehead. My reflection in the

rearview mirror is telling: undereye bags, flushed, still sweating. Last night was just a fight to try to wrestle some sleep from the night. I had laid in bed and tried to block out the rapid fire of thoughts that would not cease: did I pick up all the things I wanted from the store, do I have enough border for the bulletin boards, how do I pronounce that one student's name again, what am I going to do when they show up tomorrow, are there enough books in the classroom library, why didn't I pack my lunch before I called it a night, I for sure know where the black skirt is that I want to wear. I for sure did *not* know where that black skirt was! Which is partly to blame for why I am rushing to get to work.

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It is everything I thought I wanted—desired— but nothing that I expected. Since I could first form an idea of my future self, and the life I would have, I pictured that I would be at the front of a classroom in front of twenty-five or so pairs of attentive eyes as I delivered all they needed to know and being everything that they needed. How hard could it be? I worked in daycares, summer camps, subbed as an educational assistant, and spent endless weekends baby-sitting. I can even recall a co-worker commenting that I was a "natural" when it came to teaching. I liked school, actually, I loved school! I cherished (most of) my years as a student, and I was certain that my experiences would translate into some sort of aptitude for being a teacher. Now here I am, somehow having stepped through what must be a time warp, and I find myself preparing for *my own class*. I precariously balance on the edge of the boundary between gazing from the outside to finally being on the inside, finally *being* a teacher.

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As I drive into the school's staff parking lot my mind goes blank—what is the stall number that I was assigned? Panic, pure and unforgiving panic washes over me as I idle in the

middle of the lot where many cars have already filled their assigned spots. Yes, that's right! I have an email from the office staff about my parking spot. I pull out my phone, and the lurch of my car reminds me to put it into park. There's the email! Spot 42. Okay, great! I zip into the spot, load up all the tote bags overflowing with laminated class decorations and head for the doors. Today is filled with meetings for all the school start-up tasks: training from the public health nurse about rescuing students who are having seizures, going into anaphylactic shock, or experiencing an asthma attack; overviews of countless divisional policies; the welcome back slideshow with photos from everyone who had noteworthy summers; and introductions of new staff. I dump my bags and my purse in my classroom, grab my notebook and pen, and race to the gym. When I open the gym doors I am met with the whirring sounds of the overhead fans and the chill from the air conditioner. Scanning the tables and chairs I locate a spot next to a teacher that I chatted with in the hallway when I came in to set up at the end of August. At 8:30 am sharp we start our back-to-school staff meeting. First up, and I knew it was coming, is introductions. When it is my turn, I open my mouth to speak but is so dry. I grab a sip of water and then share my name and what I'm teaching this year. The principal excitedly exclaims, "we've got a newbie this year! Please make sure you help her out—show her the ropes." I catch the eyeroll from my "mentor" that was assigned to me through what I can only imagine was a *volun-told* situation. Ugh! I thought that once I had my first teaching position I wouldn't feel like such an imposter or that I was playing teacher. This did not help. I have the same teaching degree that everyone else here has but I just haven't racked up the experience yet. But they were all new once. I can't be expected to have it all figured out from day one? There is so much new info that I am trying to take in, and we are racing through topics at a speed where I don't know how anyone can possibly keep up.

We take a short break, and I turn to chat with some of the teachers sitting at my table. Next to me is one of the Phys. Ed. teachers and he has been at the school for 6 years. He tries to reassure me and ease my nerves by saying, “You shouldn’t be too worried. Teaching that grade is like being a highly paid baby-sitter, it’s just a lot of playing.” I sit in shock because this colleague, and fellow teacher, just told me that essentially, I am not really a teacher because of the grade I am teaching. I am stunned but I find the words to politely defend myself, and the grade I am teaching, by saying, “we are not just playing, there is so much important work that goes on in laying out the foundations for literacy and numeracy”. I hope my face is not giving away what I’m thinking because this teacher has really missed the hypocrisy of his comment; in Phys. Ed., they are *actually* playing games all day! I smile and ask another teacher at the table how their summer was.

The meeting picks up and drowning is probably the best way I can describe how I am feeling during all this. My chest tightens and it’s like someone is covering and uncovering my ears so that I can’t quite hear everything that is being said by the principal. That happens when I start to get nervous and panicky, I just can’t take in everything I am hearing and being told. Desperately I try to take notes and keep up but when I glance over my page, all I see are half finished phrases that now make little to no sense. Ugh! It’s too much!

To my shock, I glance at the clock to see that the last meeting is scheduled to wrap up shortly before we will welcome families for a “Meet the Teacher” event. I repeatedly glance at my watch, anxious for the meeting to be wrapped up. I still need to photocopy the welcome handout that I had prepared for my class and ensure that the classroom is ready to be unveiled for a new school year. As soon as we are given the word to head to our classrooms, I rush out to take care of the last few things before families start arriving. With the warm photocopies in hand, I

make my way to my classroom but come to a halting stop in the hall when I notice a typo that is now on all thirty copies! No big deal, I'll just quickly go fix the mistake, and print off another set. In moments like these it's as if the photocopier can sense the urgency and a paper jam is thrown in the mix. I fumble with the screen and try to follow the steps to resolve the jam, and as I am trying to locate the cause I can feel the sweat return. That's what I forgot! I meant to pick up a few tissue boxes for the classroom. Deep breaths...

"Hello! Welcome!" I say as the first family walks into the classroom. I am desperately trying to give off an air of confidence and ease as if I've been doing this for years.

"Oh, are you the student teacher?"

"No, I am *the* teacher," I reply, trying to mask the shock and maintain a smile that is on the verge of becoming a sneer.

"Oh, you don't look like a teacher," the parent casually throws out.

Now what do you say to that comment!? How is a teacher supposed to look? What were they expecting? I try to control my face so that it doesn't creep into a "what the fuck" expression and plaster a smile on—the mask to hide it all. The student and their two parents check the room out and chat about how it is different from last year's classroom. One of the parents turns to me and asks, "So, you're a new teacher. What makes you qualified to teach here?" I thought this was supposed to be a casual meet the teacher evening.

Never in all the anxious imagined and rehearsed conversations in my head did I expect to be asked this question. I take a breath and explain that I graduated from my teacher education program in the spring and that my practicums were in similar school settings. What I wanted to say was that I have an education degree like all the other teaching staff in the building and it wasn't really any of his concern whether I was qualified as the school division had already

determined that when I was hired. The parent just nods at my response and returns to the conversation that his partner is having with their child about the variety of tables and chairs set up in the room.

Before I head home, from what felt like five days crammed into one day, I make a note of the parking stall number in my phone, so I'm prepared for tomorrow. Racing to capture the thoughts disappearing from my mind, I quickly jot down a list of all the things I need to take care of when I get home. Thankfully, I will have the evening to myself but next week my university course starts up so Tuesday evenings will be busy. I'll be going straight from work to the university. What was I thinking?!

I find myself in bed, unable to catch that window of falling into a deep sleep. My mind is racing, the thoughts are relentless, I can't seem to slow down the panic: can I do this, do I look professional enough, what if the students don't listen to me, what if I don't know how to answer questions from parents. I feel like I'm throwing myself around in bed, trying to find a comfortable position. Where do I usually put my arms to sleep? It is like I have forgotten how to sleep.

A Week In

I could probably bring a sleeping bag and set up a place in the corner of the classroom to stay the night. There is always something else being added to the list, something of seemingly greater urgency that bumps all the rest to the next day. Book orders, permission slips, collecting school fees (sending out reminders), handing out picture day info, making a courtesy call to parents of students with allergies and medical concerns, reviewing student plans for adaptations, returning a parent call to learn their child has lice (and what am I supposed to do with that—all that I can think of is to slather my hair with mayo like Pam from *The Office* or send the students

down to line up and be checked one by one by a school nurse that exists only in my memories of television and movies), ensuring everyone is on the correct bus at the end of the day, and on and on. Then somewhere in all that I am planning lessons and teaching. Each day I peel back another layer to reveal more about teaching that I didn't even know was there. The waves of feeling overwhelmed crash into me, often without notice so that I feel like I can't catch my breath. Even though I had all those experiences in my practicum, it all seems new and so unfamiliar. I am inundated, privately navigating these hurdles of embarrassment that I don't know the questions to ask or the different things that I should be anticipating. I thought teaching would be more, like, simple, easy, like the kids listen to what and I say and then they do it. I want to desperately follow the instructions to be a good teacher, but it feels like chaos. I'm blindfolded, wandering in the dark as the voices of twenty-five children pepper me at every turn. There is so much hidden that I didn't get to glimpse until I started to be a teacher.

A Month In

How did that first month whip by but also seem to go on endlessly? I'm still finding my footing. Each time I feel an ounce of confidence amassing I am struck with a conundrum. One of my students is bringing next to nothing for lunch. I see them gazing at the lunches of other students. I collected a few snacks that I found in the school, so I had something to give them: granola bars, fruit snacks, "cheese" and crackers. On the way home I stop by the grocery store to pick up some more snacks that I can keep in my classroom. Maybe I should talk to the principal about a breakfast program or keeping a bowl of fruit in the office? I saw that at one of my practicum schools. Is it okay for me to suggest that? For the last week, I have been debating whether I should be calling child protective services. I need to check my handbook to see how I do that. Will my principal be upset with me? Does that even matter? One of the teachers down

the hall told me that nothing would be done because my student is showing up at school every day, is clothed, and has a home. Shouldn't they also have proper meals? How could this student possibly concentrate on anything when they are dealing with a nearly empty stomach every day? As I crawl into bed that night, I distract myself by going through the letters of the alphabet and naming a country for each letter. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland... Otherwise my thoughts are consumed by the worries I have for this child, and what I am teaching in social studies tomorrow.

A Term In

Well, that was another new experience! I booked a school bus for our field trip next month. It was the most convoluted and inefficient system but nonetheless I managed to get it done! I've been trying to come in an hour before the first bell rings and stay an hour after the students are dismissed just so I can make sure I get all the work done that I didn't really think about: book orders, permission slips, monthly class newsletters, posting daily on the class social media account, sharpening pencils, and organizing the supply baskets that I have the students share at their table groups. I am convinced that some small creature is making off with all the markers and pencils! Where do they go?! I feel like I need a manual for this job so I can look up what to do when...a student accidentally staples their thumb or when one of my students uses a racial slur at recess. University did not prepare me for this!

"*I AM NOT DOING IT*!"

This declaration is delivered at a screaming volume by one of my students as he runs out of the room after flipping over a table in the classroom. I can feel all their eyes looking to me for direction and I also look around for help. I can't leave the class on their own, can I? But I need to make sure my runner isn't leaving the school. I buzz the office for help but there is no answer. I

look across the hall and see an educational assistant in the other classroom. I call her over and ask if she can watch the class. I start to search the halls for my student. I asked him to write his name on the paper and then it was downhill from there! Last time I had to call his parents they just blamed it on another student and kept telling me that it's not their child's fault. What am I supposed to do with that? I feel like it's me against the parents. I just can't give this student what he needs. I don't even know what he needs! My chest tightens at the thought of making that inevitable parent phone call. I can feel the sweat. My mind is racing, and my stomach is flipping. I think I am going to be sick . . .

I went to a professional development session for new teachers last month. A break from the school! No recess duty! No bells! What a relief it was to talk to other teachers who are in the same position as me! I am not the only one that feels like they are being swallowed up by this job! The session was all about working with our mentor so that they can help us figure out how to do things like use the report card system, book school busses, and navigate the district's online database of resources. I need to find a new mentor! Who could I ask? Who should I ask? *Not* the teacher next door! They seem to despise children, complaining about anything and everything! The teacher further down the hall is away a lot—I think I heard that her partner is sick. I don't want to add more to her plate. I think I'll ask the teacher at the other end of the hallway. She is super organized, colour coding obsessed, and their classroom looks like a teacher's Pinterest dream! I heard that she is selling lots of worksheets on www.worksheetfarm.com. Like enough to pay for a spring break beach vacation! It's this website where teachers can download resources that other teachers have made as well as post (and sell!) their own resources. I should really look into that—I wonder where teachers get all those cute graphics? Next year I'm going to choose a theme for decorating my classroom.

A Half Year In

It's 6:03 am and pitch-black outside. I face my reflection in the mirror and barely recognize what I see—dark circles, tired eyes, and sadness. Shouldn't this feel better? Shouldn't I feel happier? I feel guilty. Some of my friends are subbing and here I am with a term for the full year. I spend my nights imagining what else I could do. I search online for ideas of ways to repurpose an education degree. But it is so comforting to know that I have a pay cheque I can count on. How could I possibly give that up?! I know I'll probably land another term for the next year. There is a teacher across the hall from me that told me she was pregnant and wouldn't be back next year. Wouldn't it be so easy to hire me for that job when I have already been in the building for a year? (As long as I keep all my screw ups hidden away, I should be safe.) Maybe this will feel better next year. Once I have more experience it won't feel so frenetic. Once I figure this out it will be so much better. I will feel so much better. Maybe then I'll feel like a *real* teacher.

I have tried so hard to run centers and plan for inquiry projects that feel organic but are orchestrated with precision and anchored in the curriculum, but I just can't. I can't. I cannot do it. I do not have the energy. I feel lost. I have colour coded buckets of stuff that is becoming useless, daily reminders of time (and money) wasted. Is this teaching? Is this what everyone feels? Should this feel like failure and frustration? I think the students are picking up on all this struggle. It feels like I have no control in the classroom. I just try to make it through each day and get out as fast as I can.

I navigate my existential crisis as I scroll through the endless pages of worksheets and booklets on www.worksheetfarm.com. My haunting reflection in the screen of my laptop reminds me that I should be in bed sleeping. I am searching for booklets for math. I made the

very stupid and careless mistake last week of printing off worksheets about counting coins, making a class set of booklets, and then realizing (of course once they were handed out) that it was all American coins and not Canadian. There went another tree's worth of paper! Anytime I try to have the class work as groups there are arguments erupting, some kids can't read the instructions, and others just want me to give them the answer. Oh! Here is a booklet about prefixes and suffixes!

One Month Out

Our principal came up with a new idea, we are writing out certificates for each of our students and highlighting one of their strengths, talents, or special gifts. We need to pick a date during the last month, invite parents, and organize some snacks. I didn't realize that teaching would involve so much event planning! Oh! I need to update my resume tonight. Each day there is a new email with all the job postings for next year. I can't wait until I have landed a job. I am hoping that I get the position across the hall! I haven't seen it posted but it must be coming up soon.

I let my mind wander and imagine how fun it will be to see my students from this year when they are in the next grade. I hope they will come by to say hi and chat. I see teachers that have been at this school for many years and how their previous students pop into their classrooms at recess or after school to give them a hug and catch them up on their lives. I already have students asking about next year and if I will be teaching the same grade again. I haven't heard anything yet, but I imagine that staffing should be decided soon. There are only four weeks left.

One Week Out

"Why won't you be at the school next year?"

“Are you not a teacher anymore?”

“What school will you be at?”

“I’m going to miss you soooooo much!”

It’s Monday morning of the last week and I am being peppered with questions by all my students. The email went out on Friday from the principal to let the school community know the staffing for next year. I was not on that list. I really thought that something would work out so I could stay. My eyes are welling with tears that I am desperately trying to hold back. My stomach is in knots, and I have that awful choking feeling in my throat that only shows up when I need to cry. How am I supposed to make it through this week? How am I supposed to make it through this next 90 minutes until recess.

One (Last?) Day Out

My alarm is going off on my phone—how is it already 6:00 a.m.?! My eyes will just not stay open, at least not at the same time. I fumble around and make my way downstairs. I cannot believe that this is the last day of the school year. The last month has been a blur of track meets, outdoor activity days, field trips, assemblies, a school BBQ, report card writing, and, of course, teaching! I thought this day would feel a bit more exciting and deliver some relief, but I just feel numb. I don’t know what I am doing next year. I feel like I have barely had the chance to scratch the surface of becoming a teacher. I need more time.

I have been applying for job postings but haven’t had any luck. Frankly, I’m not even sure if this is for me. Maybe I don’t have what it takes. Maybe I am not born to be a teacher. It is certainly not what I expected (or even imagined). How do I have a life when teaching takes all my energy (and most of my time)? I feel like I’m in this weird space where I’m removed, behind

glass, and watching all the other teachers at my school getting excited about their summer plans and next year's new classes. I am not part of that excitement.

As I drive out of the parking lot for the last time, I look up and catch the reflection of the school in my rearview mirror. This isn't my school next year. These teachers will not be my colleagues next year. These students will no longer be *my* students. My time has run out at this school. I feel like I'm already fading away from the memories of this year. This one year in of becoming a teacher.

Afterword

Engaging with the creation of academic fiction allows the author to experiment with language, break from academic formalities and formatting, and explore the messier spaces of research through imagination. Academic fiction broadens the accessibility of the work (Furman, 2021), the ways in which the work can be used, creates conceptual space to engage with difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2003), and may open ways for pre-service and early career teachers to inquire into their own experiences of becoming teacher. The benefit to engaging with fictional writing is that the characters can function as mediary spaces for readers to contend with uncomfortable and complex emotions or situations. As this paper is apprehended within the confines of a conceptual work, I can only speculate on the possibilities for how and why the narrative may be utilized. The spaces of fictional writing can offer safety to take risks for exploring and considering other ways of knowing and being that may not have immediate material impact but can begin to shift how we are thinking about learning to teach and becoming teacher.

Fiction as a Pedagogical Tool

This fictionalized narrative was crafted with the intention of being an object of study for use by teacher educators or mentors to support critical conversations about learning to teach. The fictionalized narrative can be understood as a lens that is taken to the experiences of the reader. There is a desirable indeterminate quality to the story so that it can be used in a multitude of ways. I have provided several provocations that could be used to generate discussion and response to the story (see Appendix A). Exploring the dynamics, facets, and ruptures in the story allow for readers to make meaning in relation to their own lived experiences and knowledge. Perhaps a next step is to explore fictionalized narrative writing as a pedagogical tool for pre-service and early career teachers to critically inquire into their becoming through reflexive and critical ways.

Closing Thoughts

Furman (2021) posits that "novels where the protagonists are themselves in quandaries that resist resolution lend themselves to complex ethical problem-solving and, in doing so, help prepare readers for their own dilemmas" (p. 330). Conceptualizing the fictionalized narrative as an object of study for use by teacher educators, mentors or administrators, with pre-service and early career teachers, offers a space for contending with and troubling the work of becoming teacher that engages with the complex responsibilities and ethical obligations that complicate the work of teaching. The fictionalized narrative endeavors to make theory, philosophy, and research accessible to pre-service and early career teachers by engaging with storytelling as a mode of inquiry. The limitation of this work is that the fictionalized narrative is produced by a single author and will not be exhaustive in its inclusion of the experiences of early career teachers. But aiming for an exhaustive story would be incongruous with the intentions of the work and its

theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism. The partialness of the fictionalized narrative leaves open the myriad ways in which the story can be problematized and drawn into discussions with pre-service and early career teachers. *A Year In* seeks to remind the reader of the incompleteness of learning to teach and becoming teacher. That one will not arrive at an endpoint of being a finished teacher and how that will feel disconcerting and arduous. Expectations, external or internalized, create false boundaries for the early career teacher's becoming. Fictional narrative writing invites and welcomes the reader into struggles and frustrations that are not their own responsibility, while creating imagined spaces where dilemmas and expectations can be deconstructed, challenged, and transformed. The discursive spaces of stories shield a reader from the affective and material risks of pushing back against the weight of expectations while welcoming the exploration of radical possibilities for becoming teacher.

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Appendix A

Possibilities and Provocations for Engaging with *A Year In*

1. In what ways could you describe the teaching subject that is portrayed by this character (i.e., character sketch)?
2. In what ways is this character drawing on their school biography (Britzman, 2003) to inform their understanding of teaching and becoming teacher?
3. What might be some of the assumptions and misunderstandings that the main character has made? How might these affect their experiences with learning to teach and becoming teacher?
4. Write a description of a secondary character that interacts with the main character.
5. Choose a secondary character in the story and write from their perspective about their interaction with the main character.
6. Create a visual representation of the affects that this character is moving between. Consider the events, encounters, or expectations that appear to be producing the affects.
7. Draw upon the readings that you have done about the study of early career teachers and teaching. In what ways do you see the story mobilizing the themes and topics in the research?
8. Write yourself into this story and create a scene where you interact with the main character.
9. How do you see yourself reflected in this story? What seems unfamiliar?
10. What happens next? Write the next chapter.

Conclusion

From the outset, teaching is undoubtedly an overwhelming undertaking. The expectations continually shift and slide, the day-to-day of the classroom abounding with uncertainty, and the myriad complexities of the contemporary educational landscape urgently intertwine within the spaces of learning to teach. The teaching subject is situated within the affective, discursive, and material forces of a world that is given (Biesta, 2019), shaping the teacher's subjectivities and mis/understandings of learning to teach (Ringrose et al., 2019). Becoming teacher is a relational, intersubjective, and rhizomatic (Strom & Martin, 2017, 2022) struggle to make sense of the self within the messy situatedness of teaching. The complexities and contradictions of learning to teach are irresolvable, perpetually resisting the grasp of desires for certainty, predictability, and complete knowability. Rather than seeking to overcome the ongoing dilemmas of learning to teach, one must embrace the difficulties in the work of becoming teacher (Janzen, 2014). Part of that embrace is the recognition that being new to the profession is neither a problem nor a fault to be overcome, solved, or remedied. But the internally and externally imposed expectations can lead the teaching subject to construct an understanding that difficulties and struggles are problems of and within the self.

The expectations that are imposed upon the early career teaching subject produce struggles and dilemmas that elicit reactions of affective dissonance, questions of identity, and gendered double binds. Problematic expectations are embedded and implied within the language of texts, such as handbooks, that early career teachers encounter and use to make sense of learning to teach. Bringing a critical lens to the experiences of becoming teacher allows for an unsettling of the often private and hidden away tensions that evoke bad feelings so that they may be deconstructed and re/contextualized. Understanding bad feelings as a product of problematic

expectations and gendered norms removes the private shame and blame from the individual teaching subject so that bad feelings can be recognized as a site of resistance to question the structures and systems that produce them.

The cultivation of a critical perspective in the study of early career teachers resists acceptance that encounters, experiences, and expectations, and the quality of each, are commonsensical or a "natural" aspect of learning to teach. Within these taken-for-granted and fleeting moments are cracks that have the potential to open to possibilities for other ways of being and knowing that challenge sexist and problematic expectations through critical and analytical engagement. This collection of four manuscripts sought to unsettle the tacit and obscured forces that shape and constrain the becoming of early career teachers. Expectations of early career teachers, produced through dominant discourses, construct problematic narratives that limit possibilities of the work of teaching and what it means to be and become teacher through prescribed ways of knowing and being.

Engaging with theoretical and analytical tools, such as deconstruction, critical analysis, and discourse, allows for the expectations of the teaching subject to be recognized, problematized, and troubled. The tensions and possibilities that emerge from theorizing the experiences of early career teachers opens up to critical consideration for how early career teachers are un/welcomed into the profession and whether their becoming is recognized or considered. The tangible aims of this collection of manuscripts is to contribute to the literature on early career teachers, possibly inform teacher education programs, and provide considerations for the ways in which inservice teacher learning, or support (i.e., induction), takes into account, or fails to, the experiences of early career teachers.

The conceptual framework of dominant discourses provides a theoretical approach that critically engages with how we make sense of the experiences of teachers and considers the situatedness of the teaching subject. The fictional narrative creates conceptual space for the teaching subject to question, challenge, and wrestle with the paradoxical and ambivalent encounters of learning to teach and becoming teacher. Ultimately, this collection of manuscripts works together to recognize the production of gendered expectations, the ways in which they can become internalized by the teaching subject, and how we might theorize bad feelings as manifestations of the asymmetrical power relations that produce discourses that control how teachers learn to become teacher. Just as teaching in ongoing, the study of teaching can never fully apprehend a definitive account of becoming teacher. The study of early career teachers' becoming is ongoing and driven by the continual intention to delve further into the complexities and contradictions.

Limitations & Strengths

This project is limited by the Canadian context that it is situated within. The critical discourse analysis of induction texts only considered texts that were available from the provinces and territories in Canada. The methodology (feminist critical discourse analysis) and theoretical approach to analysis (feminist poststructuralism) can help to inform other qualitative studies that engage with critical discourse analysis and texts related to teachers. The study of international induction texts for teachers would continue to expand this work. Additionally, the focus on discourse inquires into facets of early career teacher mentoring that are not solely preoccupied with the practice of teaching. The other two manuscripts are also informed by contexts and understandings of Canadian school systems. But in focusing on Canadian contexts, this project provides a contribution to the research on early career teachers and the induction of teachers in

Canada. The conceptual manuscripts provide theoretical tools to engage in further research of early career teachers. For example, the conceptual framework developed in the second paper provides discourses that can be used to theorize the lived experiences of early career teachers and their "bad feelings". All four manuscripts acknowledge and engage with the complications in the work of teaching and becoming teacher, eluding desires for certainty or prescription. Throughout the manuscripts, expectations of early career teachers are problematized and argued to be a contested site of the manifestations of dominant discourses that constitute the teaching subject's identities through the (competing) subjectivities that are enacted. The papers interrogate the ways in which expectations are re/produced and how they operate within the teaching subject, manifesting as internal tensions that obfuscate their production through discursive structures and practices.

Significance and Contributions to Educational Research

The collective work of the manuscripts is significant to the broader field of educational research because teacher attrition is most significant within the first five years of being in the profession which is precisely how early career teachers are defined (zero to five years of experience) (Lavigne, 2014). Rather than continually trying to "fix" early career teachers, the profession may be better served by examining how the systems and structures of education produce expectations of early career teachers that are problematic and seek out ways to mitigate, or create critical awareness for, the production of problematic implicit expectations. The teaching profession has been described as a profession that "eats its young" (Halford, 1998, p. 33 as cited in Schuck et al., 2018, p. 211)—this speaks volumes in capturing the ways in which early career teachers are expected to be teacher from the first day but are left without support for their becoming as they are continuing to learn to teach. Through research that continues to inquire into

the experiences of early career teachers from perspectives that frame teaching as a complex profession, various levels of school systems may open up to the ways in which they can re/conceptualize and re/configure how early career teachers are welcomed into the profession with support, compassion, and collegiality.

This project produced four unique contributions to the field of early career teacher research. The first manuscript, *Disturbing Discourses,* provided a comprehensive literature review of the contemporary research on early career teachers, illustrating the breadth in topics. In the second paper, *Reading Expectations*, the critical discourse analysis of induction texts (handbooks or guides) provided a robust theorizing of the dominant discourses that construct the teaching subject and learning to teach in reductive and problematic ways. From the critical analysis of induction texts, I posited that objects, such as handbooks or guides for early career teachers, may provide indirect mentorship to early career teachers, as opposed to direct mentorship through, for example, a mentor. Indirect mentorship speaks to the unexpected and unanticipated impacts and influences of objects, such as handbooks or guides. The third paper, *Interrupting Expectations*, provides a critical reading and analysis of dominant discourses that constitute competing gendered subjectivities that inform the un/desirable identities that early career teachers enact. These discourses can be used to theorize the lived experiences of early career teachers in future qualitative research studies to understand how bad feelings are produced and in what ways they may be re/considered. The fourth paper, *A Year In*, crafted a piece of fiction that can be used as an object of study by teacher educators for preservice teachers and by mentors for inservice teachers. The short story aimed to problematize the work of learning to teach and open up space to grapple with the hidden complexities and uncertainties, as well as act as a transitional or mediary space that removes the affective and material weight of learning to

teach by exploring it through the perspective of a character. Additionally, this paper provided an example of how fictional narrative writing can be utilized to inquire into the lived experiences, research, theory, and philosophy that attends to the study of early career teachers.

The dissonant experiences of becoming teacher are relational, intersubjective, contextual, and fragile. The teaching subject is situated within, and constituted by, affective, discursive, and material forces that structure an uncertain becoming. The early career teacher is becoming in ways that are messy, disjointed, incomprehensible, but generative in possibilities that remain open to knowing and becoming in other ways. Critically inquiring into, and unsettling, the expectations, structures, and practices that reify certain subjectivities in teaching shatters the smooth cohesiveness of dominant discourses to recognize the rifts and ruptures that open to other possibilities.

On Becoming-with

The work of becoming teacher is nested within efforts to make sense of the project of education that is situated within a world that is already given (Biesta, 2019). Becoming teacher is situated within an embodied world with others. Teaching is recognizing and responding to others; it is relational and intersubjective, contradictory, and indeterminate. To teach in a way that responds to the other requires a philosophical and critical orientation to reflexivity. Early career teachers must critically consider the larger purpose of education in a way that pushes beyond the cacophonic clamor that absorbs the teaching subject into a cycle of re/production where teaching is arrested in time by temporal shackles—static, closed, and unresponsive. A critical and philosophical orientation to becoming teacher allows for a sensitive attunement to the particularities and differences within context, knowledge, and identity(ies). Additionally, such an orientation evokes an ethical responsibility for the students who are part of a teacher's becoming

as teaching endeavors to make sense of the world that we find ourselves in and make sense of who we are in that world in relation to one another (Biesta, 2019). Teaching is a messy, problematic, layered, and dynamic endeavour that continually unsettles one's knowledge and subjectivity. Becoming teacher with others, in the intensities of the world, disrupts and alters who we are when we embrace our vulnerability, in relation to one another, and bear witness to the reality of a world with an uncertain future.

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