

Living on both sides of the screen: An ethnographic study of the impact of personal and professional identities on teacher candidates' pedagogical practices

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Background, Problem, and Context

Background: Identity is a frame to explore various aspects, influences, and experiences of teacher and teaching. Research on teacher identity largely focused on narratives and discourses of identity (Alsup, 2006, 2019; Beijaard, 2019); on characteristics and processes of identity development (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard & Meijer, 2017); and on dialogical engagement between self and others in relation to teaching (Henry, 2021, Henry & Mollstedt, 2021).

Problem: Understanding the processual relationship between personal and professional identities that dictates pedagogical practices of teacher candidates (TCs)?

Evidence: Prior studies have reported that the development of teacher identity is an ongoing process of teacher socialization that starts at the early stage of family and schooling and continues to the formal stage of Teacher Education and after throughout the entire professional career of a teacher (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004; Dubar, 1995; Gee, 2000; Lopes & Pereira, 2012; Rogers & Scott, 2008).

Gap: We know little about how this processual relationship between personal and professional identities impacts the pedagogical practices of TCs. This research aimed to fill this gap by achieving the following purpose:

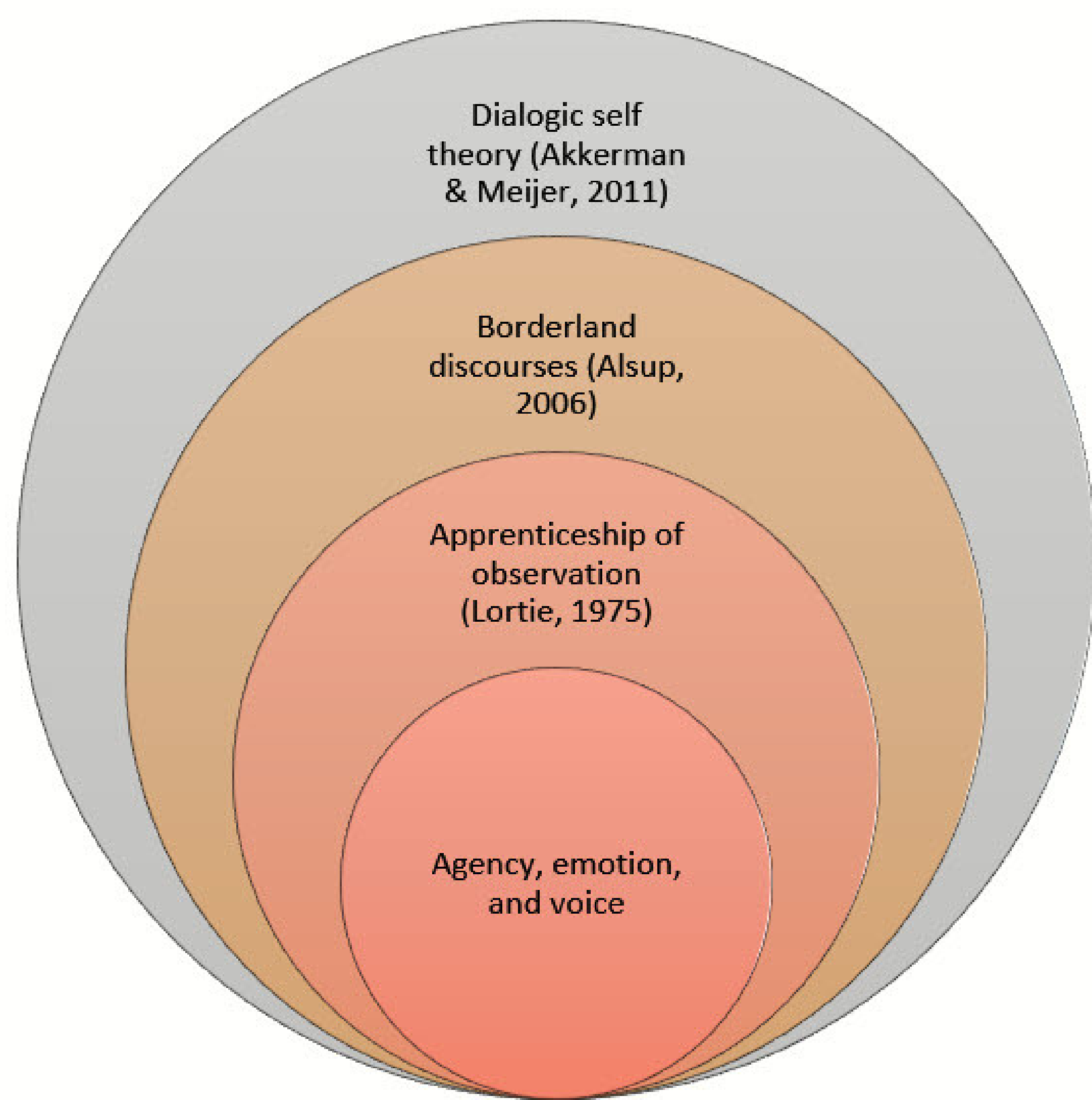
Purpose: To trace the process of professional identity development of TCs and how this relationship impacts their pedagogical practices.

Rationale: This processual relationship can be understood through personal and professional dimensions of teacher socialization because these dimensions together define and dictate teacher identity and practices (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard, 2019; Beijaard & Meijer, 2017; Olsen, 2016)

Research Questions

1. What spaces do TCs use to articulate their personal and professional selves? How do these spaces inform relationships between their personal and professional identities?
2. How does an understanding of the relationships between personal and professional identities help TCs identify with their professional identity during various stages of Teacher Education?
3. How do TCs negotiate their professional identities during student teaching? How does this negotiated identity impact their pedagogical practices in classroom?

Research Frameworks



Research Methodology

The researcher adopted an ethnographic approach in order to capture the cultural ethos of becoming teachers (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995; Spradley, 1979; Walcott, 1994).

The participants involved in this study include eight undergraduate and graduate TCs (four each) enrolled in the Teacher Education department of a large public university situated in the Eastern part of Canada.

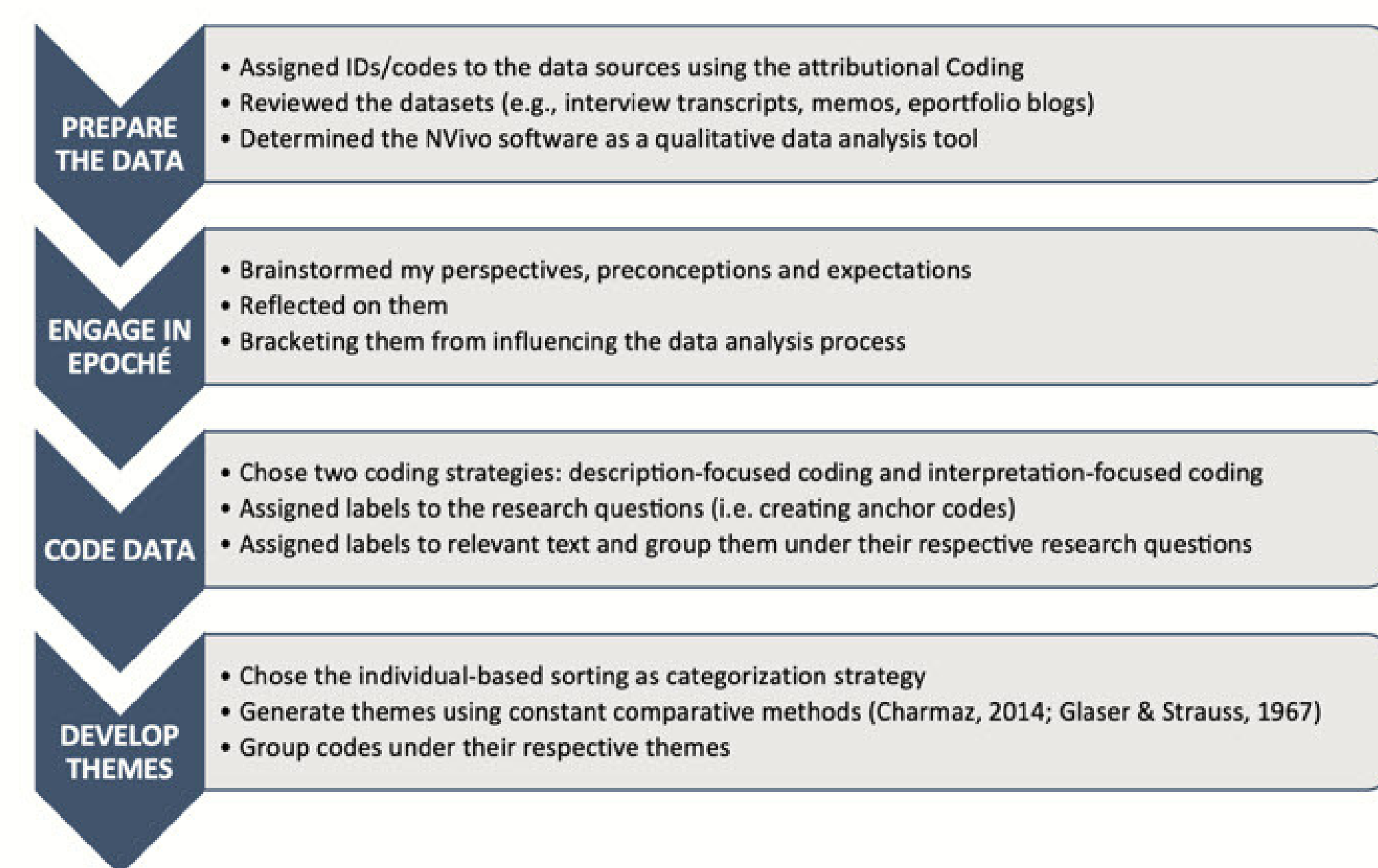
The researcher collected empirical evidence from the selected teacher participants through three methods: In-depth online interview, eportfolio Blog, and reflective memos. The first two methods used to collect data on personal histories of TCs while reflective memos focused on eliciting data on their student teaching experiences.

Data Analysis

The researcher used both inductive and deductive methods to analyse the data collected through interviews, memos, and eportfolio methods, employing description-focused and interpretation-focused coding strategies.

First, the researcher used an inductive approach to make a global sense of the data, which involved identifying units of meaning across the raw data, labeling identified units, and labeling them as codes, and generating categories and themes (Abu, 2019; Saldaña, 2016).

Once initial codes and categories created, then, researcher deductively analyzed them using the overarching lens of dialogic self theory and other concepts of borderland discourses, apprenticeship of observation, emotion, agency, and voice. In order to create categories/themes, the researcher adopted an individual-based sorting strategy (Clustering) along with constant comparative method (Abu, 2019; Charmaz, 2014). Following is a visual description of the analysis process:



Findings

The personal stage of teacher socialization that takes place within spaces of family, sports, and communities shapes discourses of personal and social dimensions of teacher identity of TCs, thus personal identity is an outcome of sociocultural discourses. Experiences gained during early schooling shape rudimentary beliefs of TCs about teaching, idealize their future images of teacher, and help them locate reasons to become a teacher.

Digital spaces of social media and eportfolio extend and mediate situational self of TCs in terms of allowing them to engage and collaborate with their significant others as well as exhibiting their multiple personae across spaces. As such, digital spaces mediate personal and professional discourses of identity. The relationship of personal and professional dimensions of identity can be identified through inseparability of self across spaces (e.g., substantial self), and its multivoicedness (e.g., taking multiple I-positions across contexts (e.g., situational self).

The professional stage of teacher socialization develops fundamentals of teaching profession of TCs which include developing their epistemological beliefs, teaching philosophies, and pedagogies in light of their early discourses created during their initial/personal stage of socialization.

Student teaching is a negotiated space for TCs because within this space intersects their personal and professional beliefs, philosophies, and dimensions of identities. In order to position their professional identity, they constantly involve themselves in negotiating with their multiple I-positions (e.g., situational selves) such as an apprentice, facilitator, observer, imitator, and collaborator during coteaching.

During this process of negotiation, some TCs encounter transitional issues and power-related conflicts with their cooperative teachers and supervisors as reflected through their emotional and pedagogical tensions. The ways they mitigate their tensions affect their level of confidence and sense of agency accordingly. In this sense, development of professional identity is both a disruption and innovation of substantial self.

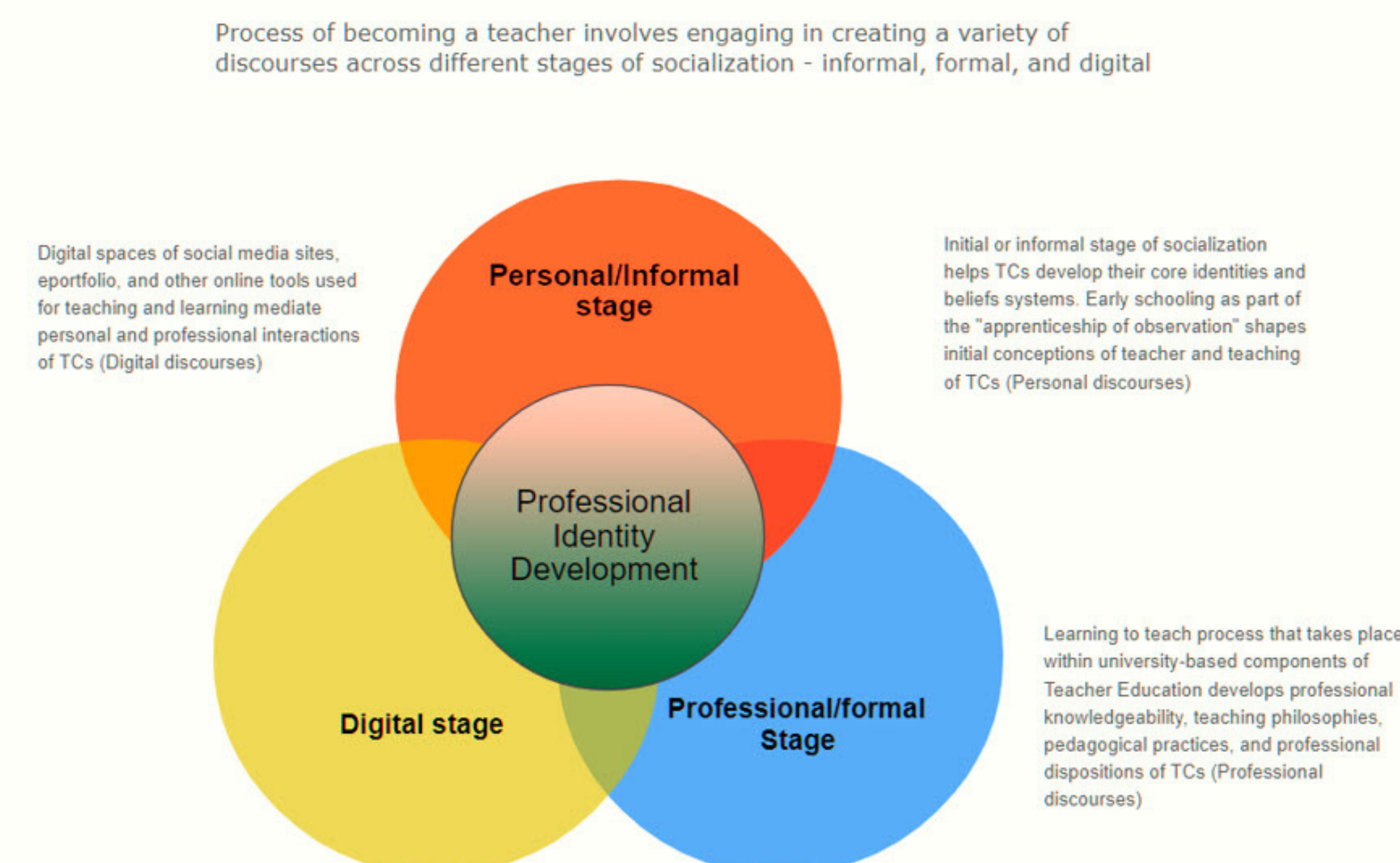
Conclusions

TCs articulate their personal and professional identities across informal and formal spaces of family, school, communities, and sports. They find that their personal is professional and who they are is what they teach. For TCs, professional identity is a contextual transformation of their personal identity.

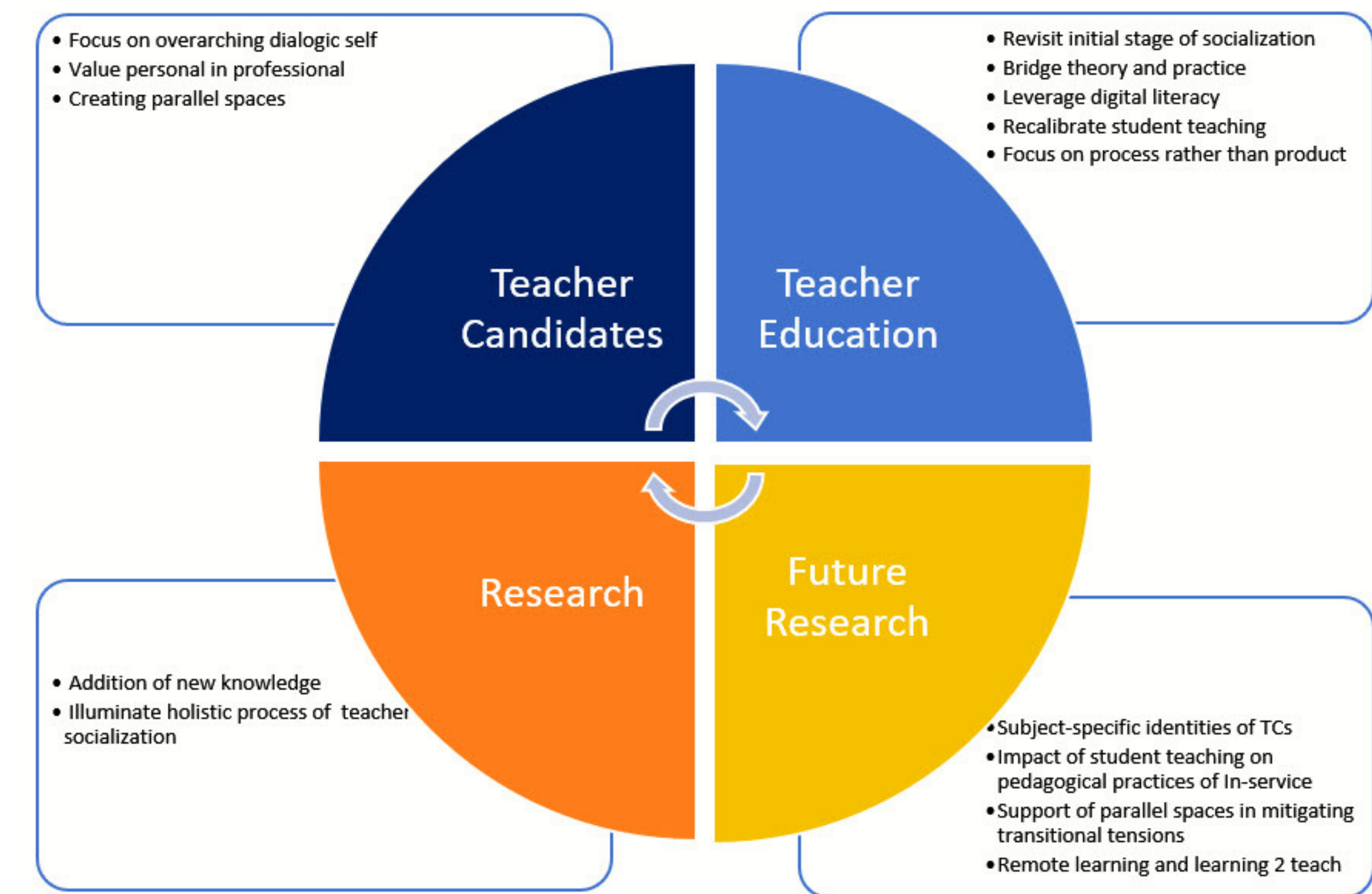
TCs develop fundamentals and knowlegability of profession within Teacher Education by taking multiple I-positions: toward others (e.g., teachers, students, and parents), toward teaching (e.g., pedagogical approaches), and toward self (e.g., situational self).

TCs realized significant changes in their professional development during and after student teaching. They experienced these changes in terms of their conceptual, theoretical, pedagogical, and social understandings of teaching profession, as well as in developing their professional language and disposition.

Becoming someone who teaches



Implications



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Connexion

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