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Update your status: exploring pre-service teacher identities in an online discussion group

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A substantial body of research indicates that a teacher's identity is an essential aspect of their professional practice. As this body of research grows, researchers have increasingly sought to investigate the nature of pre-service teacher identities. This paper reports on a study that examined identities in the context of a pre-service cohort's online discussion group. By examining the group, this study attempted to address a gap in research knowledge, as research to this date has been unable to investigate pre-service teacher identities in non-course-endorsed or instructor-occupied spaces. A thematic and quantitative analysis of online postings by and interviews with group members provided an insight into how identities performed and related to one another within the online discussion group. The findings indicate that one category of identities emerged from a commitment to the social expectations and values of the group, whilst another emerged out of a personal resistance towards the social norms of group participation and involvement. This study may be useful for teacher educators deliberating the use of online spaces to support pre-service teacher identity development.

Keywords: online discussion group; pre-service teacher identity; teacher education; thematic analysis

Introduction

The concept of identity concerns numerous research disciplines within the humanities and social sciences (Goffman, 1973; Mead, 1934). Widely studied, not just across disciplines but also across time, the search for this concept defies easy definition in the academic sense (Jenkins, 2004). Despite its slipperiness, the recent rise of interest in grasping this concept is suggestive of a contemporaneous urgency to make sense of issues of identity in a largely globalised, disjointed, and unstable world (Buckingham, 2008).

Because of this growing interest, research on teacher identities has matured into a fully fledged "separate research area" (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 107). Within this area, identity is widely accepted as multidimensional (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Curwood, 2014). Underpinning this notion of identity is also the assumption that it "is a key influencing factor on teachers' sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, job satisfaction" and is thus seen as an "essential" aspect of "teacher work" (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006, p. 601). Consequently, the inquiry into and the assessment of teacher practices and standards must necessarily reflect upon teacher identities (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005).

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Given this supposition, there is a current interest in the field of teacher education towards the nature of pre-service teacher identities. In recent years, teacher educators have increasingly sought to design programmes and research social and physical environments that help facilitate their development of positive professional identities (Danielewicz, 2001; Izadinia, 2013; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Walkington, 2005). Whilst there has been research in the areas of teacher, pre-service teacher, and online identity, the intersection of these themes within a non-course-endorsed online environment has not to date been examined. This study ties together the salient themes outlined above by choosing to focus on a Facebook group established and maintained by a cohort of pre-service teachers. This study thus fills a gap in the current research by addressing the following questions: what pre-service teacher identities *emerge* from posts and practices within this online discussion group? How do pre-service teachers conceptualise and exhibit their identities within this group?

Theoretical framework and related literature

A social constructionist view of identity

This study proposes a social constructionist approach towards examining pre-service teacher identity, as it consolidates much of the mainstream philosophies in literatures on teacher, pre-service teacher, and online identity. Social constructionism is a theoretical paradigm that fundamentally rejects the viewpoint that identity is essentialist (Berger & Luckmann, 1984). Furthermore, it undermines the role of biological and transhistorical factors in determining one's identity (Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris, 2005). Rather, a social constructionist approach proposes and privileges the claim that it is through language, interaction, and practice that we ascertain our own identities (Burr, 2003).

Research on teacher identity regards both the construction and interpretation of identity as something that is highly complex, dynamic, and socially constructed. Beijaard et al. (2004) identified this striking occurrence in a seminal review on this topic. In their article, the authors noted that the common thread that tied all conceptions of teacher identity in the literature together was the "idea that identity is not a fixed attribute of a person, but a relational phenomenon" (p. 108).

This notion of the *relational identity* has similarly underpinned the bulk of studies in the area of pre-service teacher identity (Cohen, 2010; Joseph & Heading, 2010). There are perhaps many reasons attributing to this occurrence. One of particular relevance to this study is the acknowledgement that the education of pre-service teachers is but a temporary stage in the professional career span of a teacher (Fessler, 1995). The temporality of their status necessarily means that researchers must acknowledge that pre-service teaching identities are not fixed, nor impervious to the influences of the wider world (Flores & Day, 2006; Pillen, Beijaard, & Den Brok, 2013).

The idea that identity is socially constructed is a claim also popularly supported by scholars of online identities (Black, 2008; Hine, 2000). Research in this field has found that within the online context, emoticons, avatars, acronyms, and other linguistic variations on social interaction assist in creating a sense of an online identity and presence (Thomas, 2007). Whilst researchers within this area acknowledge the *relational* aspect of identity, they also promote a *performative* view of identity (Papacharissi, 2011). According to Wood and Smith (2001), people perform their identities through the act of self-presentation – "[t]he process of setting forth an image we want others to perceive" (p. 47). Therefore, the related literatures define online identity as not only *who* you are in relation to others but also *how* you present yourself in the presence of others.

Pre-service teachers in online discussion groups

Although the literature indicates an ever-growing interest in investigating pre-service teachers under a range of contexts, only a few studies examine pre-service teacher identities within the context of a shared online space. From a comprehensive search for relevant literature, only a small number of similar studies could be located (Bloomfield, 2000; Goos & Bennison, 2008; Irwin & Hramiak, 2010; Skulstad, 2005; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012). Although these reported studies differ in direction, two overlapping research concerns emerge: (1) the issue of participation and (2) the issue of power and presence within the context of the online space.

The first concern that emerged from reviewing these literatures was the level of engagement shown by the pre-service teachers within the online space. Amongst these studies, there were significant differences in decisions and outcomes on how participation could and should have occurred. Whilst mandatory participation ensured that the pre-service teachers in Skulstad (2005) and Sutherland et al.'s (2010; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012) studies engaged in a high rate of activity, the level of voluntary participation in Bloomfield (2000), Goos and Bennison (2008), and Irwin and Hramiak (2010) study was either minimal or otherwise fluctuated depending on the need to communicate with others within the cohort.

These results suggest that given the choice between participating and not participating in the presence of teacher educators, pre-service teachers are less likely to participate and exhibit their identities within the online space. Their lack of participation raises a second major concern of these particular studies. Although the online participation of teacher educators varied from minimal to active, a constant variable in each study was the students' awareness of the power and presence of the teacher educator within the space. Bloomfield (2000) recalled how in one instance her participation in the group "appeared to 'silence' [a] student from further contributions," whilst Irwin and Hramiak (2010) commented on how the teacher educator they were observing appeared to inadvertently send mixed signals by simultaneously adopting the role of teacher educator and peer.

In the light of such outcomes, Bloomfield (2000), Goos and Bennison (2008), and Irwin and Hramiak (2010) assert that in order for pre-service teachers to feel encouraged to communicate and create a sense of self within the context of the online group, they must be able to completely feel safe within the environment. Having a safe space is particularly important for pre-service teachers at the beginnings of their professional experience in school, as it is during this time that they feel most vulnerable and isolated from what is familiar to them. By providing pre-service teachers with a space to call their own, identities may emerge more freely from within the online space. In the interests of investigating teacher identities in exploratory contexts, this study addressed this gap in the literature by examining pre-service teacher identities in online spaces which have to date not been colonised by the power or presence of teacher educators.

Methodology

Research scope

This research draws on data from a cohort of pre-service teachers part of a closed online group ("Ed Group") hosted on the popular social networking website Facebook. This cohort of education pre-service teachers uses Ed Group in order to discuss and share their degree-related interests and concerns. Only members of the Ed Group can grant Facebook users access to this online space.

All in this cohort currently study at an Australian university in order to obtain a Bachelor of Education as part of a 5-year combined degree accredited by the New South Wales Institute of Teachers. Commencing in the third year of their degree, this cohort undertook a 20-day block of professional experience, also known as their teaching practicum. In the following year, they taught at schools for a 25-day block. In their fifth year, they will have a 29-day internship during their final semester.

Due to data availability and time constraints, the study of this cohort was restricted to the periods of their first and second blocks of professional experience. Although the cohort have and still use Ed Group as part of an ongoing discussion group for themselves and their peers, we have intentionally focused on the time of their professional experience as they are often highlighted in the literature as a critical time for pre-service teachers' emerging professional identities (Pillen et al., 2013).

This study complied with standardised human ethics practices, and formal approval was obtained from the University's ethics committee. Informed consent was sought from all research participants, and our approach to data collection and analysis ensured that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants was protected.

Research participants

Ed Group includes 115 members. For this study, we examined the online posts of 61 of these group members. Of these 61, 8 served as focal participants. In addition to observing their posts, these three males (Joseph, Victor, and Kenneth) and five females (Nina, Grace, Alicia, Clara, and Tabitha) participated in one-on-one interviews. All focal participants included in this study expressed a deep commitment to the professional practice of teaching and a willingness to be critical and reflective of their own practice.

Data collection and analysis

Data sources

This study collected two forms of qualitative data: (1) audio-recordings of semi-structured interviews with focal participants and (2) online postings of all participants during their first and second blocks of professional experience. This yielded approximately 6 hours of transcribed interviews with individual focal participants and 1685 online posts from research participants.

Analysis of pre-service teacher identities

The thematic analysis of both the online and interview data followed three stages of coding based on guides by Neuman (2011) and Saldana (2011). The first stage began with an initial reading and pre-coding of moments of interest to the study. Next, we revised the pre-codes and developed descriptive codes. These codes were then categorised based on similarity and either combined to form a single code or categorised in order to produce an emerging theme. In the final stage of data analysis, we identified the meaning behind each code, elaborated upon them, and ultimately used the codes to formulate major themes.

In order to analyse the large online data corpus, we also conducted a quantitative analysis of the qualitative data to draw conclusions about pre-service teacher identities within the space. Young (1981) asserts that integrating quantitative elements to qualitative methods can lead to a "more meaningful analysis" of the data (p. 357). The quantitative

analysis of the online data corpus involved recording such details as frequency and date of each post. During the stages of data collection and analysis, we did not formulate numerical values such as these in direct response to our research questions, but rather they were developed concurrently with the thematic analysis in order to assist in the triangulation of the findings.

Findings and discussion

In order to explore how pre-service teachers *exhibited* and *conceptualised* their identities, we approach the findings from three main perspectives. First, we present an introductory overview to the research findings. Second, we examine how their identities emerged from identification with the norms of the group. Third, we discuss how pre-service teacher identities emerged when they individually negotiated the extent of their participation within the group.

Overview of research findings

From an interpretation of both data sets, we identified six main emergent identities – sociable, supportive, open, helpful, reliant, and hidden (see Table 1). In accordance with the literature, we classified these identities as expressing both a relational and a performative view of identity. These emergent identities do not encompass entirely who the participants are as people, but rather they reflect who they exhibit and conceptualise themselves to be based on their comments and postings. Therefore, the participants, their comments, and postings exhibited more than one of these identities (e.g., a participant can display both supportive *and* reliant identities in a single online post). It also means that they may embody identities beyond the scope of this study.

One surprising finding from an interpretation of the results was the evidence of hidden identities in Ed Group. In the absence of any online posts, a thematic analysis of the online data ascertained little to no information on *lurkers* – those hidden participants who did not post or posted very rarely during their practicum. However, evidence provided by

Table 1.   Codes supporting emergent identities.

Emergent identity	Supporting code(s) from online data	Supporting code(s) from interview data
Sociable	Humour and chit-chat	Providing comic relief
		Having off-topic conversations
Supportive	Giving affirmation	Giving affirmation
	Providing encouragement	Providing encouragement
	Showing empathy	
Open	Anecdotes from teaching practicum	"Venting"
	Opinions about teaching and learning	Being "heard"
	Self-reflections	Being "vulnerable"
Helpful	Providing help	Providing help
Reliant	Request(s) for help	Request(s) for help
	Giving "thanks"	Seeking "affirmation"
Hidden	-	Being "annoyed"
		Being "sick of it"
		Being "shy" and self-conscious

focal participants in their interviews enabled us to gain an insight into, and later explore, these hidden identities.

Another interesting observation found was the dichotomy between identities that worked towards identification with the group's online space and those that occupied and negotiated its marginal spaces. The processes of *identification* and *negotiability* are concepts taken from Wenger (1998). According to Wenger, identification and negotiability expresses the "tension" and "interplay" between "conflictual and coalescing aspects" of identity (p. 207). From an interpretation of the findings, we propose that sociable, supportive, helpful, and reliant identities emerge from identification with the norms and expectations of the group, whilst both open and hidden identities individually negotiated the extent of their participation and presence within the online discussion group. In what follows, we will further elaborate upon these relational and performed identities of identification and negotiability.

A friend in need is a friend indeed: netiquette as identification

The concept of *netiquette* is one not widely studied within the academic sphere, despite its use in everyday discourse (Bartz & Ehlrich, February 2, 2011). According to a classic work by Shea (1994), netiquette denotes a set of rules based on (1) common sense and courtesy, (2) technological limitations, and (3) conventional practices. The rules of netiquette are not concrete parameters for Internet users, but rather a concept largely dependent on the context in which the user is acting within. Due to the rather contextualised nature of netiquette, in recent years a number of publishers have released self-help guides that attempt to codify various rules of netiquette on online social media websites such as Facebook (Miller, 2013).

There is a strong case for linking the concept of netiquette to that of identity identification. One study by Skulstad (2005) suggests that pre-service teachers typically engage in netiquette when identifying with peers in an online forum. Skulstad noted the tendency of her students to use "politeness strategies" such as providing "praise" and "hedging" in their remarks of one another's work. For her students, these politeness strategies served to reinforce their social role as trustworthy and constructive advice-givers without jeopardising the friendly tone and harmonious group dynamic (p. 351 and 352).

From an analysis of both the online and interview data, we adopted the concept of netiquette as a viable way of framing why and how identities of identification emerged from the research findings. In order to promote a collegial online environment, data analysis revealed that participants consistently exhibited and conceptualised sociable, supportive, helpful, and reliant identities when interacting within the online Ed Group forum.

First, an analysis of the data indicated that the participants exhibited and were able to identify their reliance on their peers within the context of the online space. Dependency towards their peers emerged through requests for answers, advice to problems, or questions they had regarding their university or professional teaching experiences. Sixty-nine (6%) participant posts during the first practicum and 72 (8.6%) participant posts were requests for help regarding a range of practicum- and university-related issues.

Comparatively speaking, these requests for help constituted a relatively small portion of the codified online data (see Table 2 for a full comparison of the online codes). However, interviews with focal participants explicated their significance in terms of how the members related to and identified with one another within the online group. Grace noted in her interview that Ed Group is a place she can go to and ask, "'Oh guys,

Table 2. Frequency of online codes during first and second practicums.

Codes from online data	Frequency of code during first practicum	Frequency of code during second practicum	Total frequency of codes during both practicums
Humour and chit-chat	419	293	712
Anecdotes from teaching practicum	158	140	298
Providing help	179	98	277
Providing encouragement	144	67	211
Requests for help	69	72	141
Giving affirmation	58	39	97
Giving "thanks"	46	32	78
Showing empathy	31	41	72
Opinions about teaching and learning	30	37	67
Self-reflections	22	14	36
TOTAL:	**1156**	**833**	**1989**

does anyone have an idea for this?' and BAM! You've got five people with these creative ideas…It's amazing." According to Clara, members request for help in Ed Group because there is an unspoken social expectation that another peer in the group may be able to offer help regarding the request. Clara explains that the group is an online space where you can "ask for help and not be afraid to do so and people are going to respond." Comments such as these serve to suggest that being reliant on others is an important aspect of relating to and identifying with the group.

Second, *responding* to requests for help was another significant way in which these participants could relate to and identify with one another. During their first practicum, there were 179 instances in the first and 98 in the second practicum period of participants providing help to their peers in the form of resources, answers, and advice. In her interview, Grace described how – even though she was not able to undertake her second block of professional experience with the rest of her peers – "if someone said something about a lesson [on Ed Group] and [she] knew of a good resource…then [she] would [reply and share it with them]." According to Grace, she responded to requests because she "wanted to help" for the greater good of her peers and the group. Here Grace's statement suggests that members of Ed Group feel that it is important to help out one another not only because it is polite to do so, but also because it provides a sense of belonging to the group.

Third, pre-service teachers related to and identified with each other by being sociable and supportive. As Clara explained earlier, members do not always provide help when fellow members request for it. On some occasions, members would post light-hearted commentary, or otherwise offer messages of support to the individual. Whilst these sorts of messages did not offer practical help, focal participants claimed that peer encouragement, affirmation, and empathy helped to strengthen social ties within the group. During interviews, some participants such as Joseph and Kenneth expressed that being supportive and sociable in the group was important for the overall socio-emotional well-being and cohesion of the group. According to Kenneth, messages in Ed Group such as "hang in there," "look at this funny video," and "let's keep going guys!" are seen as commonplace because there is a common interest in making sure everyone "get[s] through" challenging situations such as completing university assessments and the undertaking of professional experience at schools.

Lastly, as a social expectation of the group, members generally adhered to the informal codes of netiquette. However, it must be noted that there were rare instances in which netiquette was not observed. One such occasion occurred when a group member recounted an experience from his practicum in which his tertiary teaching mentor advised him to change from a Bachelor of Education to a Masters of Teaching degree because she believed it was the more respected and valued of the two. Based on this post, an argument ensued between members regarding whether or not this was, in fact, true. In this particular instance, expletives were used by one member to express her resentment towards master's students, whilst another member used words such as "extremely naïve" and "slightly conceited" to challenge the legitimacy of her opinions. A similar occurrence to this one in Irwin and Hramiak (2010) study suggests that conflict of opinion does occur in such environments and that these instances serve to challenge how well groups can relate to and identify with one another within the online space. However, both in the instance described and in Irwin and Hramiak (2010) study, the immediate response to this "split" in opinion and identity was not to allow the split to grow but rather to "change the subject and then refer back to the shared student identity" (p. 371). Consequently, the argument quickly dissipated, and the conversation concluded with humour and general chit-chat.

To lurk or not to lurk: that is the question

As highlighted earlier, there are instances in which individuals within a group did not relate to or identify with the rest of the group. Instances such as these suggest that apart from wanting to conform to their peers, pre-service teachers also want to express opinions not necessarily shared by others. Furthermore, it suggests something unexplored in the related literature and it is that pre-service teachers challenge conventions by negotiating how they participate within the online space. From an analysis of the research data, two categories of what are labelled as negotiated identities emerged: (1) the open identities of the poster and (2) the hidden identities of the lurker. Given that existing research has suggested that these two identity types represent the vocal minority and the silent majority of groups online, it is worth discussing the findings of these two emergent identities as identities of negotiability – that is, identities that resist conformity within the group.

We will first begin this discussion with an explanation of what a lurker is and why lurking is practised by the hidden identities of this study. Lurking is an online activity in which an Internet user enters an online space habitually, but only posts sporadically or not at all (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2006). Within the field of education, students who lurk are of ongoing interest to teachers and researchers of online courses and communities of practice (Beaudoin, 2002; Dennen, 2008; Ebner, Holzinger, & Catarci, 2005). However, research specifically on pre-service teachers who lurk within a common online space is currently minimal. Given that existing research on online lurking has suggested that over 90% of online groups consist of lurkers, to discount their presence would be problematic for the purposes of this study (Nonnecke & Preece, 2000).

Related research on online lurking suggests there is a strong case for counting lurkers as negotiated identities within the context of the online space. In their study of 19 "reasons for lurking," Preece, Nonnecke, and Andrews (2004) found that the major categorical reasons for why their study participants lurked in online groups were: (1) they didn't need to post, (2) they needed to find out more about the group, (3) they thought they were being helpful by not posting, (4) they couldn't make the software work, (5) they didn't like or fit the dynamics of the group. Thus according to the responses provided by these participants, lurkers are present and thoughtful members of online groups.

Whilst a quantitative analysis of the online data could only identify the hidden participants who lurked, evidence provided by focal participants in their interviews suggests that there is a correlation between reasons why people lurk on Ed Group and the reasons for lurking as reported in Preece et al.'s 2004 study. Interviews with focal participants, for example, suggest that hidden identities inhabit but do not visibly participate within the online space because they do not need or feel the need to post. According to Clara, sometimes members simply "don't have anything to say." Alicia agreed with this sentiment by recounting how she did not post updates of her experiences during her second practicum because she felt that "there just wasn't anything. . .interesting enough" she wanted to share with the rest of the group.

Interviews also suggested that hidden identities lurk on the margins rather than perform within the online space because they do not fit or like the dynamics of the group. In her interview, focal participant Tabitha described herself as a "shy" and "reserved" person who prefers to "absorb" the online interaction occurring within the Facebook group rather than actively participate within group discussions. She attributed her online behaviour to the "massive sense of insecurity" she feels when she is in the presence of such a large number of her peers. Tabitha occasionally does post on the page, but when she does so it is done so with a degree of confidence that her fellow group members will appreciate it. Overall, she describes her identity as ill-suited for Ed Group and her online interaction is primarily "based on preservation and survival."

According to focal participants, other pre-service teachers lurk rather than participate because they simply do not like behaviour of some members of Ed Group. A popular topic in discussions amongst focal participants was their strong disapproval towards the so-called vocal minority who they describe as using the space for purely selfish performances. During his interview, Victor stated he disagreed with what he perceived as the heavily "personal," "political," and "religious" performances on the online forum. Similarly, Grace notes that "people were getting annoyed" because a certain individual was being *too* open on the page, "telling their every moment at the school – good and bad." Nina adds to this sentiment by describing how another individual on the page "posts a lot and posts. . .a lot of negative things" and is "one person in our cohort who feels the need for affirmation through the group."

According to these focal participants, it is this cynicism they and others feel towards these so-called selfish people that compel others to lurk on the periphery rather than participate. Victor explained that in order to avoid the unproductive talk of the online group he intentionally distances himself from the group simply by lurking and only minimally contributing to the online discussions. Additionally, Nina reported that she sometimes felt too self-conscious about sharing the positive experiences of her practicum because she was worried she would be perceived as "discounting other people's negative experiences," especially at a time when "they wanted affirmation and encouragement."

In the light of these opinions, it may be tempting to propose that the very open and vocal minority cast a proverbial dark shadow over the collegial nature of Ed Group. However, it must be noted that not all participant discussions about very open identities were framed in a negative light. During her first practicum, Alicia regularly uploaded video reflections onto the Ed Group page. Although Alicia primarily used the online space to pursue her own personal ambitions of reflecting on her first practicum in a candid and creative manner, she reported on how "stunned" and "flattered" she felt when she had members of the group approach her to say that they "watched [her video reflections] all the time" and wanted her to continue posting video reflections because they "were really

keen" to see some more. Rather than encountering hostility for opening herself up to others, Alicia reported that she received much praise and support from her peers.

Conclusions, limitations, and implications

According to James Paul Gee (2000), identity occurs when individuals and groups are recognised as embodying a particular "kind of person…at a given time and place." This kind of person "can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable" (p. 99). In this study, we have analysed posts and interviews from members of a pre-service teacher online discussion group in order to gain insight into the identities and the interrelationships between these various kinds of people. From an analysis and interpretation of the results, we propose that the participants broadly assumed the following characteristics. First, the results indicated that participants did and were willing to exhibit and conceptualise identities of identification towards their peers within the online group by being reliant, helpful, supportive, and sociable towards each other. Second, the findings also suggested that whilst most group members upheld the values of netiquette within the online space, there were instances and circumstances in which members could not relate to one another and thus did not conform to the conventional functions of the space. This lack of identification was characteristic of open and hidden identities within the online group. A lack of identification by open and hidden identities also created a tension amongst the group that ultimately served to highlight in the findings the "conflictual and coalescing aspects" of both identities-in-making as well as identities-in-meeting (Wenger, 1998, p. 207).

Whilst this study established important findings, the scope of research was limited in several respects. Mainly, the sampling method used to select participants for this study was opportunistic and consisted of recruited volunteers from the identified cohort. Therefore, the results are in no way fully representative of all the members of the online discussion group. Additionally, the study only sampled the posts for a short duration of time, meaning that we were not able to comprehensively observe participant online posts or discuss the transformation of their posts over time. A potential direction for future research could involve a longitudinal study, which includes all group members as research participants.

This study analysed and interpreted how and what identities emerged from an online discussion group established by a cohort of pre-service teachers. It is the first of its kind, as up to this point research on pre-service teachers has been unable to research pre-service teacher identities in non-course-endorsed or instructor-occupied online discussion groups. Consequently, this study describes how pre-service teachers relate and do not relate to, perform and do not perform in the absence of their instructors. From this research, it is worthwhile considering whether or not online discussion groups such as this one are a truly safe and positive space for pre-service identity development and, furthermore, whether or not teacher educators should colonise these spaces – and if so, how. Although these questions are by no means straightforward, they are important to consider in the continuing interests of understanding and educating the kinds of people suitable and prepared to engage in the work and profession that is teaching.

Notes on contributors

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