This Is My Story: Preservice English Teachers Create Welcome Videos to Navigate the Places and Spaces of Their Literacy Lives

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This article describes a recent collective case study of English language arts methods students at a large university in the southwestern United States who created literacy-based welcome videos addressed to future students. By crafting "This is my Story" videos, preservice teachers practiced technology implementation with traditionally print-based approaches, integrating multimodal media text creation and biographical narration. Digital autobiographies support preservice teachers' ability to interrogate their own contexts in ways that prepare them to facilitate diverse literacy communities in which all voices have value. Findings suggest that purposeful applications of technology can help English teacher candidates cultivate literacy identities and hone digital literacies as part of their teacher preparation.

Cassidy (pseudonym) was one of nine participants who created welcome videos for her future secondary students in a recent English language arts (ELA) methods course (Audio 1).

This study of preservice teachers' literacy stories responds to the need for teacher educators to address the growing complexities of 21st-century ELA, to answer Morrell's (2015) call to action, by "doing tomorrow in today's classrooms" (p. 312). Leveraging digital literacies toward self-examination supports preservice teachers' ability to interrogate their own contexts in ways that prepare them to facilitate diverse literacy communities in which all voices have value. The purpose of this research was to investigate how digital literacies can help preservice ELA teachers negotiate literacy identities while developing practices for effective technology integration in their future classrooms.

Literature Review

In their recent national study of technology in ELA teacher education, Pasternak et al. (2016) argued that, despite digital literacies playing an essential role in the teaching and learning of disciplinary content, technology is inconsistently utilized across methods courses, field placements, and student teaching. Although the benefits of technology integration with traditional textual practices continue to be highlighted across English education and literacy scholarship, a lack of professional development endures as a main obstacle for effective implementation in the training of future teachers (Flanagan & Shoffner, 2013; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). Emphasizing the incorporation of digital literacies in preservice teachers' coursework can help bridge this gap by supporting the expansion of their understanding of literacy and helping them establish innovative teaching practices (Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2017).

Like a host of other educational disciplines, ELA has responded to the growing ubiquity of technology platforms and contemporary digital devices by considering the impact of digital literacies on content area teaching and learning (ELATE Commission on Digital Literacy in Teacher Education, 2018; National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE] Executive Committee, 2013). Scholarship centering on the use of technology in ELA teacher education continues to flourish, with numerous studies in a variety of areas, including developing online learning communities (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015); practicing critical media literacy (Ortega, 2013); digitized analysis of instructional practices (Schieble, Vetter, & Meacham, 2015); examining teachers' beliefs about technology (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2013); and more. As our definitions of literacy expand, so do the kinds of interactions teacher educators can model between learners, literacy practices, and multimodal texts (Pasternak et al., 2014).

While this research represents comprehensive examinations of technology's impact on education, digitizing ELA teacher education spaces involves more than improving knowledge of teaching and learning with digital tools. Far fewer studies have investigated how digital literacies can support identity development in pedagogy and practice.

In her call for teacher candidates to shed notions of technology as merely supplementary tools, Hsieh (2018) framed digital literacies as integral to self-reflection and agency: "Positioning teachers as active agents, with particular dispositions that inform their professional choices, moves discussions of technology use beyond notions of skills-based competency" (para. 10). Deeper investigations into the cultivation of identities using digital literacies are accessible within the intersections of literacy, language, and culture in ELA teacher education (Watulak et al., 2018).

When teacher educators prioritize students' life stories, including their methods of making meaning, as central to their experiences in learning how to teach, teacher candidates are more likely to cultivate justice-oriented pedagogies organically (Marlatt & Cibils, 2018; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Through the recognition of diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities, teacher education becomes a space where literacy curriculum and instruction is developed alongside agency (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). Agency and technology are especially relevant concepts in multicultural contexts, where critical, socially situated approaches have the power to disrupt stereotypical and static understandings of cultural identity, as well as the replication of top-down, transmissive teaching patterns (Nieto, 2010).

Narrative practices such as autobiography help preservice teachers explore their identity and generate crosscultural competence, because by accessing their own backgrounds with

critical insight, they build connections with peers and develop empathy toward students (Ellerbrock, Cruz, Vasquez, & Howes, 2016; Florio-Ruane, 2001). Future teachers have often forged identities and cultivated agency through writing exercises such as poetry and vignettes (Morgan, 2010; Zimmerman, Morgan, & Kidder-Brown, 2014). More recently, implementation of digital literacies has supported explorations of teacher identity through social media platforms and intersectional frameworks such as Connected Learning (Rust & Cantwell, 2018).

Trend (2010) highlighted video storytelling as a potential link between identity-driven literacy learning and ELA subject matter, enabling intrapersonal connections between students and literary periods, artistic movements, and canonical and contemporary literature. Videos can help teachers and learners shape digital communities transferrable between social contexts and academic settings (Hsieh, 2018).

Video creation opens spaces within curriculum and instruction for innovative interactions among students and texts, promoting a pedagogical turn from isolated classroom activity toward socialized learning environments (Jenkins, 2009). For a discipline long connected with print-based approaches to traditional conceptions of texts and literacy practices, digital adaptations are vital for advancing identities of future teachers (Morrell, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The challenges of transforming historically print-dominated models of curriculum and instruction into socially situated, culturally relevant literacy learning accounted for by digital literacies are significant in ELA teacher education, where enduring obstacles such as availability of technology and institutional commitment to existing structures are prevalent (Pasternak et al., 2016). As Pasternak et al. (2014) argued, innovative approaches to technology implementation are needed to adequately train future teachers of English. In response, the theoretical framework (Figure 1) utilized by this study draws equally upon three promising areas of research, proposing that transmediated curricular approaches can inspire participatory cultures among preservice teachers resulting in the design of 21st-century learning opportunities.
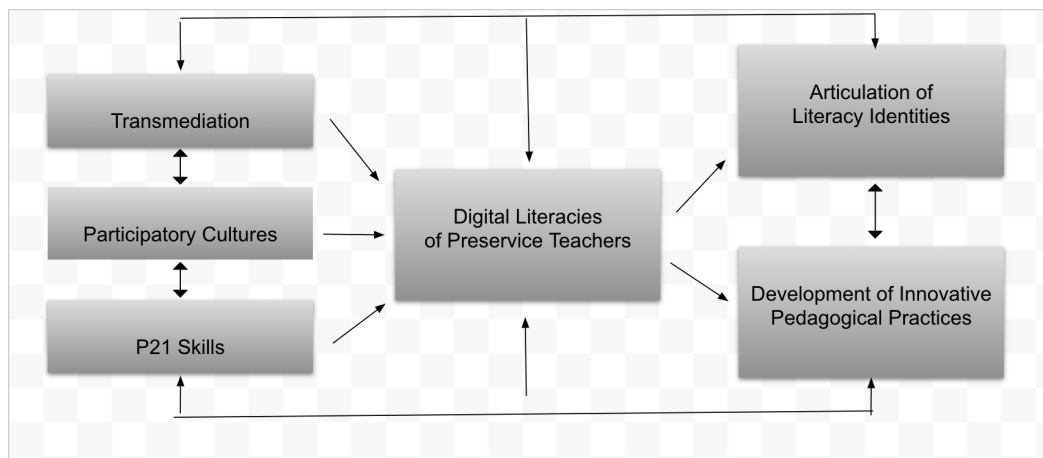

Figure 1. *Theoretical framework.*

Siegel (1995) defined the process of transmediation as, "translating meanings from one sign system (such as language) into another (such as pictorial representation)" (p. 456). Generating transfers of meaning across media involves not only an understanding of how

to utilize different platforms, but also conceptualizing how content is shaped and reshaped as a result (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2014; Siegel, 1995).

As the use of digital tools in education continues to expand, teachers and learners constantly formulate new multimodal manners of expression that help broaden normalized techniques of textual interaction (Loretto & Chisholm, 2012). The digitization of print-based approaches, such as creating videos for future students instead of composing written welcome letters, helps preservice teachers imagine their work in 21st-century classrooms (Trend, 2010).

Transmediated classroom operations invite critical approaches to a variety of topics, including class and society, power structures, race, and gender (Semali, 2002). In teacher education spaces, transmediation processes using digital media such as video autobiographies created by preservice teachers have the power to enhance teaching and learning of ELA topics (Leach, 2017). Enacting a transmediated curricula at the preservice level involves the cultivation and sustainment of a participatory culture, in which future teachers are invited to create content through hands-on experiences with technology, apply learned skills in practice, and coconstruct reflections on their developing pedagogies (Jaipal-Jamani & Figg, 2015).

Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel (2006) defined participatory cultures as having "relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices" (p. 3). As participants in a digital era, teachers and learners collaborate by navigating through and across media texts, underscoring how technology offers socially situated academic operations reflective of 21st-century communication (Jenkins, 2009).

Digital tools allow participatory cultures to flourish, because they facilitate producer-driven activity and inspire interactive communities (Baker-Doyle, 2018). Although many preservice teachers enter their undergraduate programs as digital natives, they lack instructional technology skills required for contemporary teaching, which positions spaces of teacher education to be pivotal in developing abilities to transfer meaning across texts and cultivate cultures of participation among K-12 learners (Pasternak et al., 2016).

Despite an ongoing influx of new technologies since the turn of the century, English teachers in K-12 and university settings have been slow to transform their curricular design or instructional methods and are reluctant to modify how they think and talk about their craft (Purcell, Heaps, Buchanan, & Friedrich, 2013). Howell, Kaminski, and Hunt-Barron (2016) suggested that the root of this impasse can be found, not in the types of technology students are using, but in how they are being asked to use them; specifically, in-school digital practices are not nearly as collaborative, creative, or purposeful as outside of school. In response to these conditions, educators at all levels must model practices of engaged digital participation (Jewitt & Kress, 2010; Kress, 2003; Mills, 2010; Siegel, 2012).

The need to make digital literacies a significant component of ELA learning experiences rather than a tool merely to facilitate subject matter is perhaps no more pressing than in teacher education, where future teachers develop competencies and practices that will directly impact students in schools (Pasternak et al., 2016). Promoting collaborative digital practices across texts is not without challenges; fortunately, teacher educators can look to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21, n.d.), an established framework in K-12 settings, for direction on how to design meaningful technology implementation (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006).

P21 "advocates for the integration of 21st Century Skills into K-12 education so that students can advance their learning in core academic subjects" (para. 1). Twelve skills (Appendix A) have been identified as vital for students to master in school and instrumental to their success in future endeavors, both academic and professional. By promoting global competency and workplace readiness through the adaptation of learning spaces, P21 works to mirror professional world expectations in learning objectives and activities within classrooms.

P21 posits that life and school successes are equally facilitated by multimodal, multifaceted meaning-making. This commitment to technological innovation in education offers teacher educators a blueprint for broad interpretations of textual activities and literacy that will support new teachers in schools.

Contexts

Teaching Language Arts in Middle and High School is the name of a secondary methods course seniors take during their semester prior to student teaching. Through weekly meetings on my campus at a large university in the southwestern United States, the seminar is designed to build on students' accumulated interests in English subject matter, such as literature study and writing genres. A conjoined practicum component later on in the semester allows them to work with a cooperating teacher in local classrooms throughout the week. This course helps preservice teachers situate their training in a way that is both cumulative for them as humanities-minded university students and formative as young professionals preparing to share their knowledge with adolescents through the design of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction.

As 21st-century educators, students are expected to enmesh the canonical heritage and multicultural traditions of the English discipline by modeling digital literacies that speak to the socially situated, media-driven environments and evolving global communities occupied by adolescents. Through deep reflection on their notions of literacy, preservice teachers explore authentic ways to guide the success of readers, writers, and meaning-makers in an increasingly digitized world, while generating pathways by which diverse adolescents can utilize literacy to shape their futures. These objectives entail literacy-based connections between teacher candidates that are both personal and pedagogical.

A number of texts and activities are central to helping preservice teachers initiate narrative self-reflection. Using readings from critical texts such as Susan Florio-Ruane's (2001) *Teacher Education and the Cultural Imagination* and Matthew Lipman's (2010) *Thinking in Education*, I ask students to articulate the cultural dynamics that shape their beliefs and literacy practices, while encouraging empathic considerations of the multiple heritages of their future students. When teacher candidates approach cultural identity as fluid, deictic amalgamations of factors including race, literacy traditions, ethnicity, and historical contexts as opposed to a fixed stature, they are more likely to respond to future students with compassion and reflective, inquiry-driven models of practice (Florio-Ruane, 2010; Lipman, 2010).

Asking developing teachers to complicate their biographies through narratives that consider both their cultural and literacy identities is an important step in modeling critical pedagogy and justice-oriented approaches to teaching and learning (Freire, 1970). Integrating these practices with candidates' digital literacies is a responsive choice, in that it affords preservice teachers opportunities to create content via platforms they are accustomed to in social contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Authentic, technology-infused explorations of literacy within teacher education settings are vital for preservice teachers

who are learning how to construct participatory cultures in secondary ELA (Jenkins et al., 2006).

Literacy Story Welcome Video Project

In light of these objectives, the Literacy Story project (Appendix B) was implemented as a way to begin the semester, as teacher candidates are starting their final term of coursework prior to student teaching and will later have the opportunity in their practicum settings to apply learning theories and lesson designs they initiate in our university space. As a digital update to a traditional welcome letter, candidates introduced themselves to their future students in a video lasting 3-5 minutes, emphasizing aspects of their literacy lives as a way potentially to create learning environments that celebrate diverse sociocultural factors such as cultural traditions and literacy practices as strengths that can be leveraged for academic success.

Week 1. During discussions of cultural narratives in our opening week together, I challenged students to complicate their autobiographies with critical reflections on their literacy backgrounds before introducing the project. I asked questions such as, "What kinds of literacy practices and cultural traditions did you grow up with?" and "How does your background shape the kind of writer and thinker you are?" As they shared, participants kept notes in their journals.

Week 2. I assigned readings on narrative and inquiry from Florio-Ruane (2001) and Lipman (2010) for our second meeting. We talked about the importance of self-reflection and its impact on pedagogy and identity. Following these discussions, participants then worked together to begin brainstorming talking points and crafting scripts for their literacy stories (Figure 2).

Week 3. Once they were satisfied with their scripts and preparation, participants were invited to begin recording their videos over the course of the next several days. Some students recorded in vacant classrooms inside our education building, while others preferred public arenas such as coffee shops. Others filmed in the private spaces of their homes. Participants utilized a variety of devices including smartphones, iPads, and laptops, as well as a number of software applications such as i-Movie, YouTube, Windows Media Player, and more. The videos themselves were also mixed, with some narratives closely following scripts, while others were produced in impromptu, stream-of-consciousness formats. All videos were uploaded to our course page in Canvas, our university's learning management system (Figure 3).
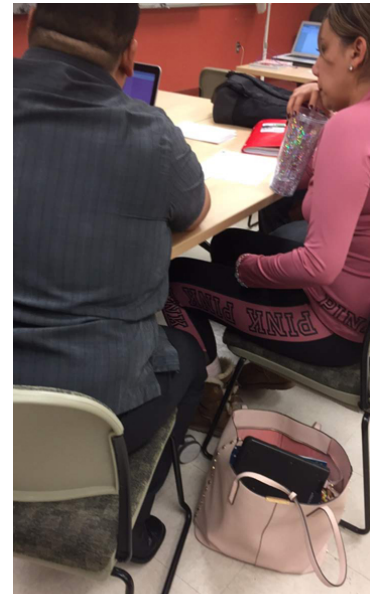

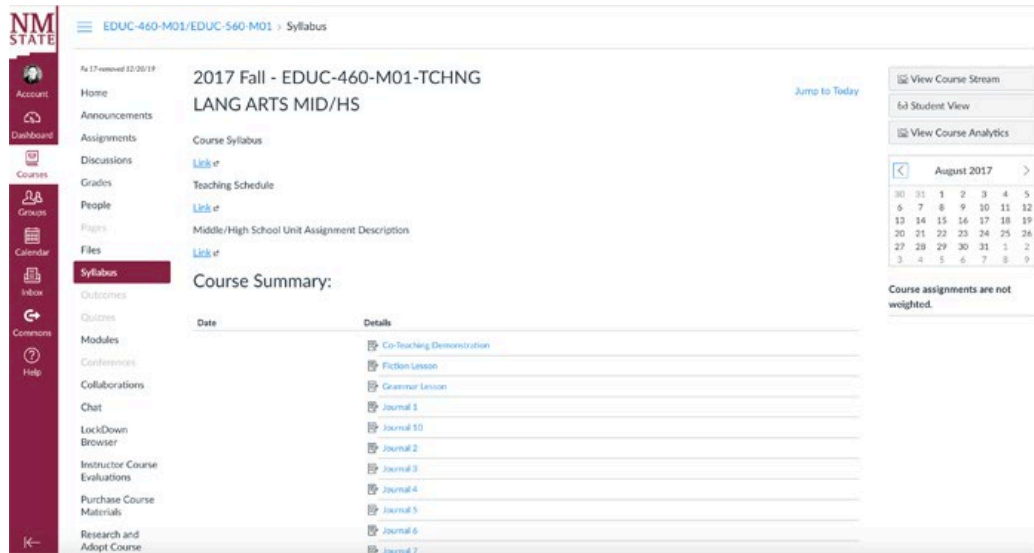**Figure 2**. *Participants brainstorming talking points.*

Figure 3. *Canvas course homepage.*

Peggy (pseudonym), who described herself as a newcomer to video creation, took her process one step at a time and utilized the free application Screencast-o-matic to record her video in the classroom directly following our Week 3 methods course meeting (Figure 4).
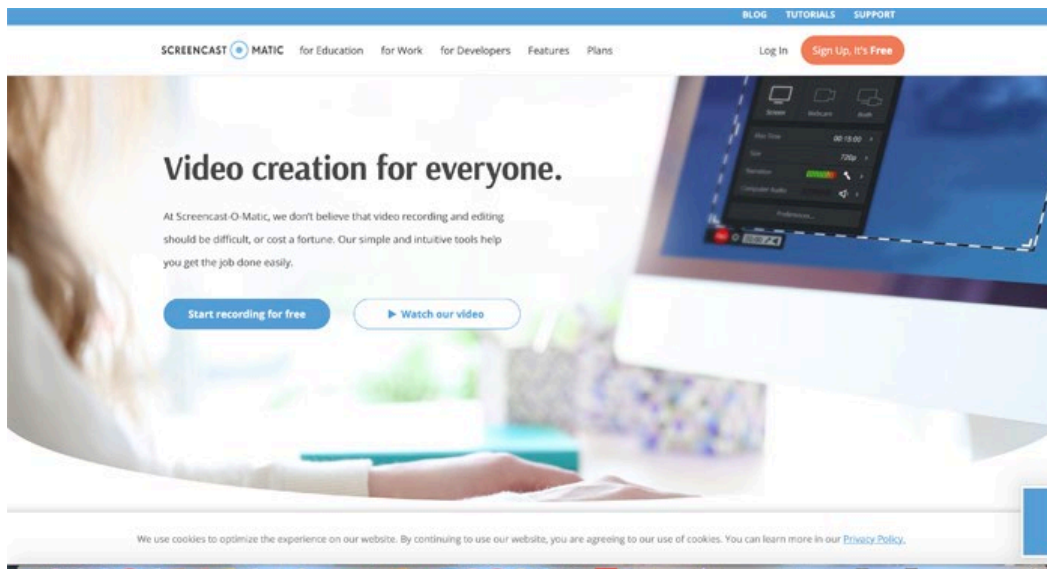

Figure 4. *Screencast-O-Matic homepage.*

While Screencast-o-matic invites users to create an account within the system, registration is not required. Peggy elected to bypass this step and access the free recording program (Figure 5).
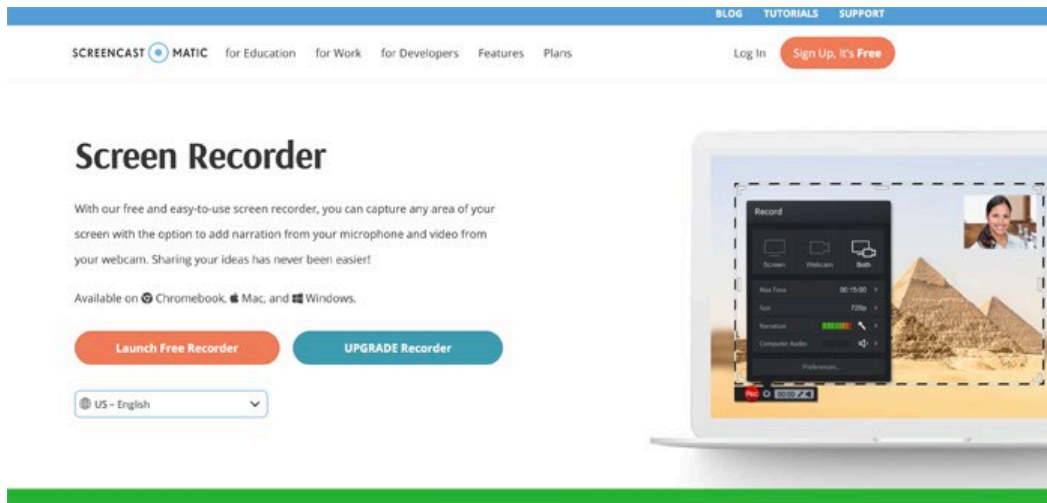
Figure 5. *Screen recorder and video editor.*

With the empty room around her quiet and her script in hand, Peggy launched the live screen and activated the web camera recorder (Figure 6).
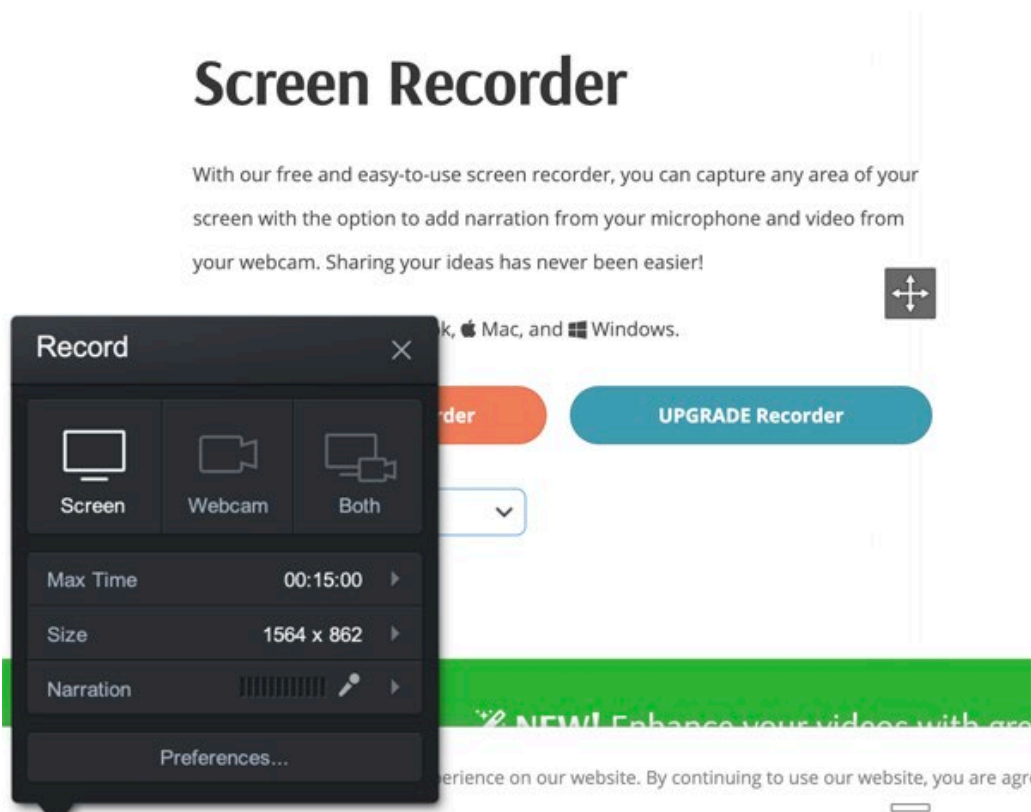

Figure 6. *Video recorder launch.*

After needing to restart her recording a few times, Peggy was satisfied with her video (Audio 2), which clocks in at just under three-and-a-half minutes.

Barely 30 minutes into her session, Peggy had finished her recording, and she navigated to our Canvas course page, where she uploaded her video file into the Welcome Video link (Figure 7) that I had embedded within the Assignments tab.
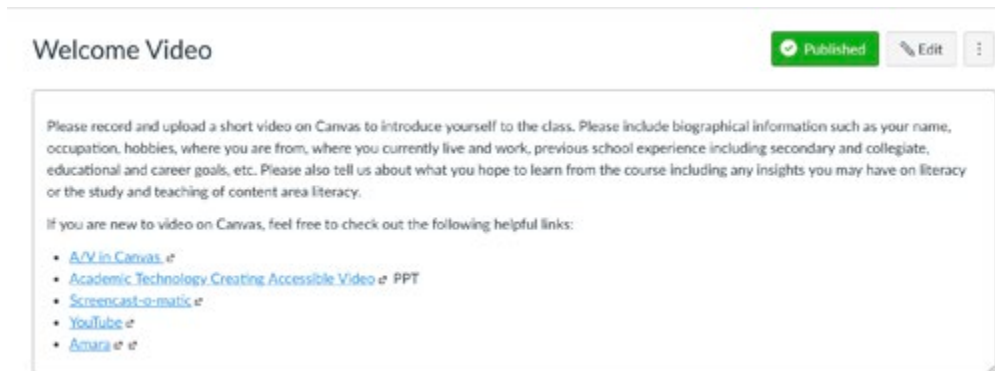

Figure 7. *Welcome video portal.*

Week 4. While Peggy's was the first video uploaded, other participants added theirs throughout the week, leading up to our Week 4 meeting. During class, each student screened their video for their peers (Figure 8), which was followed by an open class discussion on the entire experience of creating the welcome videos. Students shared a variety of insights, including challenges with producing content across different digital tools, as well as comparing and contrasting their projects with traditional welcome letters they had composed in previous classes.
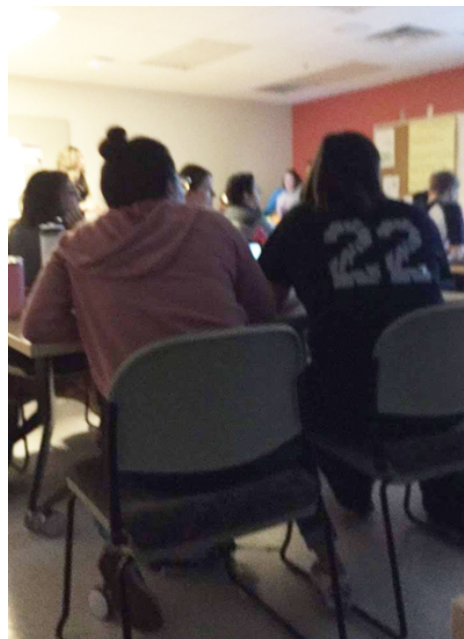

Figure 8. *Students view peers' videos.*

Week 5. During our next class meeting, I asked students to reflect individually on their literacy stories and describe their feelings about making the videos by responding to a

writing prompt. In their writing, students reflected on a range of aspects, such as how they felt they had conveyed themselves to future student viewers, as well as the kinds of connections they felt to their development as educators.

Week 6. During the final week of the study, I conducted semistructured interviews with each participant. Each interview was conducted in a room adjacent to our classroom. Participants rotated between interview sessions and a lesson plan design activity, which they completed in small groups.

Methods

This study aimed to examine the following question: How can welcome videos help ELA preservice teachers leverage digital literacies toward crafting literacy identities and practicing effective technology implementation? A collective case study design was utilized, as these events were experienced by a group of individuals and observable within similar settings (Stake, 1995). Collective case studies allow for the comparative exploration of multiple cases and can help researchers contextualize phenomena while suggesting areas for further investigation (Plummer, 2001). Nine preservice teachers participated in the study, which took place during the fall 2017 semester and lasted 6 weeks. Table 1 illustrates the self-identified ethnicity and gender of each participant (pseudonyms used), along with details of their requests for future practicum placements in local schools.

Data Collection

I collected a variety of data over the course of 6 weeks (Table 2) in an attempt to understand how preservice teachers' digital literacies helped them tell their literacy stories in welcome videos (as suggested in Stake, 2005). The first data I collected were the videos themselves, as well as a recording of our in-class discussion centered on the experiences of creating literacy stories. I also asked participants to describe their feelings about creating their digital literacy stories by responding to a writing prompt (Appendix C). Finally, I conducted individual, semistructured interviews (Appendix D) that each lasted approximately 20 minutes. These conversations gave preservice teachers the chance to share their experiences of using the welcome videos to describe themselves and their teaching for future students.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data in two stages, initially looking at each individual case, before combining and comparing cases across the collection (as in Stake, 2005). The first step with each case was to ascertain how participants told their literacy stories and to gauge the impact of their videos on their developing pedagogies. This process involved a close reading of video and interview transcriptions and writing responses and was followed by a round of open coding (Creswell, 2013). After similar codes such as "made me more approachable" and "see me as welcoming" were combined into "established an invitational stance," 33 codes were identified across the cases.

The second stage of analysis began with comparing and collapsing codes from the nine cases into five meaningful categories (Table 3). My next step was to compose a series of analytical memos that detailed how cases compared through triangulation, all the while synthesizing themes across the collection to create a collective case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I then addressed the complex process of understanding personal and pedagogical insights of literacy identity through thick, rich description (Donmoyer, 2013).

Table 1
ELA Methods Students

Preservice Teacher	Unit Description	Gender	Request for Practicum Placement
August	Latino	Male	Middle School Grade 8 Language Arts
Casey	Caucasian	Female	High School Grade 11 American Literature
Cassidy	Latina	Female	High School Grade 12 British Literature
Charlie	Latina	Female	Middle School Grade 12 British Literature
Jack	Caucasian	Male	Middle School Grade 11 American Literature
Peggy	Caucasian	Female	Middle School Grade 11 American Literature
Viola	Latina	Female	Middle School Grade 9 Composition
Rose	Latina	Female	Middle School Grade 9 Composition
Shannon	Latina	Female	High School Grade 10 Drama

Table 2
Data Collection Timeline

Week	Dates	Methods Course Activities
Week 1	8/21-8/25	Introductions. Course objectives. Discussions about literacy identities.
Week 2	8/28-9/1	Begin recording Literacy Story Welcome Videos.
Week 3	9/4-9/8	Continue recording Literacy Story Welcome Videos.
Week 4	9/11-9/15	Literacy Story Welcome Videos are viewed and discussed in class.
Week 5	9/18-9/22	Writing reflections on Literacy Story Welcome Videos
Week 6	9/25-9/29	Conduct Semistructured interviews.

Positionality

My position as a practitioner-researcher encompassed typical teacher educator roles and responsibilities such as facilitating discussions and constructivist activities related to course readings and materials, especially the design of the project itself. Observing participants in action while they created their videos gave me the opportunity to view their engagement first-hand. As the methods instructor, I offered assistance when asked and inserted my own feedback when necessary. I also prompted participants' narrative inquiry by asking questions about their literacy practices and encouraging them to think critically. For the most part, however, I operated in our weekly methods meetings as an attentive observer, hoping to understand the impact of preservice teachers' digital literacy practices on their developing pedagogies.

Table 3
Category Development Sample

Category	Sample Data
1. Preservice teachers reflect on their literacy identity.	In my own personal literacy aside from teaching, I find myself always torn between academic reading and enjoyable reading, I am trying to close the gap and find my reading enjoyable ALWAYS. This makes me want to limit the gap for my students. I thought this project helped me with that.
2. Preservice teachers consider approaches to 21st Century learning.	Just another way to change it up. When you first talked to us about this assignment I was thinking it would never fly in my high school classes. But we never read those introductory letters if they event sent them. My teachers just wouldn't do something like this. But clearly it's an important part of meeting their needs and we all know they are heavily influenced by technology.
3. Preservice teachers focus on empowering the voices of their students.	I thought the entire thing was very personal. And I would do it again. I was able to show my enthusiasm for ELA and going into teaching, which might get students fired up on their end. I shared a lot and was really genuine. I don't think they probably always think that about their teachers.
4. Preservice teachers focus on the power of words in ELA.	I guess for me this was huge and when I have my own classroom I want to share that experience with students. Whether it's poems, writing, music, literature circles, whatever. Words are still so powerful.
5. Preservice teachers consider future implementations of this activity and other digital literacies.	I think my future students would respond differently to the tech. I liked the added stimulus of sound & picture, which could possibly give them a better impression of myself. I think it could definitely work and I might even try to spice it up a little with my own touch, maybe using some slide effects and voice over. They might really got into it, which would made me excited too.

Findings

Findings are presented in this section from the collective case study of nine preservice teachers who created literacy-based welcome videos in our methods course. Sample data from participants offer support for claims made throughout these results, including excerpts from interviews and written reflections, as well as inclusion and analyses of the nine videos, themselves. Pseudonyms and audio versions of the videos are utilized throughout these results, as I share the story of the literacy identity each participant crafted in digital spaces.

Using technology as a platform for critical self-reflection and articulation of their literacy selves positioned preservice teachers to interrogate numerous factors related to identity. For most participants, this project marked the first time in their training that they had been asked to consider contexts surrounding literacy practices of their early childhood and adolescence, question how and why they had chosen particular paths, and define who they were as developing practitioners of literacy education. In addition, most had never been asked before to compose a video as an assignment within their teacher education coursework.

While the experience of video creation engaged participants' digital literacies, writing prompts and interview sessions afforded them the opportunity to share their reactions to the project, both in terms of integrating technology in their instructional approaches and in shaping their literacy identities for future students. Learning what preservice teachers thought about their growth in using technology while examining their videos offered key insights into how they engaged digitally with their developing pedagogies. Participants revealed in their interviews and reflections that, while creating videos for future students posed challenges, they appreciated the project and found it to be a valuable experience as preservice teachers looking to integrate technology.

Several participants focused quite literally on a sense of place in describing their literacy identities, while others were more nuanced with their sense of location and described their literacy identities as a collection of both seen and unseen spaces. Many videos featured the notion of empowering student voices, both in terms of how participants defined their literacy identities and in how they planned to approach teaching and learning in their future classrooms.

Some participants freely shared personal aspects of their identities while others highlighted the importance of making one's voice heard through composition and discussion. Other literacy stories were more content driven, with preservice teachers expounding in their videos on the inspirational power of words in ELA curriculum and instruction. At the heart of these stories is the interaction between preservice teachers and pedagogy made possible by the process of video creation.

August Discovered the Value of Telling Stories

August was the eldest participant and had begun his pursuit of a teaching career later in life than his peers in the course. Though he alluded to texts and reading engagement in his literacy story (Audio 3), he emphasized his identity as a "constant and daily learner" and interpreted ELA knowledge and skills as a gateway toward interdisciplinary academic success as well as integral to professional endeavors. While other participants largely approached the notion of becoming a literacy educator as the next step in a linear series of life events, August described literacy in much broader terms, discussing his winding, expansive journey to teaching.

August admitted he was nervous about putting his digital literacies to the test but was grateful for the chance to extend his skillset for the sake of connecting with future students. Sharing his satisfaction with the outcome during his interview, August noted,

> It forced me out of my comfort zone, exactly what I'll ask students to do later on. I think it's a trust thing. If I want them to be doers and to do the doing, I have to model that.

In his written reflection (Figure 9), August indicated satisfaction with the project, calling it an "enjoyable" experience that allowed him to be "expressive and real." August added that he "would definitely do a welcome video" again for students in the future.
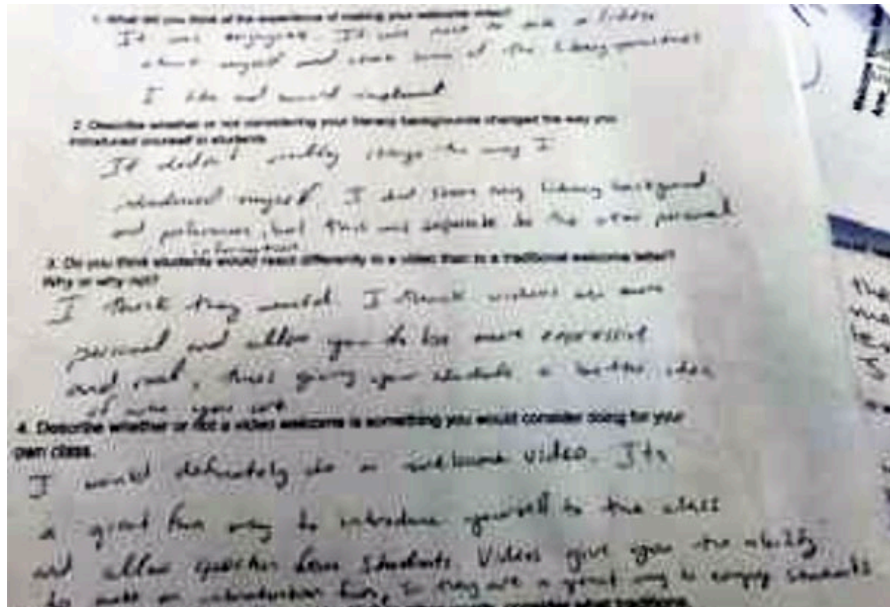

Figure 9. *August's written reflection.*

August also shared the importance of leveraging his video toward discussions of racial identities with his future students. Toward the end of his interview, August stated,

> My identity is shaped by Spanish customs. That's who I am. By sharing how proud I am, I think that will make students comfortable sharing who they are, especially kids from other backgrounds. Making the video helped me realize this.

In sharing a range of interesting facts about his life and literacy identity in his video, August felt that his voice could "inspire" future students to "be proud of who they are" and to "never be afraid to learn new things." August felt his literacy story could help future students appreciate "seeing someone who believed in them and talked and looked like them at the same time." The opportunity to compose a digital narrative allowed August to solidify his identity and celebrate the stories of his future students as well.

Jack Demonstrated the Experience of Humanization Through Video

In his literacy story, Jack (Audio 4) focused less on academic skills in favor of holistic learning opportunities, articulating ELA as a source of "personal freedom" in the lives of young adults, enabling the construction of "new ideas" and "new viewpoints" through analytical writing. Following a brief personal statement about why he became an English teacher, Jack described the multiple perspectives that reflective literacy practices can offer, including temporary respites from "harsher realities," not in order to permanently evade the problems of the world, but to understand and improve people's lives.

Jack indicated in his interview that he enjoyed the challenge of articulating his literacy identity for future students and predicted he would repeat the exercise again in the future. Citing "greater engagement" in the assignment and "stronger connections" to his

development as a practitioner, Jack appreciated the opportunity to move "out of his comfort zone" for the sake of potentially "higher student buy-in." Jack highlighted a level of authenticity he felt when creating his video as opposed to composing a printed welcome letter in a previous class:

> It changed the way I introduced myself. Before, I hadn't thought about telling students really who I was or how I was going to teach. I basically said where I was from. This actually meant something. I'll do it again.

Jack attested that the digital medium altered not only how he thought about interacting with future students but expanded the kinds of personal connections he felt videos could foster between teachers and learners.

Viola Created Opportunities for Authentic Connections

Viola (Audio 5) produced perhaps the most candid literacy story in the study. She described ELA content as a safe haven where people see first-hand that words "matter" and "can change people's lives." Viola detailed her decision to pursue teaching by recounting an oppressive encounter with her freshman year advisor whose words were "hurtful" and "mean." Viola added that this incident inspired her to be an advocate for young people, "to show them they have someone on their side who believes in them and cares about them and wants them to succeed." Thanking the "amazing teachers" she has had in her life, Viola's story reveals the potential for words to have impact in myriad ways. She also expressed her preference for writers she finds most sincere, such as Amy Lowell, who she described as "sassy and aggressive in what they believe in."

Viola shared in her interview that even though she would describe herself as "extremely techy" in her navigation of devices, social media, and digital participation, she saw "implementing technology for teaching high school as a completely different skill that she needs to practice." Describing students with whom she had worked in her introductory field placement observations, Viola said, "Today's high schoolers are driven by video," and added that "putting a voice and a face with words" can create "more authentic" introductions between teachers and learners. While alluding to numerous roles videos could play in her future teaching, Viola expressed a growing confidence in her ability to implement technology effectively moving forward.

Rose Described the Personal Nature of Video Stories

In her welcome video, Rose (Audio 6) defined ELA as a space where different ideas, points of view, and experiences all matter equally. She described language arts as a venture that extends beyond any "right or wrong answer," a platform where students can "feel comfortable" in "defending" their perspectives through literary analysis. Rose also depicted her family-centered approach to teaching and learning, hoping her future students would see her as nurturing and supportive of their individual ideas. Like other participants, Rose reflected on important mentors from her past and hoped to replicate their commitment to "building relationships" and helping students "find themselves."

In her interview, Rose was adamant about carrying the project with her into student teaching and beyond. Discussing the immediacy of the digital format, she added, "A paper letter only shows a formal side. It's impersonal. A video allows them to empathize and connect on a more personal level, making a shared respect, which is great for learning. This is how I want to teach." Rose described her video creation not as an addendum to her teacher preparation but as a natural component of her curriculum and instruction. She also

was honest about the challenges involved with implementing technology, writing in her reflection (Figure 10) that a welcome video "feels more personal than a letter actually would," while later admitting that she felt "awkward sitting in front of the camera alone."
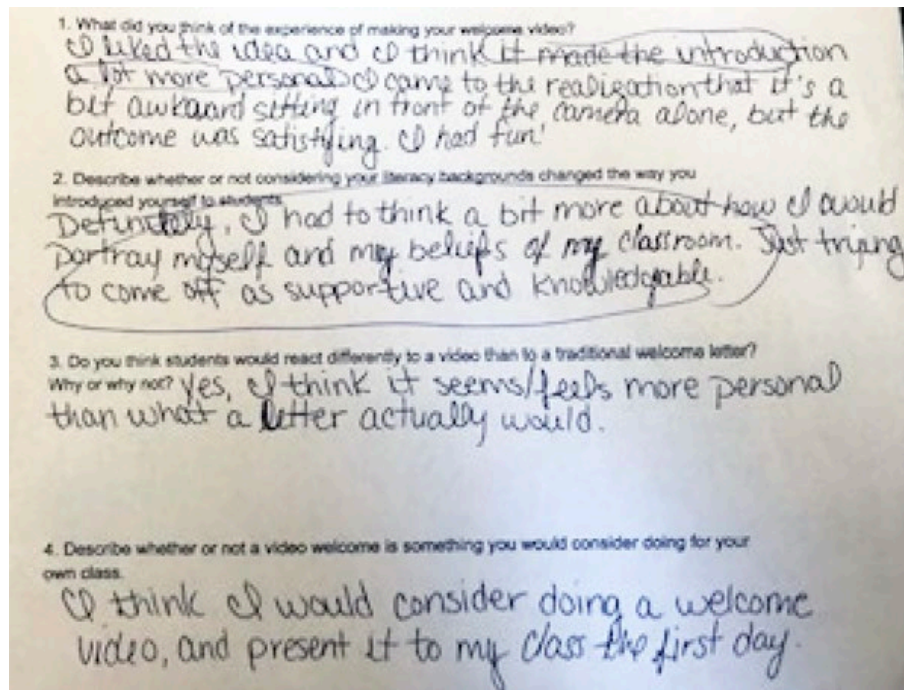

Figure 10. *Rose's written reflection.*

Casey Gauged Her Growth as an Integrator of Technology

Casey's story (Audio 7) presented the identity of an inclusive, positive educator, as she described her approach to creating an inviting, vibrant classroom community. She introduced herself to her future students by combining a vivacious welcome with a commitment to hyperbole and humor she felt could help her establish strong relationships. Casey strove for genuine connections with student viewers by stating that she is "excited to be here" and "choosing to be here." She also talked about dedicating herself to creating a space within which students would be eager to participate as engaged learners.

Reflecting on digital literacies during her interview, Casey defined her technology implementation as "a work in progress." Highlighting the "few opportunities for technology usage" that she had previously experienced in her teacher preparation program, Casey described how "super proud" she was of the progress she had made with using "digital tools for classroom use." Casey added, "It's so funny because lots of my professors would say they use technology, but this was the first time I ever made a video for a class. It was a cool experience for me personally." Casey's reflections indicated a growing comfort level with technology, as well as a realization that digital literacies can offer a conduit between her and future students that showcases who she is and what she is all about as an educator.

Cassidy Saw Opportunities for "Real Stuff" in Conversations

Like Casey, Cassidy (Audio 1) showcased a positive attitude about the teaching and learning that would take place in her future classroom. In her video, Cassidy strove for student engagement, expressing her collaborative notion of classroom culture. She informed student viewers that she sought their input on what it will take in order to make the class "worthwhile." In previewing the ELA skills she would help students master, Cassidy also introduced herself as a supporter of students' successes beyond high school, stating that she wanted to help students achieve their "life goals." She added that, regardless of students' academic interests or career trajectories, they were always going to "have to do some reading," "communicate ideas," and "write" effectively.

In her interview, Cassidy compared her video with a welcome letter she had written in a previous course and called her project "far more meaningful" than anything she had "written for any class." She went on to describe videos as a tool for teaching that could "help bridge gaps" between what students know "outside of school and in their classes." When I asked her if she planned on using a welcome video for future classes, Cassidy was affirmative, saying, "After going through this, I think videos could be a chance for me and my students to talk with one another about real stuff, rather than just me talking at them about class." Cassidy's notion of "real stuff" helps to illuminate the opportunities she saw for authentically connecting teachers and learners through technology.

Shannon Redefined Her Relationship With Technology

Shannon (Audio 8) prioritized a community of inquiry in her video, making clear in her expectations that she encouraged students to recognize the "need to learn to question things" and "not just follow blindly." Shannon described ELA as a site where critical thinking is not only welcome but a necessary aspect of meaning-making and communication. She drew viewers' attention to the power of questioning by granting her future students the autonomy to challenge legitimacy of ideas as well as powers of authority. By inviting future students to question everything and everyone, including "authors, peers, and even me," Shannon democratized the experience of literacy participation.

Though she expressed previous disdain with implementing technology in her interview, citing a SMART board lesson on the works of Edgar Allan Poe in a prior practicum lesson that had "gone horribly haywire, as in actual wires sticking out from the wall," Shannon indicated she had found a new depth in the video project, though it was not without challenges. In her written reflection (Figure 11), Shannon called the filming experience "intense and nerve wracking." And yet, she ultimately favored the digital format for connecting with future students, stating that the video "allows them to empathize and connect on a more personal level." The project afforded Shannon a chance to not only reconsider what technology can offer her instructional techniques, but also to reframe her own interactions with digital tools from a growth mindset.
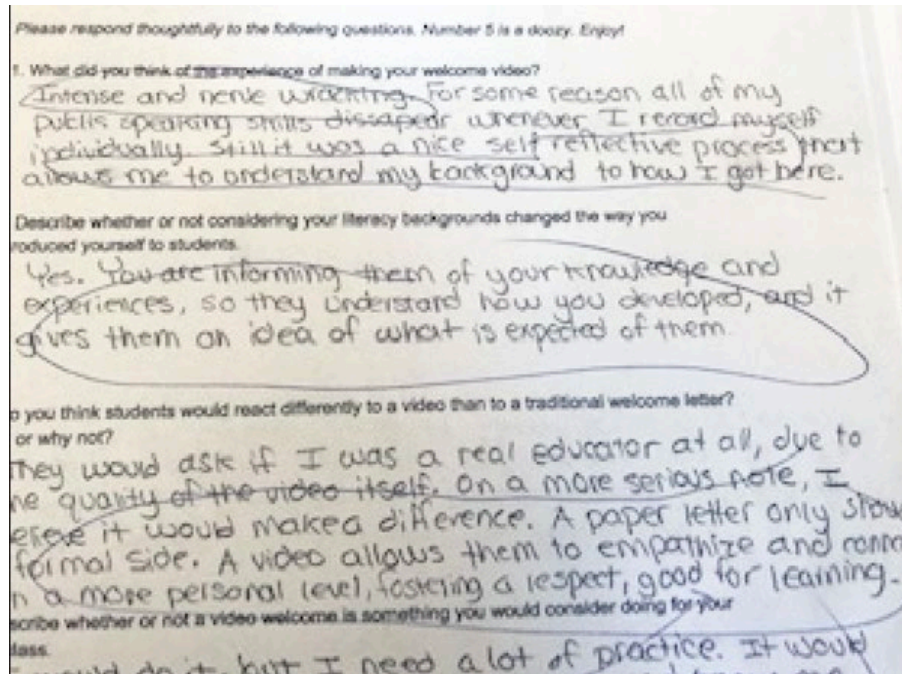
Figure 11. *Shannon's written reflection.*

Peggy Found the Root of Who She Is as an Educator

As Peggy's story (Audio 2) demonstrated, the video creation process, while beneficial in many ways, is also not without challenges. In her interview, Peggy shared,

> Considering my literacy background helped me refocus my approach from 'here is the stuff I need to teach,' to getting to the root of who I am as a person, which brought me to a better mindset for considering students.

Yet, in her written reflection, (Figure 12), while stating that she would "absolutely consider doing a welcome video" in the future, she had a "difficult time," because she is not a "technologically savvy person."

Despite her own doubts early on, Peggy's video successfully articulated her identity, including the transformational empowerment she experienced throughout her ELA journey, beginning in her adolescence when she "used to hate reading and writing," and culminating with her passion for literature and her love of working "with students of all reading and writing levels." Peggy shared that "all it took were some really great teachers" who were "open to her questions and concerns" to show her the power of discovering her own unique interests in reading and writing genres.

She conveyed herself as a "role model" for students' voices, inviting them to "show their opinions" and collaborate with her on "exploring something new" in her class. Peggy reflected on her role as a member of an educational community involving students and their families who are "open to working together, sharing together, and growing together." By immersing herself in digital practices, Peggy modeled personal growth and self-discovery.
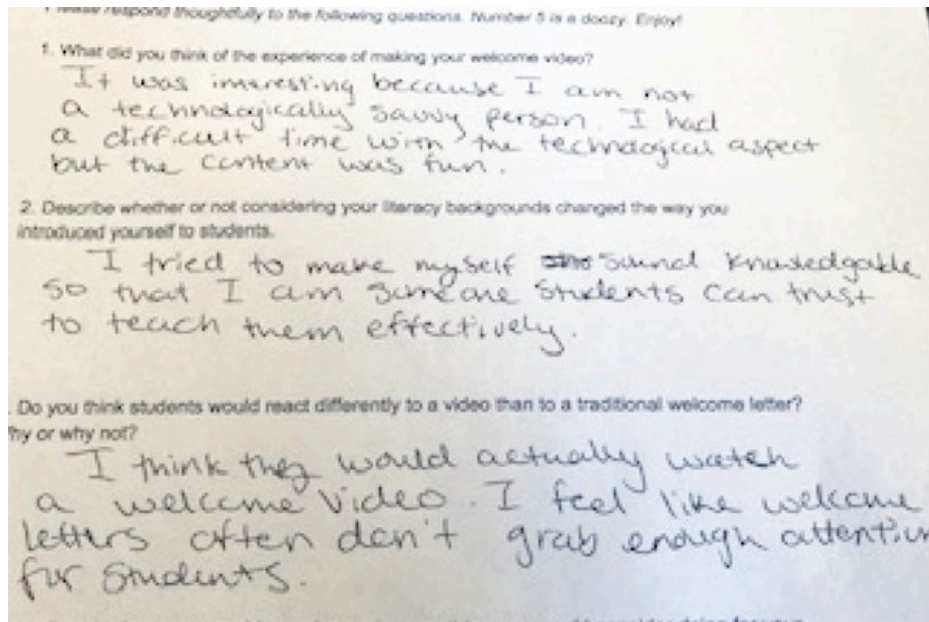
Figure 12. *Peggy's written reflection.*

Charlie Illustrated Her Passion for ELA

Charlie (Audio 9) cited her desire "to help people" as her primary reason for wanting to be a teacher, sharing that she "loves the way students' eyes light up when they understand something." As a student herself, Charlie asserted that her eyes were opened by the "wonderful world of English" and described literature study as a way to "escape," "share your hopes and dreams," and enter new chapters of life "with more knowledge than you came in with." Discussing her favorite writers such as Harper Lee and William Wordsworth, Charlie said that "reading and writing can truly change your lives."

In her interview, Charlie said that she felt her video would serve as "a great jumping off point" that could help "break the ice" for new classes, while helping her and her fellow teachers "get with the times." She attested that her video helped her establish "the right tone" for her future classroom. Describing her literacy identity, Charlie stated, "I enjoy poetry as a language and lens to view the world and to see good through bad. I can write this in a letter but through sound and picture, they can hopefully see my passion." Charlie indicated that the video format allowed her to make her enthusiasm for ELA visible for future students, "something they could see and hear and connect with."

Discussion

Participants alluded on multiple occasions to the experience of transitioning a traditional print-based activity into socially situated digital practices, which is an important indicator of reimagining texts along a continuum that is reflective of contemporary meaning-making (Siegel, 1995). Accomplishing, in a culturally relevant format, all of the objectives of a traditional welcome letter, such as introductions and overviews of expectations, the videos also provided a digitized blueprint for mapping out literacy identities in the preservice setting (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2014). While participants appreciated the innovation of the project and found video creation to be a "new" and "fresh" technique, they also

remarked on the ways in which the videos afforded them depth in their self-reflections (Loretto & Chisholm, 2012).

Participants were equally sincere regarding the challenges of utilizing digital literacies within instruction, which serves as a reminder that the process of effective technology implementation should not be taken for granted, even for digital natives preparing to enter the profession (Pasternak et al., 2016). As demonstrated in these findings, meaningful technology implementation involves more than substituting new platforms for older forms of communication and is best supported by critical considerations of purpose within the learning design (Howell et al., 2016).

Sharing digital literacy autobiographies in preservice settings has the potential to spark constructive discussions on culture and education and can impact developing pedagogies (Trend, 2010). By modeling contemporary literacy practices in their methods course, preservice teachers practiced cultivating culturally relevant and connected classroom communities and experienced a number of notable challenges along the way (Jaipal-Jamani & Figg, 2015).

P21 (n.d.) offers a framework for describing the kinds of participation teacher candidates enacted in the university setting working with and alongside technology. ICT, information, and media literacy proved to be staples within the collaborative atmosphere participants constructed. While working together on script outlines and running through rehearsals, preservice teachers utilized a variety of digital tools, and they reflected critically on aspects of their lives and connected those elements with literacy in ways that were driven by self-direction and initiative (P21, n.d.). Preservice teachers completed a digital literacies project that demanded of them practices sought after in 21st-century professional contexts and gave them the chance to model self-reflective skills for their future students (Kajder, 2010).

Significance

As teacher educators continue to design instruction through and alongside technology in methods courses, negotiating the intersections of identities, literacies, and texts emerges as a significant issue in training teachers to develop their pedagogies to affect meaningful classroom experiences. This study offers a snapshot of ELA preservice teachers enmeshing their literacy selves and literacy practices, and the findings contribute to the ongoing scholarship exploring disciplinary enhancement via digital literacies. The experiences of shared literacy lives also transcend borders, extending across content areas, age and grade levels, research methodologies, and more. The borderland dynamics of this study are particularly significant, as intersections of technology, race, culture, and language are applicable to any space of 21st-century teacher preparation, but are an everyday reality in the southwestern United States (Nieto, 2010). Participants shared in their literacy stories their primary objectives of empowering student voices and inspiring successes through the power of words in ELA.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although these findings speak to literacy connections established by preservice teachers in their university spaces, this research abounds with limitations, particularly in its exclusion of a practicum component in which videos could be shared with secondary students. In a study that seeks the inclusion of all voices, important contributions are absent from the findings, especially the reactions and experiences of secondary students, as well as cooperating teachers who assist preservice teachers in acclimating to classroom environments.

Exploring alternate perceptions of the literacy story videos and their level of impact on actual teaching and learning could expand understanding of how preservice teachers contribute to a participatory culture. The brevity of the present study also limits the depth of analysis that could be achieved in a longer examination, which might also include additional assignments or activities.

Exploring personal stories of place and space, future teachers contributed to a participatory culture by situating their histories around the social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape how they think about literacy while coconstructing a narrative of that experience with peers. In the methods course, multimodal texts initiated a platform by which participants investigated notions of "how they got here" and expanded their understanding of "living together" as future educators. Their videos supplemented traditional introduction techniques that often offer scant analysis or reflection (Trend, 2010).

In a future study, preservice teachers could take the next step and apply their stories through interactions with students during practicum experiences in local schools. The premise in both spaces, theoretical and practical, would be that participants utilize digital literacies to make their stories immediate and intimate, paving the way for authentic connections among their cohort and their field experience classroom communities.

The dual placement within university and practicum settings could allow preservice teachers to be innovative producers of content in creative spaces as well as facilitators of constructivist learning activities (Jenkins et al., 2006). Candidates could utilize digital literacies through active, interconnected participation that emphasizes agency (Lewis et al., 2007). Conceiving and recording their videos as part of their pedagogical development could encourage participants to experience being the "doers" before stepping in front of students who, in turn, could facilitate their own "doing" (Kress, 2003). The multiple roles and intersecting perspectives occupied by preservice teachers position them to affect vibrant cultures of participation with expertise in effective operations of both novices and experts (Baker-Doyle, 2017).

Initiating their practicum experiences with a digitized introduction could help preservice teachers cultivate digital literacy environments in which students are expected to be productive and engaged in their learning (Smagorinsky, 2008). In interviews, participants consistently referred to their videos as a potential "jumping off point" for ELA interactions.

Because welcome videos can serve as a point of reference for text selections and teaching philosophies, they are positioned to not only break the ice between teachers and students, but also to introduce the type of learning that is going to ensue. P21 (n.d.) provides a lens for understanding how candidates operate as instructional leaders by facilitating crosscultural interactions while maintaining adaptive approaches to fluid classroom dynamics (Florio-Ruane, 2001).

Toward Expanding the Categorization of ELA Research

Pasternak et al. (2016) divided recent studies of ELA teaching and technology into two groups: (a) platforms such as discussion forums and blogs that *open* spaces for collaborative learning and (b) learning systems like software and e-portfolios that *close* spaces for individualized instruction and assessment. Teacher education settings that integrate meaningful digital literacy practices are perhaps uniquely positioned to complicate this categorization.

Situated simultaneously within the reflective, communicative contexts of university spaces as well as practicum classroom settings, literacy story videos are an example of an implementation that could potentially support preservice teachers equally in both open and closed processes. Participants would have the opportunity to apply insights of literacy identity from their preservice community in support of their learning how to teach in schools (Morrell, 2015).

Conclusion

Preservice ELA settings should empower future teachers to discover their unique voices by articulating who they are while exploring who they may become. Identity and agency can be enhanced through the implementation of digital literacies. Students of all ages need opportunities to tell their stories in ways that not only support their learning of subject matter such as literary analysis, language competency, and multigenre composition, but also in ways that celebrate justice and equity across cultures and literacy practices. 21st-century teacher education is positioned to inspire preservice teachers to recognize digital literacies as a central aspect of the ELA experience. Through multimodal opportunities afforded by ever-expanding technologies, teacher educators can offer candidates participation in narrative practices that cultivates pedagogies dedicated to harnessing the power of our collective stories.

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