Teacher Interns' Character and Identity Development During Times of Crisis

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ABSTRACT : Before COVID-19, crises were localized as acts of nature such as tornadoes or fires or specific random events such as school shootings or intruders on campus. School leaders developed, practiced, and often implemented plans that prepared both staff and students for these crises. The advent of COVID-19 brought unique and unanticipated challenges to educators and their students and underscored the extent to which individuals can acclimate and thrive or feel defeated and overwhelmed during times of crisis. This was specifically true of K-12 public school teachers, regardless of their socioeconomic status or the geographical location of their school. Educators were placed in the daunting position of having to develop new proficiencies for accessing and implementing educational activities while testing their own fortitude. This study employed qualitative methodology with photovoice examining how K-12 public school teachers responded to a historic event, adapted to an abrupt change in their teaching practices, and revisited their identities as educators. Through photovoice, these teachers were able to convey the reality of lived experience and their personal identity development through visual images and narrative descriptions. In this study, teachers shared their voices from unique perspectives, telling the stories of adaptation and self-revelation during a significant crisis. The teacher intern participants were a demographically and culturally diverse group of K-12 public school teachers from the west coast of the United States serving a variety of grade levels, subject areas, and school locations.

KEYWORDS : Adaptation, Covid-19, Crisis, Photovoice, Resilience, Teacher Character, Teacher Identity Development

I. INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the global pandemic in 2020 and its persistence over time, education systems worldwide were challenged to provide the necessary support for the communities they served (Van Allen & Katz, 2020). Teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders experienced significant adversity during this time of unprecedented crisis. However, the pandemic also presented opportunities for these stakeholders to develop resilience, demonstrate determination, and experience positive growth (Burleigh & Wilson, 2023; Burleigh et al., 2022; Christensen et al., 2022; Donohoo, 2021). As discussed in our previous related work, teacher interns first focused on surviving the crisis (see Burleigh et al., 2022). In so doing, they proved they were adept at facing the challenges that the pandemic forced upon them (Burleigh et al., 2022; Christensen et al., 2022). Through the use of self-designed collaborative networks, teacher interns modified their teaching styles, home environments, and technology implementation to meet the needs of their students in the best way they could during the pandemic (Burleigh et al., 2022; Christensen et al., 2022; Pinto et al., 2023). In this study, we extended our previous work (see Burleigh et al., 2022) by applying the method of photovoice to investigate how teacher interns developed their character and identity as educators during and in response to this crisis. As depicted in the previous article and by other authors, photovoice represents a unique approach to qualitative inquiry whereby visual images and/or photos tell the story of participant experience, thus allowing these visual representations to be analyzed and interpreted, making sense of circumstances in the moment without relying solely upon language-driven communications (Brown & Collins, 2021; Latz, 2017; Nykiforuk et al., 2011). Whereas the content of our previous article focused on the struggles associated with the initiation of the pandemic emergency, this study extended our investigation by focusing on resultant positive changes in the teacher interns' professional character and identity as they evolved to meet the demands inherent in this unprecedented time of crisis. To our knowledge, no other studies available at the time or currently published collected data addressing teacher character and identity development in real-time at

The height of the pandemic during school-based emergencies and school closures such that the concurrent lived experiences of teacher licensure candidates could be understood as they happened and without contamination of the passage of time. In this discussion, we apply the term *crisis* as a long-term event that forces significant paradigm shifts in curriculum, pedagogy, and location of instruction. Any prolonged period of pervasive crisis, chaos, and change in the environment is likely to create profound anxiety for all stakeholders and thus produce lasting, significant change within an individual (Pishghadam et al., 2022). As the pandemic crisis unfolded, what began with educators being inundated and overwhelmed with adversity unfolded into opportunities for their own personal and professional growth, marked by perseverance, adaptation, and resilience.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Facing adversity, especially persistent and/or widespread adversity is known to alter human development (Portilla, 2022). During the global pandemic, all eyes fell on the adversity the students in classrooms were facing. It was easy to see how disruptions to time in school and exposure to instruction were limiting students' academic, behavioral, and emotional growth (Burleigh & Wilson, 2023). What was less evident was how educators were facing adversity in and out of their classroom environments. Such adversity strained the teachers and altered their personal and professional identities (Pinto et al., 2023). It is known that facing adversity alters many aspects of human development; thus, educators, like their students, were deeply affected during this time of crisis (Cain et al., 2022; Portilla, 2022).

Adversity and Adaptability: Being an adult does not make a person immune to the effects of adversity. Educators are as susceptible to the adverse effects of internal and external stressors as anyone. Therefore, educators require systems of support for their own social and emotional well-being when facing extreme adversity and crisis (Portilla, 2022). After all, educators' social and emotional well-being has a profound influence on their instructional practices and interpersonal relationships with their students, especially for those students who may be at risk (Luthar & Eisenberg, 2017).

Adaptation is a process of making necessary changes in response to an internal or external event or stressor (Nelson et al., 2007). The purpose of adapting is to improve functioning or bring a current state of action into alignment with the demands of circumstances (Carr & Nalau, 2023; Granziera et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2007). The ability to adapt to external and internal stressors is a sign of resilience. Specifically, Luthans (2002) described the concept of resilience as "the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility" (p. 702). In addition, possessing high levels of resilience protects individuals from the negative psychological effects of distressing circumstances (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2022) while helping individuals to cope with changing conditions across a wide range of environments (Daniilidou et al., 2020; Näswall et al., 2019).

The circumstances created by the global pandemic could not have been more distressing for everyone involved. Thus, the working environment for educators in schools during the pandemic required a significant level of adaptability and resilience on their part (Luthar et al., 2021). The stressful environment created by the pandemic forced educators to adapt and become resilient in all facets of educational practice as a matter of improving outcomes for themselves and their students. Adaptability and adjustment are critical skills needed from teachers in classrooms of all types (Christensen et al., 2022; Collie & Martin, 2021; Marek & Chew, 2021; Parsons et al., 2018). When faced with challenging circumstances within and outside the classroom, individual characteristics of adaptability and resilience become key sources of strength for teachers who are overcome by the struggles of day-to-day operations in the classroom. Teachers who have higher levels of adaptability and resilience are more likely to meet the needs of their students, overcome the overwhelming negative feelings associated with crisis situations, and develop a better sense of well-being (Christensen et al., 2022; Collie & Martin, 2021; Tebben et al., 2021). Resilient teachers are more likely to have better student-teacher relationships, which may contribute to better student-learning outcomes (Eadie et al., 2021; Foreman-Brown et al., 2023; Passey, 2021).

Teacher Identity Personal and Professional: Identity is a core component of an individual's persona (Gomes et al., 2021). It defines the self (Clayton, 2012) and all of who we are (Erickson, 1968). Identity is formed and shaped in response to multiple internal and external physical, social, and cultural factors (Erickson, 1968). Identity is not a stagnant state of being or destination. The development of identity is a life-long journey of maturation, evolution, and consolidation of personal experiences and responses to them (Hall, 1990). For educators, their personal and professional identities have a significant influence on their everyday practices in and out of the classroom. Specifically, recent research showed that educators from around the world experienced

rapid and profound reshaping and redevelopment of their personal and professional identities in response to the new educational environment created by the pandemic, similar to the known effects of other crisis situations (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Dagenhard et al., 2019; Gomes et al., 2021; Lane et al., 2020; Tsui et al., 2020). Professional identity is defined simply as "the sense of being a professional" (Paterson et al., 2002, p. 6). Professional identity has been linked to specific skills, such as technical and interpersonal (Paterson et al., 2002); feelings, such as personal adequacy and satisfaction (Ewan, 1988); and attitudes and behaviors consistent with what society expects of members of the profession (Higgs, 1993; Paterson et al., 2002). Development of professional identity entails engaging with the professional community, and all that community entails. Like personal identity development, professional identity development of teachers is a process that involves honing existing skills and practices, adding new skills, refining interpersonal connections, and contributing to the community in a meaningful way (Trede et al., 2012). The process of identity development is never complete (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Massive changes and shifts in the professional community at large, such as those caused by the global pandemic crisis, prompted the need for more rapid, significant change for everyone involved.

In their work on developing a new conceptual framework for teacher identity development, Pishghadam et al. (2022) emphasize the essential role of context and participatory practices in fostering teacher identity as a dynamic and evolving construct. It is in this new conceptual framework of Pishghadam et al. (2022), which emphasizes the dynamic, context-dependent, and responsive nature of teacher identity development, that this study is situated. The pandemic was a unique crisis that created an extreme shift in the teaching context, which prompted the need for teachers to transform who they were as teachers (Christensen et al., 2022; Foreman-Brown et al., 2023). Using photovoice methodology, the present study seeks to understand the shift in teacher identity that was affected by the extraordinary context created by the pandemic crisis as it occurred.

III.   RATIONALE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As a research team, we have worked together on previous projects and are professional educators with many years of experience as classroom instructors and school administrators. In addition, we are all currently facilitating online courses for graduate and doctoral students. Because of our professional and academic experiences, we have a profound interest in studying and understanding best practices in training teachers for the challenges they will face in the classroom. We saw an opportunity to extend the results of our original published work (see Burleigh et al., 2022) by sharing the positive experiences of these teacher interns. We learned from reviewing and analyzing the data that each participant experienced personal and professional growth during times of crisis. Photovoice, as a unique research methodology, allowed the teacher interns to express their views, share observations, and reflect on experiences through the use of visual images. Few research methods allow participants to capture the essence of personal experiences so chronologically close to the event (Dennis, 2014), where a visual image can transcend the written word and have a personal context for each individual (Latz, 2017).

At the time data was obtained from the teacher intern participants, we found no other research describing the individual and distinct experiences of teacher interns that led to personal and professional growth throughout and in the aftermath of the pandemic. Daniilidou et al. (2020) suggested that teachers who are successful in coping with change are more able to control stressors, maintain a positive outlook, and generate a greater sense of self-efficacy, all of which may increase personal resiliency. Resiliency enables individuals to move through difficult events and is directly correlated to personal growth and the development of identity (Cain et al., 2022; Foreman-Brown et al., 2023; Greitens, 2015; Näswall et al., 2019). Understanding these teacher interns' journeys of personal awareness and adaptation during the crises of school closures, whether for a few days or an extended period (Burleigh & Wilson, 2023; Burleigh et al., 2022), may provide those who design teacher licensure programs and school district leaders with a deeper understanding of how educators can adjust, acclimate, and make the best of a negative situation and maintain personal and professional sanity. Additionally, the information shared in this study may provide an opportunity to reevaluate professional development workshops and sessions that can support teachers who may be challenged by an extended and paradigm-shifting crisis. Having awareness, knowledge, and tools to recognize and accommodate a crisis may benefit not only teachers, regardless of their professional status, but also the school district and the greater community. Using a prospective cohort study in conjunction with the qualitative approach of photovoice whereby collecting data in real-time concurrent with the teacher interns' experience of the pandemic crisis and school closures, we sought to answer the following research questions:

How did K-12 public school teacher interns respond on a personal level to the pandemic and other crises they may have experienced?

What adaptations were made to an abrupt change in the teaching practices of these interns, and what did they think about their identities as educators?

IV.   METHODS

This photovoice study is based on previously published research (see Burleigh et al., 2022) and follows the same conceptual framework, research methods, and protocols inclusive of ethical considerations and the role of the researchers. The type and number of teacher intern study participants (*N*= 97) did not change from the original study. The data collection, via written and photographic journal entries and thematic analysis processes (see Saldaña, 2021), was carried out in the same fashion as the prior study. The only exception from the previous study was that we analyzed different visual images the teachers had presented, either personally created photos or graphic images they selected from the public domain, that represented their responses to journal prompts. Their responses included corresponding written narratives. As a team, we worked to understand the visual and narrative data (Brown & Collins, 2021) that the study participants presented.

Conceptual Framework: As we have explained (see Burleigh et al., 2022), we analyzed our visual and textual data through a framework developed by Brown and Collins (2021). This systematic visuo-textual analysis examines contextual datasets to develop a deeper understanding of a participant's story. We are using the terms visuo-textual, and visual-textual synonymously to describe the combination of visual and textual or written representations created by individuals. The role of the photovoice researcher is to "account for the visual information, the textual information, and the visuo-textual information combined" (Brown & Collins, 2021, p. 1281) during each step of the data analysis process. Brown and Collins equate the process to weaving each of the elements together to create a richer and more authentic meaning of the experiences shared by the participants. The synergy of this weaving may create a stronger impact on those who examine the combined visual and textual narratives. The elements of the systematic visuo-textual analysis are defined by Brown and Collins as visual only, written documentation only, and visuo-textual combined. Researchers then analyze each of the elements at two different levels, noticing/describing and conceptualizing. During each step of the visual-textual analysis, the researcher must be wholly vested in the process in order to weave the visual representations in an interactive and spiral analysis (Brown & Collins, 2021). Brown and Collins (2021) advise the researcher to "revisit the textual only and visual only work to confirm, consider and reconsider the initial descriptive findings" (p. 1282) from the first level of noticing and describing prior to moving onto the conceptualizing level of analysis. As in weaving, the researcher must repeat the analytic process for each data set, from the individual study participants to their relationship to all the data collected from the sample population.

Photovoice to Support Qualitative Inquiry: Photovoice is not a new qualitative design and has been applied in health-based research (Fraser & al Sayah, 2011), the social sciences (Gubrium & Harper, 2013), education (Brown & Collins, 2021), and community development projects (Switzer, 2018). The application of photovoice in qualitative research is designed to evoke critical dialectics about personal stories of events or experiences (Wang & Burris, 1997). In previous applications of photovoice, researchers have provided participants with a camera to take photographs based on a specific context or guided scripted practice (Wang, 2003). Freire (1973) found the use of photos to be a useful tool to create awareness of issues that might otherwise be unknown to the public. Most research about teacher licensure candidates has focused on researchers or assessors capturing teacher strategies and actions through field observations or interviews (Klassen & Kim, 2019). When faced with obstacles to traditional data-gathering techniques, however, researchers must seek innovative techniques to gather data. Photovoice is a qualitative tool that provides an alternative data collection method that authentically and uniquely captures and reflects the voices of the participants (Mulvhill & Swaminathan, 2011). Such was the need during COVID-19. In this study conducted in the midst of the COVID-19, we applied the technique of photovoice to help us understand the experiences of teacher interns. Photovoice was the best means to provide a "voice to see" the participants' perspectives through a different lens (Gubrium & Harper, 2013).

The data for this study were collected from one of the author's work as a classroom instructor facilitating a course in which teaching licensure candidates were enrolled (Burleigh et al., 2022). The course occurred in the midst of the pandemic when teachers and their students were working from home via computers. Each student had at least a bachelor's degree, and each was already employed as a classroom teacher. The course was one of a series of courses the candidates were required to take to receive their state teaching certificate. Among the

course activities, one of the authors gave each participant the option to select a photo or image they believed best represented their experience in teaching from their homes during the pandemic. She then gave each the choice to create a written narrative to describe what the photo or image meant to them at that moment. Her premise was that the physical act of taking a photo or selecting an image helps actors empower their voice, capture their meaningful lived experience, and reflect on the moment (Gleason & Jaramillo Cherrez, 2021; Plunkett et al., 2013; Tsang, 2020). We agree that such an interactive event may have a deeper meaning or effect in both their personal and professional lives (Mannay, 2010).

Photovoice is a qualitative research methodology that utilizes images to tell the stories of participants (Brown & Collins, 2021; Latz, 2017; Nykiforuk et al., 2011). Through photographs, participants share personal knowledge that might otherwise be difficult to express (Brown & Collins, 2021; Versey, 2022). Photovoice is unique in that it conveys the reality of lived experience through visual images and narrative descriptions from the participants themselves in real-time (Brown & Collins, 2021; Latz, 2017; Nykiforuk et al., 2011). In this study, we saw and heard novice teachers both show and describe virtual or distance learning in their own voices as the events occurred (Burleigh et al., 2022).

Participants: The participants for this study were teacher interns who were classroom teachers of record in California schools and in the process of completing the teaching practicum requirement for their respective credentialing program (see Burleigh et al., 2022). Each held a degree in a field other than education, taught in a California public school, and were enrolled in online courses taught by one of the authors that were directly related to the completion of their credentialing program. These online courses were occurring during COVID-19. As we explained above, California classifies these teachers as "interns," and so that is how we reference them in this study.

We did not recruit participants since archival data were used from online seminars, and one of the authors was teaching as part of their state credentialing requirements (see Burleigh et al., 2022). The participants were demographically and culturally diverse and represented all regions of the state of California including rural, urban, and suburban K-12 public school districts. Many of the teacher interns were multilingual and represented a range of ethnicities and cultures. The study sample consisted of 97 teacher interns, 70 women and 27 men, representing multiple subject (n = 39), single subject (n = 53), and special education (n = 5) teacher licensure credentialing programs. The teacher interns represented various grade levels: elementary school, grades TK-5 (n= 37); middle school, grades 6 -8 (n= 21), and high school, grades 9-12, inclusive of all subject content areas (n=34); and special education both mild/moderate (n=4) and moderate/severe (n=1). Each study participant had full-time teaching experience of 1 to 5 years in the classroom, with an average of 3.25 years of teaching students. These individuals had access to a wide range of technology applications and devices consistent with the resources of their respective school districts (Burleigh et al., 2022).

Data Sampling and Collection: As described above, one of the authors was the instructor facilitating online seminar courses through a California-based K-12 teacher licensure program. The teacher interns represented in this study were among those students enrolled in these courses. As a key assignment, the seminar students completed a weekly reflective journal of teaching practices based on prompts provided for the journal assignment. These included a traditional research-based question or an alternative photovoice journal assignment. If the interns chose to complete the alternative reflective journal assignment, they could choose from different writing prompts based on the impact COVID-19 had on their teaching practices, personal and professional life, and the types of activities they participated in to help combat mental fatigue and stress due to COVID-19 and teaching remotely. The assignment asked each teacher intern to provide a narrative reflection and a photo or graphic/public domain image representing their response (see Burleigh et al., 2022).

The archival journals collected and reviewed for this study occurred between April 2020 through March 2021 during the Spring II term of 2020 through the Spring I term of 2021. Not all the teacher interns in the Spring II 2020 through Spring I 2021 terms participated in the alternative weekly reflective journal assignment. Students could respond to one or two questions (entries) per week based on the prompts provided for the alternative Journal assignment. From this archival data, the authors reviewed 283 journals and 515 entries. Of the entries reviewed, three specific journal reflection questions were chosen to be examined for the purposes of this study due to the frequency with which the prompts received responses from the teacher interns. The teacher interns' responses to the following selected journal prompts created the data set for this study. We analyzed the students' responses to these prompts:

How did you experience disruption or change in your approach to teaching when a crisis occurs?
How have you balanced your personal, home, and life activities with your professional responsibilities?
How has your personal work-life balance been restricted or changed during a time of crisis?

Ethical Considerations: We understand the significance of using these participants' personal visual data and reflections and addressed these considerations in several ways. First, each participant voluntarily completed the assignments. As the instructor, one of the authors allowed each student to complete the weekly photovoice assignment or an alternative, more traditional assignment. Students engaged in the journaling activities to share and work through the angst of their experiences. Not all participants completed all photovoice assignments; instead, some chose to complete the traditional journal assignment provided in the course curriculum. After the courses ended, the author realized the personal and visual reflections of the teacher interns were powerful information that provided windows into the workings of an international catastrophic phenomenon. Then, she followed the university's process and protocol to secure IRB approval to access, analyze, and publish the archival data. In preparation for publication and to maximize the protection of participants, she obtained individual permission from the participants to use their images and narratives within this article. All identifiers are masked, so no teacher interns or their locations can be recognized. In addition, because the courses were online, the students were afforded an additional element of anonymity (Burleigh et al., 2022).

Data Analysis Approach: We followed Brown and Collins's (2021) framework for analyzing visual and textual data as we studied the data. First, we examined the photos or visual materials independently. Following the initial review of the images provided by the teacher interns, we selected examples that best represented the research questions and intent of the study (Brown & Collins, 2021). Next, we analyzed the visual and textual content. Reviewing the textual content that accompanied each visual image provided a rich description of how the specific image directly related to the context in which the image was presented. The process of coding the text for specific words and phrases that reveal themes plays a significant role in building a bridge between the visual image artifact and the textual meaning (Brown & Collins, 2021). Through this step in the data analysis process, we sought to explore how the data was scaffolded to create a new understanding and knowledge of the teacher interns' captured experiences in real-time (Capous-Desyllas & Bromfield, 2018). Analyzing the interrelated and entwined visual and textual data, we developed a clearer and deeper understanding of the teacher interns' experiences. The authors independently analyzed the narrative and visual data for commonalities and categories through resonant images. They then shared and merged their analyses. Although the teacher interns' visual and narrative reflections were idiosyncratic, we were surprised at the continuity that flowed across stories and images (Burleigh et al., 2022). Through our analysis, the following themes emerged: ability to adapt; the role of technology; and benefits both personal and professional.

V. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

Through the systematic analysis and careful curation of the visual images and narratives the participants created, we selected a representative sample for each theme we identified. To ensure confidentiality, we identify each participant by gender-neutral pseudonyms and have removed identifying information.

Theme 1: Ability to Adapt: Teachers are often presented by their administration or school district with situations in which they must adapt their teaching practices and implement and deliver classroom curricula. Most of these changes that occur are systematic, where updates to the curriculum are often data-driven and based on federal or state Department of Education mandates, which are integrated within a specific timeframe for compliance (Burleigh et al., 2023). When the unexpected occurs, specifically during a crisis, teachers must become introspective to determine how they will maintain a productive classroom where students can learn and thrive. Participants described their experiences and how they were able to adapt during various crises, including natural disasters and the pandemic. In such instances, the participants needed to take stock of what resources were available, their skillset and possible deficiencies, and how to make the best of the situation. The image Rowan shared (see Figure 1, public domain image) depicts what character attributes they needed during a difficult time while still acknowledging the challenges they faced. Gaining a deeper appreciation of personal attributes and areas of improvement served participants well when developing and expanding their character and finding inner strengths. Rowan shared, "To be honest, it has been difficult and stressful. However, I have learned so much! I feel much more technologically advanced now. I am proud of my resiliency and willingness to adjust to change".

Figure 1. *Adaptability and Resilience*

During a crisis, change can provide the opportunity for new perspectives, ones that the participants may have never even fathomed. Participants regularly observed that these unforeseen changes often resulted in positive outcomes, whether in their classroom strategies or their professional or personal identities. Madison, an elementary school teacher, shared their perspective of change that was originally unforeseen and resulted in positive personal growth. They acknowledged that regardless of the challenge or door that must be open (see Figure 2, public domain image), a positive outcome is possible.

Figure 2. *Change, Unforeseen and Positive*

Madison explained, What I thought would be just an early spring break turned into a 7-month nightmare. Despite all of this, I firmly believe that when things feel like they are falling apart and all doors are closing, it means that better doors are about to open, and I honestly think I am on the path to opening those doors. I wake up so excited to go to work, and I feel that despite the craziness initially, so much good is to come. Participants' narratives overwhelmingly reflected their ability to adapt during crises and test their resolve. This was particularly true when schools enacted distance learning, and physical classrooms were unavailable for in-person instruction. Cameron's image (see Figure 3) illustrates how their daily life was a series of predictable routines before being engulfed in a crisis. Changes in *normal* daily routines and practices, whether at school or home, required quick adjustments and caused noticeable disruptions that resulted in a *new normal*.

Cameron reflected: My entire paradigm for teaching had flipped upside down, and my work and home-life balance was anything but balanced. However, I have learned to adjust and make the most of distance learning. At this point, I wouldn't say there is disruption because I have a new rhythm, but I definitely miss being in the classroom with my students. I have a new, deeper appreciation for in-person instruction, and I can't wait until I can teach in person again.

Figure 3. *Flipped Paradigm*

Theme 2: The Role of Technology: Technology plays a significant role in distance learning. As schools changed abruptly to online platforms, teachers had to quickly develop the skills to be able to identify and use appropriate online educational programs and content, applications, and visual teaching aids while navigating new platforms in which to deliver curriculum to their students. Communicating with colleagues, administrators, students, and parents/guardians was another challenge the participants faced since not all parties had online access to the same platforms. The participants expressed initial frustration in learning to use collaborative productivity programs selected by their schools, such as Google Workspace/Suite and Classroom, and then teach their students to create and submit work within those learning platforms. However, the participants revealed that by exploring various web-based applications, they were able to find new and exciting ways to deliver curriculum to their students. Some participants decided that the web-based applications and platforms they learned would find a permanent place in their teaching practices, whether online or in the classroom.

Mackenzie shared just one of the platforms and applications of technology used in the science classroom to support student learning (see Figure 4, public domain image). They explained,
I very much use technology much more than I have ever used in my classroom.
Because they are super simple to set up but engage the students. I also use a lot
more activities where students are sharing screens. It's been possible to allow
them, for example, to create a shared document by finding on the picture as a group
and writing a paragraph about it. That picture can then be easily shared with the class, and everyone can listen to
the paragraph while seeing the picture.

Figure 4. *Increased Use of Different Technology Applications*
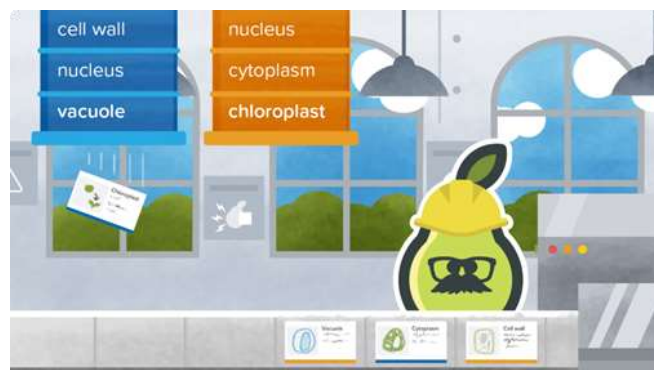
Technology plays a significant role in distance learning. Teachers had to quickly develop the skills to be able to research appropriate online educational programs and content, applications, and visual teaching aids while navigating new platforms through which to deliver curricula to their students. Communicating with colleagues, administrators, students, and parents/guardians was another challenge articulated by the participants since not all parties had online access to the same platforms. Additionally, the participants explained that by exploring various web-based tools, they were able to find new and exciting ways to deliver curricula to their students and communicate with others. Some of the participants mentioned the web-based applications and platforms they discovered and implemented will find a permanent place in their teaching practices, whether they are teaching online or in the classroom.

Some of our participants had significant experience in the use of educational technology within a physical classroom. Changing how technology was applied within a distance learning environment, while a challenge, proved to be an opportunity for creativity, freeing up both teachers and students to express themselves. Billie, a performing arts teacher, shared the following public domain image (see Figure 5) and revealed,I have been using a lot of technology. I have been able to focus on providing the students with more content with outside examples. They have been able to get creative in different ways aside from using their bodies. I have found that the students like to work on things on their own because it is hard to work in groups. They want to focus on creating solo pieces rather than group pieces. I just think of this time as a time for the students to focus on themselves, focus on their own work, and be held accountable. They are getting time to step outside of their box or out of their comfort zone in their very own comfortable space at home.

Figure 5. *Non-Traditional Use of Technology to Support a Performing Arts Classroom*

Leslie noted the importance of character and identity development during times of crisis, and the significance of flexibility in attaining unforeseen technology based-skills (see Figure 6):

This entire experience has taught me a lot about the technical aspects that are currently required to teach. I have gained knowledge and skills in troubleshooting. I truly feel like an IT supporter, this has really been a valuable experience for me because I can use these experiences later on to either address technology in my own classroom or as a foundation to further my understanding of technology. This experience has also increased my confidence in technology greatly, which I am so thankful for.

Figure 6. *Troubleshooting and Learning*
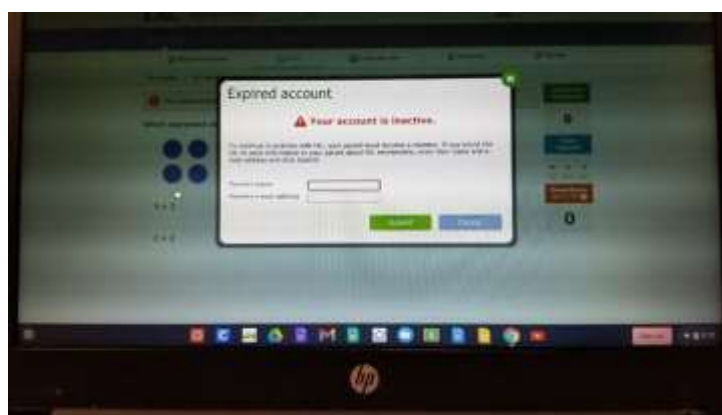
Theme 3: Benefits both Personal and Professional: Teachers found that balancing personal and professional demands required them to set aside time for both introspection and attention to family. Regardless of where teachers lived or the grade level they taught, each of the participants described the importance of focusing on family and self-care. Although teachers often found it challenging to carve out precious time during the workday, the importance of reconnecting with self and family was a constant theme.

The majority of the participants who have families, such as Jordan (see Figure 7, public domain image), described how periods of crisis refocused their priorities, with special attention to the well-being of their children. Rather than a distraction or burden, participants described the presence of family members during work hours as an opportunity to create a deeper connection with them. Jordan explained, "Working from home has given me the opportunity to spend more time with my son [and] has really helped me polish up on my technology skills.

Figure 7. *Time with Family*

Relating to distance learning (see Figure 8, public domain images), Robin discovered that: Distance learning has simplified my life and given me more time. I gained an hour on commute alone! So, distance learning has helped immensely in maintaining work/life balance. Classroom management has been simplified. Classroom disruption this year is non-existent. No detentions. No referrals. If someone acts up, you can mute them. No one notices or cares if someone walks out of the virtual classroom. No more drama. No more cliques. No more messy floors and damaged desks. There are tech benefits as well. But as far as how it has affected *my life* – Distance learning has been a huge improvement.

Figure 8. *Simplified Life*

Other participants found a silver lining during times of crisis. By not having to travel to and from school, more time could be devoted to professional development and learning their craft as classroom teachers. The participants expressed that they were able to think critically about classroom management, student engagement, academic achievement, and integrating various forms of technology and modalities of instruction to support student learning. Hunter's photo, Figure 9, illustrates the positive feeling of having time to reflect and devote to one's professional development. Hunter explained, Teaching via distance learning has been a blessing in disguise. August 2019 was the beginning of my first year of teaching, which was cut short due to the COVID outbreak. I think it was awesome for me to get my feet wet in teaching and prepared me for this year. I wouldn't call this a disruption but more an adjustment, as I had to learn how to teach differently than I had in my first year.

Figure 9. *Blessing in Disguise*

Even though these teachers focused on the needs of their students during times of crisis, the participants explained their need to prioritize their well-being in order to be their best in the classroom. Carving out time during the day for self-care when teaching in a virtual learning environment was often challenging. However, if the participants did not do so, they experienced a lack of energy to actively engage their students within the classroom. Angel (see Figure 10, public domain image) shared the importance of dedicating specific time to developing healthy routines.One of the good things it has allowed me to work on setting some healthy habits I've been able to work on is managing my time more responsibly. It all boils down to dedicating time blocks throughout the day outside my work schedule for certain activities. Having a routine that I can be comfortable and consistent with makes my life a lot easier in this pandemic as I try to find some sort of balance. I learned the importance of exercise and doing things I enjoy. By doing activities that I enjoy, I feel reenergized, less stressed, happier, and confident. It is not healthy for me to be behind the computer all day and to think about work all day therefore, I try to implement things I enjoy and have a life outside of work.

Figure 10. *Healthy Habits and Personal Priority*

The teachers quickly understood the necessity to be ever-present throughout the school day and at home. Logan shared public domain images (see Figure 11, public domain images) to illustrate not only the need to balance one's personal and professional lives but also the importance of being mindful within each moment. Participants observed that when they intentionally practiced mindfulness, those same practices translated into classroom routines, which resulted in students being more focused and attentive.

Figure 11. *Being Present*

Logan reflected, I balance home and life activities with work by making a conscious, intentional effort to leave my work at work. When I began teaching a few years ago, I didn't set those boundaries, and I would become so stressed out. My stress would bleed into other areas of my life and, ironically, my teaching. I know the healthier

choice is to uphold my boundaries by checking my emails and messages during working hours only and not feeling guilty about that. I have seen people with an unhealthy work-life balance lose relationships and, ultimately, their happiness by getting lost in their work. I would never want that to happen to me, so I make a genuine effort to find and maintain that balance. Teachers often indicated in their responses to the journal prompts the role routines played throughout the school day and at home. Flexibility in how to relieve stress was a common point of discussion by the participants. Several teacher interns remarked that connecting with nature and being outdoors gave them a sense of reconnecting with themselves. An additional benefit, the participants commented that when they were able to leave the stressors of the school day and take a hike or run, they were able to relax and enjoy life. Rory (see Figure 12) observed:Running and hiking have been huge stress alleviators. Prior to this, I was experiencing recurring nightmares about work that were destroying my sleep and sanity. I would encourage anyone who needs a mental break to take a hike and enjoy the bigger things in life that have the incredible ability to clear the mind.

Figure 12. *Reconnecting to Self-Hiking*

Whatever the crisis, natural or man-made, the teacher participants recognized personal struggles with mental health and wellness. How each person handled stress differed, yet most of the teachers indicated that exercise, regardless of the type, helped them relax and find inner calmness. Sterling (see Figure 13) disclosed, Running has always been a big part of my life and has really helped during some difficult times. It clears my mind and helps me think more clearly as I am running, sometimes I am so deep in thought I forget that I am running. The tired feeling, I get once a good run is over is the one of the best feelings, I always end up relaxed and calm after a run. Running has been great for my mental health, especially during these times.

Figure 13. *Reconnecting to Self*

When confronted with challenges faced during times of crisis, the teacher participants acknowledged that personal struggles did exist. Each participant faced hardships unique to themselves, their students, and the school community. Even so, during times of uncertainty and crisis, the ability to adapt, stay resilient, cultivate new skills, and set aside time for self-care became prominent. Our participants realized that when adversity presents itself, that is the time when one needs to be positive and introspective, to look beyond the present adversity and develop a purpose that not only serves both personally and professionally.

When confronted with challenges faced during times of crisis, the teacher participants acknowledged that they did confront personal struggles. Each faced unique hardships. Nevertheless, during those times of uncertainty, the ability to adapt, remain resilient, cultivate new skills, and set aside time for self-care rose to the forefront. The teacher interns realized that when adversity presented itself, it was time to remain positive and introspective and look beyond the present adversity to develop a purpose that served them personally and professionally.

VI.   DISCUSSION

Times of crisis are often associated with overwhelming negativity and hardship. While the atmosphere of negativity during the pandemic was often overwhelming, such crises also present opportunities to demonstrate resilience, perseverance, and growth. This study used photovoice as the vehicle through which these teacher interns could document, share, and reflect upon their own experiences during this challenging time. There should be no surprise that successful teachers like these interns must be adaptable such that they can address fluid, novel, and unpredictable situations on short notice and without meaningful disruptions to their pedagogy (Burleigh et al., 2022; Copeland & Wightman, 2021; Granziera et al., 2016; Petzold, 2020). These teacher interns showed their strength and resilience (Luthans, 2002) by meeting the challenges of remote learning during the pandemic. We found that they (a) were adaptable (Orkibi, 2021; Parsons et al., 2018) to the ever-changing situation, (b) experienced and produced positive change in response to the most difficult obstacles, and (c) capitalized on the permeation of technology into every aspect of their instructional repertoire (Marek & Chew, 2021).

In what easily could have been one of the worst times in their lives, both personally and professionally, these teacher interns demonstrated initiative and resolve, willingly faced the challenge of overcoming adversity, and made the most out of an incredibly difficult situation. We found that they blossomed in their personal and professional lives. In many ways, the teacher interns were surprised at the positivity and strength they were finding in their lives despite facing a significant crisis. The introspective and reflective process that is demanded by participation in photovoice methodology helped them see who they were, what they experienced, and what they were becoming as it happened. Even though work-life and home life suddenly no longer had clear boundaries (Burleigh et al., 2022), they found themselves more connected to family and their inner selves in many ways. By being present in the discomfort of a great crisis, they found ways to practice self-care, which had been long since neglected in the busyness of their day-to-day lives.

Stated simply, these teacher interns were forced to adapt to everything as they faced the new normal created by a significant crisis such as the pandemic. Working from home and supporting distance learning meant there were no clear boundaries at the start and close of the workday, scenarios that create immeasurable stress (Marek & Chew, 2021). They had to find ways to compartmentalize their home and work lives and adapt their responses based on the needs of each situation. They were required to adapt the curriculum, instructional delivery, and class activities, all initially developed for traditional face-to-face instruction, within the limits of online instruction and in light of their students' needs and access to technology (Copeland & Wightman, 2021). The numerous obligations of being a teacher during this time of crisis forced them to examine their roles as an educator, partner, parent, family member, and citizen, to produce a new personal and professional identity that was unique to the present circumstances (Kell, 2020).

While these individuals could have folded in the face of such adversity, they blossomed. In a very unexpected way, they managed to meet their challenges and succeed despite the odds stacked against them. Teachers with this type of high-level adaptability and resilience are better able to meet the needs of students, overcome the stress associated with crisis situations, build stronger student-teacher relationships, and have a better sense of well-being (Collie & Martin, 2021; Eadie et al., 2021; Passey, 2021; Tebben et al., 2021). In light of the identity characteristics of adaptability and resilience, almost unbelievably, some aspects of the pandemic might have been blessings in disguise.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are similar to our previously published work (see Burleigh et al., 2022) in that the sample and data collection were restricted to only one education master's degree program in one California private university during the 2021-22 academic year. While the goal of this study was to analyze the reflective journal archival data of the teacher interns to understand how they adapted during times of crisis, we believe it is critical that future research directly explores how teacher licensure candidates were able to positively adapt and innately develop resiliency to situations that were not in their control. Future research is needed that directly

explores teacher licensure candidates' self-efficacy during times of crisis and describes how their character strengths may have an effect on student engagement and academic success.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS

We believe the findings of this study have several implications for future research. Additional studies may be needed to help educational leaders and researchers fully understand how teachers, regardless of standing within their school district or experience in the profession, are able to adapt both personally and professionally during times of crisis. Future research studies could focus on the positive and negative effects that a crisis, when presented in real-time, may have on members of the school community. Such studies may reveal the types of professional development needed to support staff, what mental health and wellness resources should be available to those individuals affected during a crisis, and how various populations within a school might respond to a crisis regardless of their level of experience in an educational setting. Educational leaders should also study how to prepare educators for major paradigm shifts in how the curriculum is delivered and how to support the mental health of teachers and students during an extended crisis (Hamilton et al., 2020). We encourage the use of photovoice for future studies in order to allow participants to express their experiences both in a narrative and visual context, thus presenting a holistic perspective of personal experiences.

We discovered that these teacher licensure candidates were able to adapt their teaching styles, demonstrate resilience, and maintain a positive outlook during a crisis, even if initially they felt overwhelmed or did not think they had the personal resources to deal with their specific situation. As noted in our previous study (see Burleigh et al., 2022), the teacher licensure candidates proposed that their districts create collaborative support networks to sustain teachers' ability to work through crises for both the short and long term, thus reducing the probability of exhaustion and burnout (Sokal et al., 2020). On their own accord, these educators, as teacher interns, demonstrated resilience and adaptability that allowed them to succeed under the most arduous circumstances, which contributed to the development of their professional and personal character.

Research into school practices, policy, and programming should be further addressed and developed in anticipation of future crises. While school districts throughout the United States have protocols in place for natural disasters and other crises (see Lane et al., 2020), they may not have developed in-depth practices for wide-ranging crises that impact the delivery of curriculum, students, educators, and the school community over an extensive period of time. To mitigate professional issues and to acknowledge the possibility of personal health concerns that may arise within the school setting during times of crisis, recurrent, collaborative, and productive communication is needed between all parties within the school community (Asha et al., 2021). The global crisis showed that educational leaders must build stronger and more vibrant partnerships within the school community (Bagwell, 2020) in order to help build the resiliency that our participants demonstrated.

We found that the research method of photovoice presented a multidimensional representation of these teachers' unique experiences during times of crisis, providing richer descriptions and insights than narrative text alone might have delivered. The participants' selection of personally relevant visual images allowed them to conjure and deeply reflect on how such visuals creatively represent their mindset and thought processes. While some of the teacher licensure candidates had initially felt angst, their resiliency, adaptability, and resourcefulness proved that during times of crisis, positive professional and personal outcomes can prevail. Ultimately, these individuals strengthened their character and identities as teachers during this previously unimaginable form of global crisis.

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