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Diffractionally Thinking about Teacher Identity in Body Mapping as Performance, Intersectional Positionality, and Material-Discursive Enactment

Jihea Maddamsetti
Old Dominion University, jmaddams@odu.edu

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Abstract

Teacher identity is integral for teachers' professional growth and shapes how they address persistent educational disparities and inequities. Teachers' embodied relationships with self, others, and the world play a vital role in the ways teachers (co-)construct and (re)negotiate their identities as professionals. Still, little is known about how the relations among teachers' bodies, material, and power may affect teacher identity. This study adopted a diffractive methodology to examine how elementary teacher candidates' (TCs) engagement in body maps—that is, arts-informed tools and processes of (re)presenting one's lived experiences and identities—may contribute to their embodied aspects of identity work. A diffractive methodology also enabled the researcher to draw on three theoretical perspectives on teacher identity (i.e., post-structural, critical race, and new material) and use the data to think with theory. Data sources included one TC's presentation of her body mapping, its associated narratives, and two responses from her peers. These data were collected in an online asynchronous course in the Southeastern U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight how one focal TC's embodied experiences, her interactions with two peers, and material practices affected the three TCs' identity work in an online discussion space in performative, intersectional, and material-discursive ways. Diffractive methodological approaches can benefit teachers' continuous professional learning and development and can open new methodological perspectives in analyzing teacher identities at the intersection of discourses, bodies, and materials.

Keywords

teachers' identities, diffractive methodology, performative, intersectional, and material-discursive bodies/embodiment, body mapping

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Diffractionally Thinking about Teacher Identity in Body Mapping as Performance, Intersectional Positionality, and Material-Discursive Enactment

Jiheia Maddamsetti

Department of Teaching & Learning, College of Education and Professional Studies,
Old Dominion University, Virginia, USA

Teacher identity is integral for teachers' professional growth and shapes how they address persistent educational disparities and inequities. Teachers' embodied relationships with self, others, and the world play a vital role in the ways teachers (co-)construct and (re)negotiate their identities as professionals. Still, little is known about how the relations among teachers' bodies, material, and power may affect teacher identity. This study adopted a diffractive methodology to examine how elementary teacher candidates' (TCs) engagement in body maps—that is, arts-informed tools and processes of (re)presenting one's lived experiences and identities—may contribute to their embodied aspects of identity work. A diffractive methodology also enabled the researcher to draw on three theoretical perspectives on teacher identity (i.e., post-structural, critical race, and new material) and use the data to think with theory. Data sources included one TC's presentation of her body mapping, its associated narratives, and two responses from her peers. These data were collected in an online asynchronous course in the Southeastern U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight how one focal TC's embodied experiences, her interactions with two peers, and material practices affected the three TCs' identity work in an online discussion space in performative, intersectional, and material-discursive ways. Diffractive methodological approaches can benefit teachers' continuous professional learning and development and can open new methodological perspectives in analyzing teacher identities at the intersection of discourses, bodies, and materials.

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Introduction

Researchers and teacher educators need to better understand how teachers form their professional identity: teacher identity is integral for teachers' professional growth (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day, 2011) and shapes how they address persistent disparities and inequities in education (Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Philip & Benin, 2014; Varghese et al., 2005). Teacher identity can be broadly defined by how teachers make sense of themselves as professionals, by how they present themselves to others, and by the roles that they play in response to their disciplinary, social, cultural, and political contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day, 2011). A focus on teacher identity is also crucial for discipline-specific teaching and learning because it provides a reference point for teachers to reflect on their pre-existing assumptions of education and examine the pedagogic and disciplinary consequences of such assumptions in their practice for future actions (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day, 2011). For this reason, I focus on

how teachers' embodied relationships with self, others, and the world play a vital role in the ways teachers (co-)construct and (re)negotiate their identities as professionals.

In this paper, the notion of bodies and their embodiment neither reduces to corporeal flesh (e.g., blood, bones, and skin) nor linguistic constructs (verbal and non-verbal language and ideologies). "Bodies" and "embodiments" here refer to not just the corporeal, emotive, and relational ways of being in a particular socio-material condition. In addition, bodies and embodiment encompass cultural, political, and historical ways of knowing, acting, and becoming with respect to ideologies and power relationships (Eriquez et al., 2015; Perry & Medina, 2011). In this sense, Perry and Medina (2011) refer to bodies and embodiment as "whole experiential beings in motion, both inscribed and inscribing subjectivities" in relation to other social actors, material things, norms, and power dynamics (p. 63). In educational research, studies have shown how dominant body-related discourses and practices in schooling—for example, neoliberal testing regime, Eurocentric, standardized English-only curricula, intelligence tests, and racialized disability labels—hierarchize students' intelligence or ability, classify whose bodies are "normal" or "abnormal," and justify surveillance or discriminatory practices on those student bodies that fail to conform to perceived hegemonic norms (Eriquez et al., 2015; Ohito, 2019, 2022; Sonu, 2020). Dominant body-related discourses also operationalize what teacher bodies are (or are not) effective, qualified, and desirable in the hegemonic and normative production of student bodies (*ibid.*).

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the nationwide movement for racial justice, and anti-abortion legislation have together intensified attention on how intersectionally minoritized bodies of students are vulnerable to material, educational, and sociopolitical conditions of systemic disparities, inequities, and injustices. In response, recent scholarship has argued that the ways that teachers understand body-related discourses and practices and engage and position their own and students' bodies and subjectivities in their professional learning and practice, can reinforce or challenge hegemonic forms of schooling (Kohli & Pizarro, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Ohito, 2022).

This article aims to extend previous qualitative research on embodied aspects of teacher identities, by showing how a qualitative methodology called diffraction can enable researchers to rethink the relations among teachers' bodies, material, and power in knowing and doing teacher identity work. Diffraction involves analyzing a qualitative dataset from multiple theoretical perspectives at the same time (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007). Diffraction also involves the conceptualization of physical objects and spaces as part of knowledge production (*ibid.*). Here, the focal dataset for diffractive analysis is one teacher candidate's (TC) presentation of her body mapping¹, its associated narratives, and two responses from her peers. These data were collected in an online asynchronous course in the Southeastern U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. These data are analyzed simultaneously from performative, intersectional, and material-discursive perspectives on identities.

Methodologically, body mapping is a creative and reflexive tool and process of (re)presenting one's body and identities using material objects (e.g., drawing, painting, and collages; de Jager et al., 2016; Fox & Aldred, 2015; Solomon, 2002). Because identity-(re)making is more than linguistic accounts (e.g., interviews and reflection entries; e.g., Maddamsetti, 2021b; Ohito, 2022; Perry & Medina, 2011), the very act of mapping or tracing myriad forces surrounding bodies can serve as the window into one's experiences with (dis)embodiment and identity (trans)formation. This multimodal, contextual, and relational

¹ Although I adopt the terms "body mapping" or "body maps" from the literature (e.g., de Jager et al., 2016; Gastaldo et al., 2013; Solomon, 2002), I acknowledge that the cartographic terms "map" or "mapping" (with associated ideas of travel, property, landscaping, and erasure) often has associations with White, Euro-Western settler-colonial gazes, imaginations, and structures (e.g., Yancy, 2016). Therefore, in the data analysis, I strove to be cautious against bodily staging or display and their associated White gaze.

process of materializing one's embodied experiences and subjectivities can also open alternative or counter-hegemonic ways of thinking about 'professional' or 'desirable' bodies in education, both for teachers and researchers.

In my diffractive analysis of the focal data, I use post-structuralist theory, critical race theory, and new materialist theory to analyze the TC's teacher identity. The selection of these theoretical lenses was guided by what I noticed in the body-mapping data—that is, the recurring or absent presence of the body (human and otherwise) as power-laden locations and agentic sources in making meaning and identity. Despite some tensions among the three selected theoretical lenses (as discussed below), these lenses are productive for inquiring into discursive, socio-political, and material conditions of bodies and for exploring the ways that bodies take up identities in response. In so doing, this study diffractively explores the consonances and dissonances amongst these perspectives, how they produce differences, and how such differences matter in understanding teacher identities performatively, ideologically, and materially. This diffractive analysis aims not to reduce teacher identities to the application of various theoretical perspectives but to continually rethink, unsettle, and enrich teacher identities in alternative or new ways. Such analysis can also create methodological openings for teacher educators and researchers who seek to study and cultivate embodied aspects of teacher identity towards justice-based ends, even in online-only spaces.

This article is structured as follows. I begin by reviewing extant research on body mapping in identity work. I then explain diffraction as a methodology. I outline the notions of identities from performative, intersectional, and material-discursive perspectives, and analyze the focal data through those three lenses. I conclude that diffractive readings of teacher identities benefit teachers' continuous professional learning and development and open new methodological perspectives on analyzing teacher identities.

Body Mapping: Potential Spaces for Identity Work

Body mapping was initially used as a reflexive, arts-informed, and therapeutic method for South African women with HIV/AIDS to reflect on and (re)frame their embodied experiences with illness and sexual violence using visual, oral, and written texts (Solomon, 2002). The purpose of body mapping is to draw participants' attention to the interrelationships between minds and bodies, and make visible and heard otherwise marginalized individuals' voices and embodied accounts within dehumanizing body-related discourses and unjust social and material conditions, such as ablism (de Jager et al., 2016), poverty and drug consumption (Dennis, 2020), cis-heteronormativity (Crath et al., 2019), linguisticism (Kusters & De Meulder, 2019), racism and colonialism (Krueger-Henney, 2019; Morton et al., 2021), sexism and sexual/physical/emotional violence (D'Souza et al., 2021; Lu & Yuen, 2012), and undocumented immigration status (Gastaldo et al., 2013).

Although variations in body-mapping structures may exist, participants and body maps become entangled with material and power-laden discursive practices. For instance, body-mapping process involves using material objects (e.g., paper, crayons, and apps on smartphones), exploring material conditions of the space (e.g., face-to-face versus online engagements), and responding to dialogues and actions in the aesthetic, material, and affective course of the exercises (de Jager et al., 2016; Fox & Aldred, 2015; Solomon, 2002). Constructing and unpacking multimodal meanings of body maps can also prompt participants to speak up about, and speak back to, historical, sociocultural, and political discourses, practices, and subjectivities operating in and through one's body (ibid.).

This body-mapping process can in turn empower marginalized or minoritized individuals to assert their agency and (re)claim identities in ways that foster healing. For instance, D'souza et al. (2021) showed that collaborative body-mapping work among children

and a researcher in Jamaica created a playful and therapeutic space where children could collectively surface their own or observed, embodied experiences with sexism and sexual/emotional violence; contextualize how their gendered, classed, and raced identities and locations were related to such oppression; and agentively reimagine future possibilities. Similarly, Morton et al. (2021) reported on how participatory body-mapping work among indigenous youths and their community in Canada fueled discussions about one's cultural and racialized identities and allowed for counter-visual (or decolonial feminist) storytelling against colonization, racism, and intersecting issues within their communities and institutions.

Educational research also highlights how the body-mapping work of students and teachers allows for taking up or challenging oppressive body-related discourses and practices within the social and material conditions of schooling. Ruglis (2011) demonstrated how body-mapping work, as a form of youth participatory action research, can enable dropout youths to confront normative schooling discourses on how they should behave, talk, and feel. In so doing, these students challenged their prescribed identities as "at risk" students. By showing how body maps supported Black male students, alongside their peers and teacher educators, to speak out and resist anti-Black racist and ableist discourses and actions, Krueger-Henney (2019) argued for critically oriented, embodied identity work that engages both students and educators toward justice-based ends. Most teacher education research has, however, highlighted how body mapping provides opportunities for teachers to explore and enact general, professional identities as reflective practitioners (Botha, 2017), multilingual learners/teachers (Lau, 2016), and music performers/teachers (Griffin, 2014). One notable exception is Restler's (2019) work, which focuses on how body mapping enacts teachers' critical identity work that interrogates, and resists intensified bodily, social, and material surveillance over teachers' bodies under the current accountability regimes.

Still, there has been relatively little research into how body mapping in online spaces, vis-à-vis offline settings, supports or constrains teachers' identity work. Compared to face-to-face settings, the online educational environment—that is, the context of this study—materializes a particular kind of relational ontology between human and non-human bodies and discursive forces (e.g., Mehta & Aguilera, 2020; Warfield, 2018). For example, online spaces materialize textually, visually, and audio-linguistically mediated embodiment of human and non-human bodies (e.g., online discussion threads and weblogs). On the one hand, online spaces' materiality can help teachers facilitate collaborative and open-minded conversations and feel more secure sharing their personal, lived experiences. Such materiality of online spaces can also decrease prejudice, particularly towards those who do not identify with white, cis-heteronormative, standardized English-speaking, middle-class, abled, and/or masculine-centered bodies (Warfield, 2018). On the other hand, a burgeoning number of studies, especially after the COVID-19 outbreak, has suggested that the materiality of online spaces is still deeply rooted in the physical world (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). Our physical, cultural, and historical relationship to discourses (written, spoken, or signed) that emerge from online spaces can, thus, reinforce hegemonic assumptions about our bodies and associated power relations.

In this regard, this literature has called for attending to (both human and non-human) "bodies' relevance" and "the discourses that are embedded in them" in online spaces and the dynamic and relational production of teacher identities (Perry & Medina, 2011, p. 63). In response to this call, I consider the focal data set—that is, one TC's presentation of her body map and its associated narratives and two responses from her peers in online discussion threads—as part of relational acts and identity-making processes among TCs.

Diffraction as a Methodology

My analysis in this article is grounded in diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007). In the literal sense, diffraction refers to the bending of waves when they encounter an opening in an obstruction. In qualitative research, diffraction is used as a metaphor to describe a dynamic and relational research process in which theories, methods, practices, and matter "like particles of light, ripples on a pond, or crisscrossing waves on the ocean, affect each other—they interfere with each other" (Davies, 2014, p. 3). In this vein, although both diffractive and reflective approaches to thinking about and doing qualitative research are grounded in ontological frameworks, Barad (2007) distinguished diffraction from reflection and advocated for the former. According to Barad, reflection (or representational approaches) position researchers and participants as mirrors, which implies the categorical, neutral, and discrete relations between subject and object, or knower and known. By contrast, diffraction focuses on "which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom" (Barad, 2007, p. 90) and what it does in and through knowledge-making practices.

Lenz Taguchi (2012) provides further insights into this diffractive view of differences as "an effect of connections and relations within and between different bodies, affecting other bodies and being affected by them" (p. 118). In so doing, diffractive analyses aim to "shift research from the concept of difference as categorical difference to difference as an emergent process, in which subjects and objects become different in the encounters through which they emerge and go on emerging differently" (Davies, 2014, p. 740). Adopting diffraction as a methodology involves engaging in the process of how differences are made, rather than understanding or positioning differences in terms of oppositions or binaries (e.g., mind/body; subject/object; human/non-human; and theory/practice; Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007).

Considering such relational nature of differences, the diffractive methodology is performative: it encourages researchers to "rupture, unsettle, animate, reverberate, enliven, and reimagine" data and theory as co-constitutive agencies in the performative (and intertwined) process of knowing-doing-becoming (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 1511). In this regard, some have used matter as data—for example, daily materials such as suits (Mazzei, 2013) and creative arts materials such as collages, poetry, biography, and drawings (Crath et al., 2019; Ohito, 2022)—to explore how such materials enable participants to surface embodied experiences and memories and co-produces knowledge, action, and identity. Others have engaged in diffractively reading the same data segment through multiple theoretical lenses and "[compare] consequences for theory when data and theory encounter each other" (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 147; see also, Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). Such diffractive readings aim to see what diffractive patterns emerge and explore how they produced differences and to what ends, rather than to synthesize theories hierarchically or set theories against other theories.

Diffractive methodologies are largely situated in new materialisms and Barad's agential realism (2007), which conceptualize matter and discourse as inseparable. Importantly, however, qualitative scholars across disciplines have continuously probed how this onto-ethico-epistemological framework can help rethink our theoretical, methodological, and analytic approaches to exploring identity, difference, and praxis and work toward feminist, queer, trans, anti-racist, anti-ablest, and decolonizing goals (Braidotti, 2013; Ulmer, 2016; Wynter, 2003; see also, Springgay & Truman, 2022).

Building on this diffractive approach, in this article, I use diffractive methodology to study how material objects of body-mapping work affect participants' identities. I also explore how diffractive readings of the focal data could provide researchers opportunities to rethink the embodied aspects of teachers' identities. I first used a post-structuralist view (identity as performative) because I understand identity as the discursive adoption, negotiation, or resistance of subjectivities within power relations and dynamics (Butler, 1990). In this view,

interlocutors' expectations and associated social, cultural, and political ideologies matter in performing identity. I also selected a critical race perspective (identity as intersectional) to highlight multifaceted aspects of teachers' social identity positions (e.g., race, gender, class, language, and religion)—namely, intersectionality—and how these identity positions intersect in the (re)production of relational and systemic power, privilege, and oppression (Collins, 2008; Crenshaw, 1997). Finally, I adopted a new material perspective to consider how the entanglement of human and non-human bodies, such as social interactions and material practices through body-mapping artifacts, invoke teachers' identity enactment (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007) in a particular social, cultural, and historical context (Braidotti, 2013; Wynter, 2003). Importantly, these three perspectives are not mutually exclusive but relevant in their feminist concerns with bodies and (dis)embodiment that produce power, agency, and identities. I believe that the diffractive identity analyses performed in this article can foreground embodiments, discursivities (e.g., verbal and non-verbal language, ideologies, and power relations), and materialities (e.g., material objects and spaces) in studying and cultivating teachers' identities towards more equity- and justice-based goals.

The Study Context

The present study draws on data from two sections of an online asynchronous literacy methods course offered for preservice teachers in Spring 2021. This course aimed to deepen TCs' literacy content knowledge and pedagogical strategies and foster their critical awareness around language, power, and identity. This course was taught by me (the researcher) at a public university in the southeastern United States, which is designated as a Minority-Serving-Institution (MSI).

This study focuses on a body mapping assignment from this course. This assignment aimed to encourage TCs to reflect on embodied experiences and relationships as future educators (or lack thereof) during the pandemic and to explore their professional identities concerning discourses of teaching and learning identified in and through their embodied experiences in the local and global contexts. With these aims in mind, the body mapping assignment entailed both a collaborative and individual process of reflection and body mapping. This study focuses on individual process of reflection on body mapping.

The individual body mapping included:

- Individual reflection: Based on their course readings, the whole-group and small-group discussions, and collaborative body mapping, TCs were asked to reflect on how those experiences may have influenced their professional learning and identities as future educators.
- Individual body mapping: TCs were asked to use their individual body mapping to support their reflection. In this process, they were encouraged to illustrate their feelings, thoughts, (dis)embodied experiences, and their effects on their evolving professional identities on their body map (e.g., using different colors and symbols).

While TCs were provided with a basic body-outline image in both collaborative and individual body mapping, they were encouraged to use their preferred visualization methods. Furthermore, having completed their collaborative and individual body mapping, the TCs were asked to share their work with peers in discussion forums and share their responses with other peers.

The Focal Participants and Data Set

The course sections for this study included 49 students whose ages ranged from 22 to 45 years old; 41 students identified as women and eight students as men. Among the 32 students who participated in this project, this study focused on three focal participants in this study—Ariana, Liz, and Cathy—because they (a) were interested and willing to participate in this study; (b) regarded themselves as continuing to teach within the next 1-3 years; (c) self-identified themselves as novice elementary-level teachers; and (d) took up different self-identities in this context. While all the participants self-identified as middle-class women in their early 20s, Ariana self-identified as a Black woman, and Liz and Cathy self-identified as White women. Before beginning the research project, the purpose and process of data collection were explained to the participants by the researcher, and verbal consent from participants was obtained.

Using diffraction as a methodology, I was particularly interested in relational instances (i.e., interactions between the focal TC and peers) of TCs' identity construction, rather than TCs' self-reported visual or written narratives alone, because they allow for various interpretations of the data from multiple theoretical perspectives on identities. For this diffractive analysis, I chose a key event: one TC's (Ariana) display of her body map and associated narrative and two of her peers' (Liz and Cathy) responses to that visual and written text in discussion threads (see Figure 1 and Table 1 below).

Figure 1
Ariana's Body Map

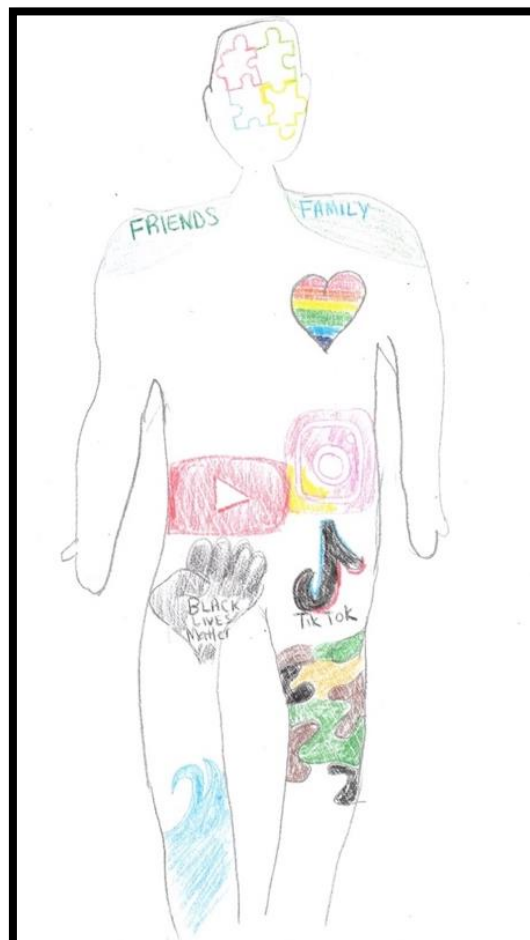


Table 1
Focal Narratives

Line	Ariana’s written narrative about the body map
1	The first thing that came to mind was military families and students, and that’s why I used the
2	camouflage patterns on one leg. My family is military, which is another reason I thought to
3	include this in my body mapping. My family and friends are an enormous part of my life and
4	impact me, for better or worse. That is why I placed them on the shoulders of the body.
6	Next, I chose to place a rainbow heart on the body mapping because my gender identity and
7	supporting LGBTQ rights are at the heart of who I am. Given today’s political climate, I also
8	placed the BLM fist to represent me, a Black queer woman, and those who want to continue
9	to fight for social justice and spread peace and justice. But I included the puzzle pieces in my
10	head to represent my ongoing learning process about how to do such work in the classroom.
11	Third, in thinking about living and social contexts that shape teaching and learning, I placed
12	a water wave to represent the Tidewater regions, home to my students and me in this city. Yet
13	these areas are vulnerable to climate change and environmental injustices.
14	Finally, social media symbols (e.g., Tiktok) reflect my social media-oriented life and my wish
15	to break away from it. Especially amid COVID-19, students and teachers are being dealt a
16	difficult hand within schools. Teachers must teach in a distanced, virtual setting. Teachers
17	have to be exceptionally flexible, but this is not allowing much time for planning or personal
18	time. Lack of planning and personal time has teachers unable to meet the needs of the students
19	or themselves, so it is a constant battle of playing catch-up. These teachers, like me, are feeling
20	a lot of stress, anxiety, and burnout in their current work circumstances.
Line	Liz’s response
21	Hi Ariana, I enjoyed “reading” your body mapping; your representation as a complex human
22	being and educator is so telling. You made many great points about how the pandemic has
23	affected teachers’ physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Working in a school as
24	a student-teacher, I see the pandemic has taken a toll on teachers as they struggle to meet their

25	own needs. But most importantly, I think minority students (e.g., from various gender, ethnic,
26	class, and disability backgrounds) particularly feel they are not always being heard. All they
27	genuinely want is to fit in and be their most authentic, natural self, but if the system says that
28	it is impossible to do so, how will they ever feel comfortable enough to put forth their best
29	effort at school? That’s why I think we need to continue to engage in this line of conversation
30	with students, teachers, and administrators.
Line	Cathy’s response
31	Hi Ariana and Liz, indeed, distanced online-only education has provided a challenging
32	learning environment for all students, especially those without technology access or special
33	needs support. The most challenging part of the body mapping assignment was placing myself
34	in the shoes of the teacher and student, trying to visualize their current school environment.
35	Your perspectives and experiences were helpful to me as a future teacher so that I can consider
36	each view of the students I will be teaching and the professionals I will be working together.

I selected this event as the focal data set primarily because of its analytic richness. Ariana’s body map and narratives illustrate how TCs might negotiate their various social and professional identities with respect to the hegemonic discourse of be(com)ing a teacher during the pandemic (e.g., social pressure on teachers to care for students despite low pay and inequitable educational resources). Likewise, Ariana’s embodied identity-making process and responses from Liz and Cathy prompted me to notice connections among teachers’ bodies/embodiment, digital technologies, socio-material spaces, and the social world around them at that time, thus providing insights into their identity performances, positionalities, and enactments. For this reason, this focal data set can be considered as a “telling case,” which shows how “the same actors are involved in a series of situations in which their structural positions must continually be re-specified and the flow of actors through different social positions specified” (Mitchell, 1983, p. 194).

The selection of the focal participants and data set does not aim to represent “themes” emerging from the larger data set. Rather, the aim of this choice is to illustrate the connections between the materialities of body-mapping work and TCs’ performative, intersectional, and material-discursive bodies, and their combined effects on TCs’ identity work. The diffractive mode of analysis can also point to implications for teacher education in engaging with the potential or capacity of body mapping for teachers’ professional learning and development.

Entanglement among the Researcher, Participants, and Data

The diffractive analysis requires researchers to “mov[e] away from the familiar habits and seductions of representationalism (reflecting on the world from outside) to a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it” (Barad, 2007, p. 88). In so doing, the diffractive analysis considers the ever-present human researcher gaze for interpreting theory,

methods, and data, and recognizes how researchers are entangled with and produced through dynamic and relational research processes. That said, I acknowledge that my social identities and embodied experiences at the intersection of privilege (e.g., a highly educated, cis-, middle-class, East Asian, abled body/embodiment) and marginalization (e.g., a body/embodiment that has been subject to racism, linguisticism, xenophobia, and deportation court proceedings) might have influenced the theories, methodological materials, discourses, and other methodological elements that I chose to engage in this study. I also served as the teacher educator and researcher in this study. I recognize that my dual positionality might have affected their identity positions and the stories they chose to share with their peers or me. I also recognize that the body-mapping assignment might have brought up personally, emotionally, and politically thorny issues. As such, I made conscientious efforts to attend to the participants' well-being as follows: (a) discussing how this inquiry might touch on sensitive topics, thus reassuring the participation in this study as entirely voluntary; (b) holding weekly question-and-answer virtual meetings to establish rapport with TCs and openly discuss the process of completing the assignments; (c) checking in with each body-mapping group for guidance and support for their progress; (d) using the online discussion boards and course announcements as spaces to review students' work and engage in critical reflection myself; and (e) member-checking with the participants and removing off-the-record information, if desired by the participants. Furthermore, in the ethics of visual research methods, it is important to protect the confidentiality of participants' identities (Frith et al., 2005). Thus, I asked participants not to include any identifiable images related to their personal information or any commercial images.

Data Analysis

Murris and Bozalek (2019) describe how in using diffraction as a methodology, there is no linear set of steps, instructions, or checklists to follow to reach to a particular conclusion. In so doing, diffractive analysis decenters the conventional, linear process of qualitative research, such as data collection → data analysis (e.g., coding and reducing the data to themes) → representation. Instead, diffractive analysis considers theory-methodology-method-analysis as already always entangled without clear-cut units and intends to create circumstances that piece together theoretical and analytical elements for more multifaceted and nuanced understandings of data (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012; Murris & Bozalek, 2019). Therefore, in my diffractive analysis of the focal data, I engaged in what Mazzei and Jackson (2012) referred to as an entangled process of “methodological maneuvers.” That is (1) engaging with theoretical concepts in ways that disrupt theory/practice binary and demonstrate “how they *constitute* or make one another” (p. 264, italics original); (2) being intentional and transparent in what analytic questions are raised and analyzed by a specific theory and demonstrating how the questions are used for analyses; and (3) intentionally and repeatedly plugging the same data set into and across theoretical concepts not only to elicit new or various understandings of the data but also illustrate the “*suppleness of each when plugged in*” (p. 264, italics original).

Diffractively Thinking about Teacher Identities

In this section, I discuss the three theoretical perspectives on teacher identity—that is, identity as performance, intersectional positioning, and material-discursive enactment—and present three analyses of the focal event. Below, I first explicate key concepts of identity from each theory and then use the focal data point to think with those theoretical concepts. As an organizing framework, the three theories can shed light on converging and diverging conceptualizations of teacher identity.

Teacher Identity as Performance

Conceptualization of Teacher Identities as Performance

Butler (1990) describes “identity as performance”—that is, fluid, dynamic, and interactionally embodied acts of “doing,” displaying, or making rather than static or internal being in situ (see also, Ives & Juzwik, 2015). The performativity of identities highlights how socially, culturally, politically, and historically hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses manifest “through corporeal signs and other discursive means” over time in different spaces (Butler, 1990, p. 333). In other words, “doing” identities is contingent upon the local and global discourses (i.e., spoken, written, or signed language, narrative, interaction, and ideologies) within moment-to-moment social interactions and physical or material bodies that embody such performative acts. It is within and through a series of performative acts that one reinforces, appropriates, negotiates, or challenges hegemonic discourses and power dynamics therein.

In analyzing teacher identity as performative, one aspect to which I give particular attention here is “identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler, 1990, p. 179, italics in original). In Butler’s work, one’s verbally and bodily stylized acts (or discursive moves) establish gender norms and produce gendered subjects, such as hetero-cis-patriarchal structures that define gender and sexuality in particular ways and privilege masculine-oriented straight bodies and identity performances. If we consider teacher identity as a stylized repetition of acts where verbal and non-verbal language and representations discursively constitute meaning, teacher identity is not just *in* the narratives and embodied experiences but stylized or enacted “through” narrative- and embodied performances in relation to interlocutors’ expectations and larger discourses (e.g., professionalism, womanhood, or motherhood; Ives & Juzwik, 2015). In this light, this performative perspective on identities provides an analytic lens for understanding how teachers performatively (co-)construct and (re)negotiate identities in a particular context, and for exploring whether and how teachers reinforce, negotiate, or disrupt hegemonic discourses through identity performances.

Analysis of Teacher Identity as Performance

Based on the Butlerian concepts of identity as performance, the analysis of teacher identity here focuses on the following questions:

1. What discourses (e.g., about teaching and learning; and bodies and embodiment during the pandemic) do the participants mobilize in their online discussion posts?
2. How, if any, do the participants use discourses (e.g., about teaching and learning; and bodies and embodiment during the pandemic) as performative resources for “doing” their teacher identity?

Using the visual and textual narrative (i.e., body map and its accompanying written narrative), Ariana performs two aspects of teacher identities: “Ariana-as-justice-oriented-teacher” and “Ariana-as-frustrated-and-overwhelmed-teacher.” To do this, she adopts two *stylized acts*, or discursive moves (Butler, 1990). Ariana’s first discursive move involves visual and textual metaphors and personal narratives to communicate her family background and perform justice-oriented identity as an individual and professional (lines 1-13). For example, Ariana illustrates that her family and friends are akin to moving forces like “the camouflage patterns on one leg” (line 2) or “the shoulders of the body” (line 4). Ariana then uses the metaphors of a rainbow heart (line 7), BLM (Black Lives Matter) a fist (line 8), and a

water wave (lines 11-12) to (re)present herself as a Black queer woman living and working in an environmentally vulnerable region. Her use of the “puzzle” metaphor (line 10) further illustrated her perplexing yet ongoing process of learning to teach towards justice-based goals. Together, Ariana performs her identity as a socio-politically assertive and justice-minded teacher. Her identity-performing discursive moves also indicate that teachers’ professional selves are intricately entwined with personal selves and associated experiences.

Ariana’s second discursive move entails using the modality and emotional tenor in relation to dominant discourses of being a teacher during the pandemic. This discursive move criticizes educational and societal conditions outside her control. Ariana performs a frustrated and overwhelmed teacher identity. Ariana uses strong modalities, such as “must” and “have to” (line 16), to illustrate dominant discourses to which many teachers were subject during the pandemic (e.g., teachers as hyper-resilient and committed in times of crisis). Her use of the conjunction “but” (line 17) and negative emotional tenor intensified with “a constant battle” (line 19) and “a lot of stress, anxiety, and burnout” (lines 19-20) indicates her critique that such expectations are too unrealistic and counterproductive for (pre-service and in-service) teachers, including herself. In this way, Ariana’s identity performance presents a sharp critique of hegemonic discourses of be(com)ing a teacher at the local and societal level at that time, and yet falls short of alternative views or actions that teachers might take up in response to such hegemonic discourses.

Liz accepts and resists Ariana’s identity performance through two largely discursive moves, such as revoicing and rhetorical questions. Liz first accepts “Ariana-as-frustrated-and-overwhelmed-teacher” identity performance by revoicing (a) Ariana’s critique of unrealistic professional pressures on teachers during the pandemic (lines 22-23); and (b) her (mentor) teachers’ embodied teaching experiences at that time in her practicum school (lines 23-24). By revoicing her mentor or other teachers’ experiences, Liz implicitly expressed her negative feelings about dominant discourses of teaching at the expense of their “physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness” (line 23).

Concurrently, Liz resists and accepts “Ariana-as-justice-oriented-teacher” identity performance. On one level, Liz resists Ariana’s focus (only) on teachers’ voices and their well-being at the individual level without much consideration of those of intersectionally minoritized students at the structural level (lines 24-26). Liz’s rhetorical questions (lines 26-28) further amplifies the severity of such issues for minoritized students and situates them within a highly restrictive schooling system. On another level, Liz’s identity performance in alignment with “Ariana-as-justice-oriented-teacher” is implied, because the assumption underlying this stance is that teachers need to enact socially just identity and practice alongside their students. In this vein, Liz suggests the importance of various stakeholders’ collective action towards systemic change, which can be discursive (e.g., engaging in critical dialogues, questioning practices, or changing beliefs; lines 28-30).

In contrast to Liz, who actively performs her identity in response to Ariana, Cathy’s identity performance is reflective yet largely monologic; she relates her response to topics brought up by Ariana and Liz but uses them as a background to foreground her personal reflection on body-mapping activities and classroom practice. Repeating some critical ideas from Ariana and Liz’s narratives, Cathy briefly acknowledges the detrimental impact of the pandemic on all students but particularly those who do not have equitable access to educational resources and support needed for their learning (lines 31-32). In so doing, Cathy reflects teacher identity in alignment with Ariana and Liz. Without much elaboration, however, Cathy immediately redirects her narrative from a focus on the challenges that many students might have faced during the pandemic to a focus on her personal, internal struggles with learning to teach in challenging educational conditions (e.g., empathizing with students and teachers; lines 33-34). Still, Cathy does not substantively engage with Ariana’s and Liz’s complex negotiation

of hegemonic discourses of teaching and learning or its implications for her classroom practice. In this light, Cathy's teacher identity performance here can be understood as not reflective but rather monologic.

Teacher Identity as Intersectional Positionality

Conceptualization of Teacher Identity as Intersectional Positionality

Rooted in critical race theories and Black feminism, “intersectionality” refers to various social identity markers that are “inextricably interconnected in the production of social practices of exclusion” (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 237). The notion of intersectionality was theorized as critique of second wave feminism that centered on experiences of white, middle-class women; common challenges surrounding womanhood do not necessarily produce common experiences in systems of power, oppression, and privilege (Collins, 2008). Intersectionality underlines the significance of recognizing and disrupting the structurally intersecting aspects of lived oppression that many intersectionally minoritized women of Color, such as Black, queer, working-class women's experience (Collins, 2008; Crenshaw, 1997; see also, Ohito, 2019, 2022).

Here, I adopt positional perspectives on intersectionality—that is, “identity as intersectional positionality”—to understand whether and how participants agentively take up, appropriate, or disrupt their perceived intersectional identities in and through their reflections on embodied experiences and online interactions. Although the original intersectionality conceptualization is largely grounded in structuralism that attributes socio-political phenomena and processes (e.g., racism and hetero-cis-patriarchy) to the unidirectional effects of structure on social actors, intersectionality scholars have increasingly extended this notion by drawing on positionality—that is, the interplay between power and social actors' agency (Geerts & van der Tuin, 2013; Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021a, 2021b).

This positional approach to intersectionality shifts away from an essentialist or determinist understanding of intersectional identities toward enduring yet dynamic social locations and agentive processes of intersectional identity work. On the one hand, this shifting focus on intersectional identities, to some extent, is aligned with the Butlerian notion of performative identities, given its emphasis on the discursive construction of hegemonic power and social actors' agency in (re)framing, negotiating, and resting such power in turn. On the other hand, from a critical race standpoint, identity as intersectional positionality is distinctive from identity as performance, with its justice-oriented focus on racism and its intersectional issues entrenched in American society—that is, the context of this study—and manifested through everyday life experiences (Collins, 2008; Crenshaw, 1997). For this reason, in educational research, identity as intersectional positionality has been applied to social justice research and practice as an entry point, rather than an end, for understanding how teachers position themselves between their intersectionally minoritized students and the social injustices that many of those students face, and their implications for teachers' curricular and pedagogic decisions and students' social, emotional, and academic engagement (Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Ohito, 2019, 2022).

Analysis of Teacher Identity as Intersectional Positionality

From a critical race perspective on identity as intersectional positionality, the analysis of teacher identity is guided by the following questions:

1. How do the participants make sense of and describe their own and others' intersectional identity positionality within systems of power (e.g., gender, race, and class)?
2. How, if any, do the participants engage with their own and other peers' discussion posts in ways that take up, appropriate, negotiate, or resist their intersectional positionality?

Ariana initially foregrounds her intersectional identity markers and positions herself as critically conscious of gender, sexual orientation, race, and environmental issues through her embodied experiences—a Black queer woman in environmentally susceptible areas of the city. When framing her personal and professional commitment to socially just practices, Ariana explicitly refers to the ways that her intersectional positionality and its associated memories, experiences, and relationships are stored in and manifest through the body (e.g., a rainbow at heart; BLM fist at the pelvis area; and camouflage- and watermark on the legs). The active presence of the body (or embodiment) in Ariana's justice-based teacher identity also resonates with critical race feminist views of identities—that is, embodied (or enfolded) ways of knowing, doing, and becoming within and against systems of power, oppression, and privilege.

However, in the later part of the post, Ariana positioned herself as a more overwhelmed and uncertain future educator navigating challenging social, political, and educational terrains in the contingent pandemic context. From a perspective of intersectional identity positionality, this shift could be attributed to social norms and practices at that time. For example, high pressure on educators during the pandemic (e.g., serving students with unwavering care) may have provided little or limited resources and support for teachers like Ariana to persist and grow as justice-minded teaching professionals. Furthermore, from a cis-hetero-patriarchal, white supremacist, and able-bodied perspective, caring is both gendered and racialized, able-bodied labor (Collins, 2008; Crenshaw, 1997). Women teachers are often expected to innately care for students. (Women) teachers of Color are projected to advocate for critically conscious care, especially for historically minoritized students (Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Ohito, 2019, 2022). Along this line, Ariana's shifting positionality could be interpreted as her uncertainty or resistance to the successful performance of hegemonic femininity without social, emotional, or material resources to act as such, especially during the pandemic.

Like Ariana, Liz, and Cathy underline the importance of attending to the students' intersectional identity positionality (e.g., ethnicity/race, gender, class, and dis/ability) in teaching and learning. However, the extent to which Liz and Cathy take perspectives of students and explore their implications for teaching and learning is different in this post. For example, Liz takes up perspectives of intersectionally minoritized students to consider how they might feel when their voices and experiences are not included. She also questions how systematic underrepresentation has been persistently embedded within the schooling system. By doing so, Liz pushes back Ariana's teacher-centered views, invites her peers to adopt more student-centered and structural perspectives on educational inequities, and explores avenues for collectively advocating for intersectionally minoritized students. Cathy also regards teaching with some consideration of intersectionally minoritized students. Nevertheless, she does not fully explore structural inequities that minoritized students might experience and the role of educators in responding to such issues.

Notably, Liz and Cathy do not explicitly articulate their own intersectional identity positionality or address how their positionality may shape their interactions with students and teaching practices. It is possible that, in this discussion post, they may have focused on responding to Ariana's post because they were asked to post their body maps and associated narratives in other posts and felt less willing or unnecessary to connect personally with the intersectional positionality of students or their peers. As shown in Cathy's reflection on herself

as a teacher in a constantly evolving educational landscape, the meaningful and intentional sharing of intersectional positional identities among teachers can, however, contribute to enhancing teachers' open-mindedness to students' diversity and the breadth of classroom circumstances they might be in as teachers of intersectionally minoritized students.

Teacher Identity as Material-Discursive Enactment

Conceptualization of Teacher Identity as Material-discursive Enactment

Both performative and intersectional perspectives on identities situate agency as the discursive interplay and negotiation between subjectivities and power-laden social, cultural, and political discourses. However, new materialist views of identities are critical of overemphasizing human- and discourse-centered agency, contending that discursive framing of identity is necessary but insufficient for explicating the ways that human and non-human bodies' matter (or materiality) is entangled in data generating and analytic process (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007). In other words, it is not just spoken, written, or signed texts or discourses that exercise power and agency; rather, power and agency are distributed and emerging through the entanglement of human and non-human matter and "historically specific sets of material conditions" (Barad, 2007, p. 23).

On one level, "identity as material-discursive enactment" underlines materially and discursively entangled aspects of identity enactment in and through both human and non-human bodies' materialization in the world (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007). On another level, attention to discursive materiality of human and non-human bodies is not to equivocate or decenter hegemonic discourses and practices that perpetuate inequity and injustice inflicted upon human bodies in education and society writ large. Instead, this view draws our attention to how human bodies are historically and politically situated within material conditions and how non-human bodies, as agentive, material actors, materialize issues of equity, justice, and belonging (Braidotti, 2013; Wynter, 2003).

I found the notion of "intra-action" particularly helpful for understanding the role of the materially and discursively produced matter (e.g., body maps and online spaces) in teachers' identity work. "Intra-action" refers to the "mutual constitution of entangled agencies" of non-human matters and human bodies, as opposed to the "inter-action" that implies distinct and separable entities (Barad, 2007, p. 135). The notion of intra-action highlights the ways that material matters agentively participate in producing phenomena, knowledge, or identity. This "thing power" of material matters challenges Cartesian ontological dualism (e.g., subject/object, mind/body, matter/meaning, theory/practice, and human/non-human), that is engendered by an overemphasis on interactions between human bodies and the material world. Importantly, intra-active "thing power" is not limited to non-human materialities but inclusive of embodied memories and practices, and "histories of colonial, racist, and sexual oppressions in systems of bodily production and inscription and their consequent liberatory and oppressional discourses" (Haraway, 2007, p. 84). In this regard, the notion of intra-actions has been used in educational research, such as to examine the agentive role of picture books in engaging students and teachers in tracing, questioning, and re-imagining social injustice (García-González et al., 2020), and to explore the relational and agentive role of online spaces in shaping power dynamics and pedagogical choices of teachers (Heikkilä & Mankki, 2021).

Analysis of Teacher Identity as Material-discursive Enactment

Through a new materialist lens of identity as material-discursive enactment, the analysis of teacher identity focuses on the following questions:

1. In what ways do the participants and material-discursive matters, which emerge from participants' discussion posts, intra-act with one another?
2. How, if any, do intra-actions between human and non-human bodies enable the participants' teacher identity enactment here?

We can see what the body-mapping object “does” in enacting Ariana's identity through the entanglement with Ariana and material-discursive conditions of her personal and professional lives—that is, an example of the material-discursive intra-actions that allow for thinking about teacher identity differently. These intra-actions produce Ariana's multifaceted teacher identities: Ariana-as-justice-oriented-teacher and Ariana-as-frustrated-and-overwhelmed-teacher. At times, as shown in her body map, the very act of drawing the body directed Ariana's intra-actions through material (e.g., paper, coloring pencils, and digital technologies). The body-mapping process also enabled the intra-actions among her memories and experiences from her body (e.g., a Black queer woman with a military family background); sociopolitical discourses surrounding her body (e.g., anti-Black racism and BLM); and the socio-spatial configuration that influences lives of students and her own (e.g., environmentally vulnerable urban communities). These intra-actions evoke affective responses (e.g., pride, joy, hopefulness, and anxiety) and produce Ariana's justice-minded teacher identity. At other times, the intra-actions within an online educational space with students (e.g., remote, virtual communication), the material-discursive resources (e.g., Tiktok), the time (i.e., the contingent pandemic), and discourses (e.g., adjusting to online education under high time pressure) jointly operate to produce Ariana's frustrated and overwhelmed teacher identity.

We can also see various forms of matter in Ariana's posting (e.g., body-mapping material objects, narrative texts, bodies, affect, pedagogies, and discourses) actively co-participate in enacting Liz's and Cathy's teacher identities. Online discussion threads, as material-discursive space, can also be seen as part of this intra-action: it enables Liz and Cathy to explore emerging ideas and enact their teacher identity collaboratively and critically. These intra-actions lead Liz and Cathy to problematize the material-discursive agency of digital technologies in positioning both teachers and students as disembodied agents and potentially constraining minoritized students' visibility and their socio-emotional well-being and academic engagement. In this way, Liz and Cathy explicitly acknowledge that the materialization or embodiment of digital technologies in education is not neutral but implicated in the (re)production of educational disparities, inequities, or injustices. These intra-actions relationally produce Liz as a critical teacher who feels the need to destabilize the status quo in collaboration with other stakeholders. Likewise, such intra-actions push Cathy to reflect on ways to engage with the (digital) materiality of teaching and learning in the future and produce her as a reflective teacher.

Discussion and Implications

Drawing on the post-structural, critical race, and new material perspectives on identities, this study shows how three TCs engage with relations among bodies/embodiments, material objects, and discourses, and perform, position, or enact their identities in online discussion threads. Using diffraction as a methodology, this study adds to a growing body of research on teacher identity research and has implications for thinking about and cultivating teacher identities in alternative ways.

By engaging with theoretical diffraction (e.g., Mazzei & Jackson, 2012), this study extends the current teacher identity literature by conceptualizing the performative, intersectional, and material-discursive aspects of teachers' identity work. Performative

perspectives on identities (Butler, 1990) allow for fine-grained discourse analysis of how Ariana's identity performances as a justice-oriented versus overwhelmed and frustrated teacher challenged the normative discourses of being a teacher at that time (e.g., effortlessly managing pandemic-inflicted pressures and disconnections). The findings also showed how Liz and Cathy performed multiple and contradictory identities in response to Ariana (e.g., accepting justice-oriented teacher identity and rejecting teacher-centered views). Resonating with existing research (Ives & Juzwik, 2015), this analysis further illustrates how TCs performed their identities in ways that worked to negotiate salient discourses of teaching and learning within their local online discussion contexts. Intersectional views of identities (Collins, 2008; Crenshaw, 1997) enable us to consider gendered and racialized social expectations on women teachers (of Color) to be committed to social justice issues and caring work. Echoing previous studies (e.g., Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Ohito, 2019, 2022), Ariana's identity positionalities as a justice-oriented, yet frustrated and overwhelmed teacher, for example, might be interpreted as her attempt to resist such gendered and racialized discourses around women teachers of Color or her struggle to act as such without ample support and resources at that time. New material understanding of identities (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2007) invites us to explore the intra-actions among TCs' embodied memories, temporally and spatially specific hopes and fears during the pandemic, material objects like body maps, and digital technologies such as online discussion forums, and how such intra-actions are entangled with the ways of knowing, doing, and be(com)ing a teacher.

Notably, although the three theoretical lenses of identities were teased apart above for the close-up analysis, they are interrelated to one another and allow for a layered account of teacher identities. For example, thinking with intersectional and material-discursive views of identities leads us to consider how intersectional bodies of their own and students (e.g., raced, gendered, classed, and differently-abled) are discursively read, acted upon, lived, and felt, are contingent upon the complex entanglements or intra-actions with discursive and material forces at work—for example, the physical/material space and activity that occurs, visual and textual metaphors emerged from the body-mapping object, and the sociopolitical climate during the pandemic. Likewise, the analysis shows that the materiality of the body-mapping object and online discussion threads functioned as performative resources for TCs' identity work within and against hegemonic ways of being a teacher at that time. Discourse analysis of visual or textual texts alone may not have explicated the material and discursive conditions of teacher bodies and their effects on power, positioning, and teacher identity.

Methodologically, like Restler's (2019) work, using body maps as creative methods opens new and different ways of thinking about and doing teacher identities. For example, Ariana's body-mapping object staged narratives of Ariana's embodied aspects of personal and professional histories, sparked conversations about what it means to teach during the pandemic and invoked different identity theories. In this way, Ariana's body-mapping object played an agentic role in the participants' meaning- and identity-making while showing the methodological possibilities of doing teacher identity research differently.

Concurrently, diffractive methodology highlights the interrelationships of theory-method-praxis to know and become through research, and their ethical and political significance (Braidotti, 2013; see also, Springgay & Truman, 2022; Ulmer, 2016). We must, then, consider whether and how body-mapping objects in this study enabled the TCs' critical conversations about their identities or roles in embodying anti-oppressive pedagogies. In their response to the body-mapping object (either direct or reflective), all the participants, as future educators, acknowledged the vital importance of promoting diverse ways of students' knowing and acting within and beyond online educational environments. Such critical awareness seemed to have led them to express their heightened concerns about normative curricula and instruction that often constrain or minimize teachers' own and students' well-being—that is, the evidence

of their critical conversation or confrontation about hegemonic discourses of teaching and learning. Liz also briefly underlined the significance of educational stakeholders' collective efforts to meet minoritized students' different needs. However, the participants did not substantially engage in critical pedagogical implications of their emergent teacher identities, such as exploring how they might be able to embody anti-oppressive pedagogical acts within and through often-challenging conditions of teaching and learning.

The diffractive analyses of this study have methodological and practical implications for teacher educators to consider when working with TCs to cultivate their agentive professional identities. Beyond simply "using" body-mapping as creative objects, teacher educators must engage teachers in deliberate and guided reflection through which TCs learn to account for the mutually constitutive role of power-laden discourses and material elements (objects, places, histories, and systems) in shaping their professional agency and identities. For example, teacher educators across the different classroom or institutional communities can work together to process and share creative material artifacts (e.g., poetry, personal essays, collage making, photo diaries, and tweets) through which TCs embody, feel, and make sense of their professional selves. In that process, teacher educators need to facilitate TCs' collaborative and critical reflection on how material (e.g., objects, spaces, bodies) and discursive forces (e.g., ideologies, language) shape and are shaped by TCs' professional experiences and identities (cf. García-González et al., 2020). Given that such reflections can surface deeply personal, political, or controversial topics, teacher educators must create a brave- or counter-space (Maddamsetti, 2021a, 2021b; Ohito, 2019, 2022) where they model participatory protocols needed to engage in difficult conversations around the complex nature of one's intersectional identity positionalities and their implications for teaching practices.

Concluding Remarks: Limitations and Future Qualitative Research Directions

The limitations of this study highlight future research directions. This study mainly showcased the small number of women-only participants' visual, written, and interactive data during the pandemic-specific period in one research setting. For this reason, it might not be possible to generalize all the findings of this study. Methodologically, the use of body-mapping objects might have two limitations: (a) dependent on participants' interest in artistic or aesthetic modes of expression, this body-mapping tool might not be appealing or constructive to all participants; and (b) like interview data, participants might construct the visual, spoken, or written narratives related to the audience/researcher's expectations. Diffraction as a methodological approach entails varied and often dense theorization and analytic disentanglement. However, for those unfamiliar with interdisciplinary dialogues, this diffractive analysis can be "bewildering and perhaps even exhausting" (Gerrard et al., 2017, p. 386). Moreover, diffractive analysis, and by extension, post-qualitative inquiry has faced concerns and skepticism. By focusing on theoretical complexities and analytic possibilities, they may unwittingly overlook or obfuscate how interlocking ideological and political forces exclude certain ways of knowing and being, and how the knowledge-production process may reify the existing power structures (Gerrard et al., 2017; Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). Therefore, future research not only needs to use longitudinal and multiple data sources across various research contexts with different TC demographics to paint a more nuanced and fuller picture of teacher identity construction. But also, in using diffraction as a methodology, it is imperative for qualitative researchers to pay explicit attention to who "we" are as participants-researchers and what power structures are reified and/or unsettled to consider the ethical and political implications of the diffractive analysis.

Because identities and, by extension, teacher identities are constantly evolving, performative, and contested in various social locations and material arrangements, it is

imperative to broaden the conceptual and methodological scope for studying teacher identities. My diffractive analysis shows one example of how TCs and their surrounding world act in the performative, intersectional, and material-discursive production of one another's subjectivities. Particularly in working towards transformative goals in education, I hope this work inspires researchers and teacher educators to consider alternate possibilities for addressing social justice issues and praxis operated in and through bodies (both human, non-human, and more-than-human) as important context for teacher identity analysis.

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Author Note

Jihea Maddamsetti is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Education at Old Dominion University. Her research interest includes humanizing pedagogies, teacher identities, and embodiment in the field of general and language teacher education. Some of her work has been published in the *Action in Teacher Education*; *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*; *International Multilingual Research Journal*; *Teaching Education*; *The New Educator*; *Urban Review*; and *Urban Education*. She earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum Instruction and Teacher Education at Michigan State University. Please direct correspondence to jmaddams@odu.edu.

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