NEGOTIATING THEIR HORIZONS:
PRESERVICE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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NEGOTIATING THEIR HORIZONS: PRESERVICE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (220 pp.)

Co-directors of Dissertation: James Henderson, Ph.D.
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This qualitative hermeneutic study examined the lived experiences of 5 preservice secondary English/language arts teachers. It specifically examined their negotiation of an early urban field placement and their reflections upon the general methodology course in which it was embedded. The course was designed to facilitate their understanding of Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. The study employed an adaptation of Pinar’s (1976) method of currere to scaffold their reflection. The study examines the origins of the participants’ pre-understandings of urban public schools, as well as their considerations of them after leaving the field. Incorporated in to the participants’ currere narratives are also their reflections on Henderson’s teaching for democratic living and Pinar’s currere.
CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Across the United States, there is a surplus of applicants to positions in suburban high schools, especially those applicants for English/language arts positions in secondary schools. On the other hand, there is a national shortage of applicants for positions in rural and urban high schools (Ingersol and Smith, 2003; National Education Association, 2006; Spring, 2006; Thorton, 2004). The shortages of applicants to both rural and urban schools are equally significant and pressing issues in education today. However, my own experience and interests have prompted me to focus this qualitative study on the examination of the phenomenon as it specifically pertains to urban public schools. There is a deficit of preservice teachers willing to consider entering the professional field in urban settings, and something needs to be done about it. “The pool [of urban teachers] keeps losing water because no one is paying attention to the leak” (Merrow cited in Claycomb, 2000, p. 18). This trend may be symptomatic of issues within the schools themselves. “Because of low salaries and poor working conditions, many urban school districts are unable to retain good teachers” (Spring, 2006, p. 51). For an array of reasons, many teachers are reluctant to seek or maintain employment in that milieu, and urban public schools across the United States are creatively vying for their consideration.

Perhaps this trend is also an indicator of an oversight within teacher preparatory programs. Teacher educators would do well to seek ways to scaffold the way preservice teachers think about urban public schools, and invite them to experience those spaces. Doing so may serve to demystify the possibly unfamiliar environment of urban public schools. Surely, the responsibility of solving this dilemma cannot rest solely upon the shoulders of the school principals and policy makers attempting to encourage preservice teachers to consider engagement with urban
classrooms; they alone cannot facilitate preservice teachers’ authentic and multifaceted understanding of urban schools. Teacher preparatory programs have the opportunity to do just that, though, as they engage in the curricular decision-making that will serve as the journey preservice teachers navigate to eventually find their place in the profession (Burant, 1999).

For this reason, I perceive an intrinsic call for those engaged in teacher preparatory programs to listen to the voices of preservice teachers in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they think and feel about urban public schools. In doing so, the field of teacher education may gain valuable insight and examine new ways in which preservice teachers might be supported as they engage in early urban field placements. The purpose of this study was to discover whether or not one particular curricular framework, teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding (Henderson, 2001), is a viable mechanism to scaffold preservice teachers’ understanding of urban public schools and evoke critical conversations and purposeful reflection about that setting within teacher preparatory programs.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study was an examination of preservice secondary English/language arts teachers’ individual experiences in a general methodology teacher preparatory course. The curriculum of that course was intended to address issues that concern various aspects of teaching and learning in urban public high schools in an effort to scaffold preservice teachers’ reflection upon their experiences in both the course and the early urban field placement embedded within it. To achieve that end, the research questions that directed this investigation were:

- How do preservice secondary English/language arts teachers articulate their understanding of the multiple facets of urban public school education;
How do preservice secondary English/language arts teachers articulate their engagement in an early urban field placement; and

How do preservice secondary English/language arts teachers reflect upon their experience in a course designed to facilitate their 3S understanding of urban public school teaching?

Insight on these various facets of preservice teachers’ experience may contribute a new and valuable perspective to secondary teacher preparatory program decision makers as they engage in curriculum deliberation. This study was set within the course Principles of Teaching, which was designed to introduce Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. While I will explain the purpose of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in greater depth in chapter two, a brief synopsis is necessary here.

**Teaching for Democratic Living Through 3S Understanding**

Henderson (2001) employs three facets of teaching to build his framework: teaching for subject matter understanding, democratic self understanding, and democratic social understanding. Teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is essentially a way to consider curriculum that is intended to provide the learner with a holistic and democratic learning experience. Historically, many individuals engaged in the design and implementation of curriculum have worked with a balanced approach between cognitive, affective, and social learning to help students achieve their full potential (Tanner and Tanner, 2007). Since the birth of our nation, people have sought to fashion a system of public education that would provide “each person the chance to advance to the limits of his or her powers, and thus for human happiness” (Tanner and Tanner, 2007, p. 4). John Dewey is often cited as the leading advocate of the notion of experiential democratic education, and there are many current progressive
curriculum scholars who have stressed the importance of student experience in teaching and learning decisions (Breault, 2005).

Henderson’s work is unique in that it constructs teaching for subject matter understanding within the context of experiencing democratic living through this three-pronged approach to curriculum and instruction; it embeds subject matter learning with the continuous reflective consideration of self-learning and social learning. Teaching for subject matter learning is to focus on content-area learning, or specific information about a particular topic. In the Principles of Teaching course, the subject matter is curriculum development and pedagogical strategies in secondary education. Preservice teacher preparatory programs are relatively consistent in their focus on subject matter learning of this nature. A second component of the subject matter in this course is also an examination of multiple facets urban public schools. Through class readings, discussion, and a scaffolded early urban field placement, the preservice teachers consider urban public schools and their place in American society. The early field placement provides for an experiential submersion, albeit unfortunately brief, in an urban classroom as well as personal engagement with the teachers and students in that milieu. Consequently, it is intended that the preservice teacher learns about the subject matter not only through textual and classroom activities, but also through their engagement with an experience of participation within the subject matter itself.

It is hoped that the scaffolded experience in the Principles of Teaching course not only serves as a foundation for preservice teachers’ subject matter learning, but also provides them with the opportunity to learn about themselves and their society from the perspective of responsible democratic living. Democratic self understanding is facilitated when the preservice teachers reflect upon their own personal experiences, thoughts, feelings and opinions with reference to
experiencing democratic ideals and then connect this self-examination to their subject learning. Democratic self-examination is highly individualized and requires time for scaffolded reflection. As Maxine Greene (1973) writes, one can achieve a “wide awakeness”, or higher level of understanding, when an individual is personally and consciously engaged with what they are learning. Finally, to facilitate democratic social understanding is to foster within the student a commitment to and reflection upon issues that are fundamental to our democratic society, such as equity, fairness, and social justice (Henderson, 2001). Through the lens of social learning, preservice teachers are encouraged to reflect upon different facets of society and culture within and outside of urban public schools.

The facilitation of preservice teachers’ subject matter, self, and social learning within the context of a preparatory course or early field placement in not necessarily unique; common sense dictates that, when a student is engaged in learning about a particular subject they may also, even inadvertently, learn about themselves and society. What is unique here, though, is that this particular course was designed to embody and scaffold Henderson’s (2001) framework of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. The required course readings were intended to enable preservice teachers’ understanding and appreciation for democratically minded pedagogy and invite preservice teachers to engage in their own 3S understanding (Henderson, 1996) of urban public schools. The coursework and discussions did not stop simply with engaging in subject matter learning. Instead, the course curriculum was written with the distinct purpose of teaching for democratic living through the lens of Henderson’s (2001) teaching for 3S understanding.

In addition, preservice teachers were purposefully guided to approach curriculum and pedagogical design from the perspective of teaching for democratic living through 3S
understanding. Consequently, as preservice teachers completed their content area assignments, it was expected that their work reflected the development of 3S understanding for their future secondary students. For example, one of the required course assignments was to generate a semester-long course of study in their content area. Each course of study was expected to include instructional goals, defined in the course as broad-sweeping statements of content-based achievements that it is hoped that students would acquire within that semester-long course. Upon its completion, each course of study was expected to include goals that are designed to facilitate student 3S understanding; goals to support the students’ subject matter learning, self-leaning, and social learning were to be included.

Finally, the support and guidance they received during their engagement in the early urban field placement embedded within the course was designed to encourage preservice teachers to reflect upon their urban public school experiences from the perspective of Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. The field journal was intended to not only serve to guide and focus their attention in the field, but also encourage preservice teachers to enter the two required field meetings already thinking about their experience and observation through the perspective of 3S understanding. Field meeting discussions centered on their observations of evidence (or lack of evidence, as the case may be) of teaching for democratic living in the urban public school classroom, specifically their interpretation of student subject matter learning, self learning and social learning in their urban field placement.

By incorporating the 3S scaffolding into the curriculum of the Principles of Teaching course, I made a conscious commitment to teaching toward a particular holistic understanding. As the subject matter of the course was constructed around Henderson’s framework, it began to look different. By bringing in teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding, the preservice
teachers and I reconceptualized the subject matter of teaching and learning in urban public schools (Henderson and Gornik, 2007). Every facet of the course purposefully and reflectively was intended to guide preservice teachers in their own democratic learning experience. In the Principles of Teaching course, we explicitly examined Henderson’s (2001) framework; it was introduced within the context of a guided discussion, reinforced with readings from Henderson’s work, and reflectively examined. We employed teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding by approaching the subject matter of urban public schools through that framework. In fact, Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding became not only the framework with which the course was constructed, but also one facet of the very subject matter of the course. It is that explicit engagement that makes this course unique, and served as the basis for this examination.

There are many curricular frameworks in the literature today, and perhaps countless more pedagogical methods that teachers employ to develop and scaffold their students’ understanding. From my own experience both as a public school teacher and as a graduate student, I have found Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living to be particularly well suited as a means to foster the reflection and consideration that I now hope to scaffold for the preservice teachers in my preparatory classroom. However, to my knowledge no other teacher preparatory program has ever been designed to specifically employ Henderson’s framework of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding (2001). For this reason, I wondered if engaging preservice teachers in this way -- promoting more than just subject matter understanding of curriculum and pedagogy in urban public schools and inviting engagement in more personal and authentic learning -- might affect the way they think and feel about a teaching career in urban public schools.
Nevertheless, it is also significant to note that the time allotted to this study is inadequate to foster a deep understanding of Henderson’s framework for several reasons. First, the framework is not simply a pattern to be unquestionably followed. As its name implies, it is subject matter learning integrated with democratic living. At a time in their lives when preservice teachers are learning the basic precepts of curriculum and instruction, one semester-long undergraduate course is markedly insufficient for them to authentically absorb and deeply identify with teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding (Henderson, 2001). Secondly, also in part because of the brevity of the course, their understanding of 3S understanding may instead have proved to be noneducative, and possibly even mis-educative (Dewey, 1938) in that it would serve distort their later understanding of democratic experience.

One method to determine how this type of engagement affects preservice teachers’ consideration of urban public schools is to facilitate and elucidate their deep and personalized reflection. To garner this very personal and individual information, I utilized Pinar’s (1976) method of currere, which is a means of examining how an individual has evolved over time, both personally and professionally, through their academic studies. Pinar writes:

The method of currere [reconceptualizes] curriculum from course objectives to complicated conversation with oneself (as a “private” intellectual), an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engaged pedagogical action – as a private-and-public intellectual – with others in the social reconstruction of the public sphere (2001, p. 37).

To articulate and examine one’s own currere, or professional life experience, first requires a great deal of thoughtful reflection on those experiences, people, readings, and various events that have influenced (either positively or unconstructively) one’s journey of becoming an educator. A lifelong endeavor, currere seeks to uncover the personal and academic influences that have acted upon that evolution, through “complicated conversation” with oneself (Pinar, 2001; 1976).
Through this experience, one may seek to become a “public intellectual”. The method of *currere* is constructed of four consecutive steps to scaffold the participant’s reflection and imagination: regression, progression, analysis and synthesis. These steps will be explained fully in chapter two.

To further elucidate and critique preservice teachers’ consideration of urban public schools, and how participation in this course and its embedded early urban field placement might affect that consideration, I scaffolded and guided each participant in the generation of their *currere*. I chose Pinar’s (1976) method of *currere* because it served to facilitate rich and meaningful reflections from preservice teachers about how they have come to understand urban public schools throughout the course of their professional journey. The elucidation of their *curreres* will explicate the affects the course and the early urban field placement may have had on their personal considerations of multiple facets of urban public schools.

The notion that two aspects of Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding – critical self- and social examination -- fit neatly with the four steps of Pinar’s (1976) method of *currere* will be further established in chapter three. However, subject matter learning, while embedded in Henderson’s framework, is not an intrinsic aspect of Pinar’s articulation of *currere*. For the purpose of looking at that type of learning in this study, I also encouraged reflection on subject matter learning as it pertains to curriculum development, pedagogical strategies, and various other characteristics of urban public schools as the participants constructed their *curreres*. 
Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter two, the review of the literature, has four sections. In order to frame how the participants may have arrived at their understanding of urban public schools, the first section of chapter two is an examination of existing literature on how contemporary American society represents that setting. It seems important to include here the caveat that this study was not an examination of the field of urban education, nor was it intended to directly inform that field. The purpose of the review of literature included here is to provide insight into one facet of the subject matter of the Principles of Teaching course, urban public schools, as that subject matter is presented by those who are considered scholars in that realm. The second section examines the emergence and evolution of the early field experience in secondary English/language arts teacher education. The third section is a brief overview of the Tyler Rationale and how that work has effected deliberation in the field of curriculum studies, as well as a close examination of one possible alternative to Tyler’s work: Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. Chapter three explicates the design and context of the study, and how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. It also introduces van Manen’s (1990) method of hermeneutic phenomenology as well as Pinar’s (1976) method of currere. Chapter four not only explains how these methods inform this study, but also how they serve to inform and support one another because they are both recursive examinations of unique experience. Chapter four also describes the conclusions drawn from the study. The findings are developed through a textual representation of each participant’s unique currere (Pinar, 1976) narrative, as well as my own thoughts and reflections on those texts. That chapter concludes with the currere narrative of my personal journey of becoming a “public intellectual” (Pinar, 2001) and researcher in my field within the context my dissertation experience. Finally, chapter five elucidates the implications
that the findings of this study have on my own further research as well as my suggestions for other researchers and teacher educators.

The purpose of this work is to discover ways in which secondary teacher preparatory programs might help preservice English/language arts teachers to engage more authentically with urban public schools. It is also intended to possibly bring to light one way to incorporate democratic experiences into teacher preparatory programs and provide an experience through which preservice teachers might not only talk about democratic ideals, but also be submersed in them in a classroom. It is hoped that this study will serve to illuminate the inherent value of one way that submersion might happen: scaffolding teacher preparatory programs with Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. By contributing to the curriculum decision-making conversation in secondary teacher preparatory programs, this study has the potential to impact the structure and focus of English/language arts secondary educational field placements. Because the course served to encourage preservice English/language arts teachers to consider applying for teaching positions in urban public schools, other preservice teacher preparatory programs might consider the value of building teaching for 3S understanding into their teacher education curriculum. It may also suggest ways to enhance the facilitation of preservice teacher learning as it pertains to urban public schools by demonstrating the value of incorporating the concepts of teaching for democratic living in teacher preparatory classrooms.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study considers the contributions of five preservice English/language arts teachers who have volunteered to share their unique personal journey of becoming a teacher. This chapter is an examination of the literature that informs this work. It is significant to note that there is no known research related to the use of Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in secondary teacher preparatory programs. Therefore, I have chosen to situate this study within a broader context of work. Because the participants are engaged in early field placements in urban public schools, this chapter begins with an examination of contemporary urban public schools, followed by an historical examination of the evolution of the early urban field placement in secondary teacher preparatory programs. In the second half of this chapter, I review the literature surrounding the two ways that I have attempted to enhance the facilitation of my participants’ learning as it pertains to urban education.

One foundational piece of that scaffolding is the study of the course text, *Beyond the silence: Listening for democracy*. Edited by Cynthia McDermott (1998), this text incorporates not only the work of teachers who work to construct democratic classrooms in public schools, but also teacher educators who strive to scaffold an understanding of classroom democracy in their preservice teachers. The chapters speak to topics such as assessment, classroom management, curricular and pedagogical design and social consciousness, all from a democratic paradigm. The issues addressed in *Beyond the silence* generate classroom discourse about the scenarios and issues surrounding the construction of democratic spaces in their future classrooms. To build upon this work, I also address Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living in teacher preparatory classrooms as it pertains to the Principles of Teaching course.
Prior to embarking upon the examination of this body of literature, it is important to bear in mind that the concerns of urban public schools extend far beyond issues of race. Just a portion of the critical issues they face include inequity, poor quality of teaching, and the national rush to standardization (McNeil, 2000; Spring, 2006). This study specifically addresses one of the many challenges: urban public schools experience great difficulty staffing their classrooms with high quality teachers. In this study I examine one of the reasons why that challenge exists: preservice teachers most often do not apply to positions in urban public schools. As will be explicated later, the demographic of preservice teachers is, among other characteristics, white. The urban school population is far more diverse in that it includes a larger percentage of people of color. Moreover, the urban school population is becoming increasingly diverse. Minority populations are expanding in American cities and therefore attending urban public schools. In fact, currently the most diverse segment of the US populace is the youngest age group (Jay, 2003; Valli, 1997). “Currently, ‘minority’ students represent a majority in all but two of our twenty-five largest cities, and by some estimates, the turn of the century will find up to 40 percent nonwhite children in American classrooms” (Delpit, 1995, p. 66). This is not a study about “multicultural education”, but instead an examination preservice teachers’ reflections upon their engagement with urban public school students. These populations are dissimilar in several ways, and this study examines, in part, the fact and fiction of those differences.

This study is both timely and significant to preservice English/language arts teachers in the United States and the teacher preparatory programs that serve them. Over the last century, the face of the United States has been changing dramatically. Despite the fact that “American” and “white” are frequently conflated, by the year 2000, 28% of the population were people of color
and by 2050 it is projected that the percentage of non-white Americans will almost double (Jay, 2003). Historically, race has had a significant impact on American societal structure and discourse. In the United States, from the throes of the Civil Rights movement to as recently as 2005 when Hurricane Katrina took the lives of disproportionately high numbers of economically disadvantaged Black Americans, social discourse and policy in this country has often centered on issues of racial subjugation, marginalization and unrest.

Leistyna (2005) created the term “racenicity”, which is defined as “the process through which the sociohistorical and ideological construction of race (“whiteness” in particular) has had a significant impact on defining national identity, ethnicity, and the perception of ethnic differences in the United States” (p. 271). Unfortunately, this conversation and deepened understanding do not come without difficulty. To further complicate matters, race and race issues are intricate conversational fodder. Even recent historical events that are inextricably linked to racial issues, such as the Rodney King beating and the double murder trial of O.J. Simpson, evoke vehement battles throughout societal discourse from news programming in the mass media to small town barroom conversation. Even those individuals who are intimately familiar with multicultural environments stumble over the issue of race.

Is it any wonder, then, that young preservice teachers in America are typically shying away from circumstances in which they may encounter racial issues? The overwhelming majority of preservice teachers are not applying to positions in urban public schools (Claycomb, 2000; Foster, 2004; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003; Kozol, 2005a; Theobald, 2005). This may be due in part to the demographics of the preservice teacher population. American colleges of education are 83% Caucasian, which is 10% higher than the population of universities at large. The vast majority of preservice teachers come from middle to lower-middle class households in non-urban
settings (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Richards et al., 1994). It is likely that, in part, preservice teachers are not applying to urban school districts because they are not familiar or comfortable with the urban setting.

Teacher educators would benefit greatly from insight into how preservice teachers think and feel about urban public schools. Attending to preservice teachers’ personal experiences and reflections would “help prospective teachers examine those events in their lives that influenced them to be teachers (and) learn to question the sources of their beliefs, attitudes, and biases” (Valli, 1997, p. 78). It is through this understanding that teacher preparatory programs might demystify urban spaces and help students cope with these complex and very important feelings.

“Most Whites uncritically assimilate the cultural criteria of dominant racist values and practices and as a result are unable to historically situate themselves, that is they are unable to identify the cultural mechanisms that have shaped their ethnic identities” (Leistyna, 2005, p. 272). For curriculum decision makers in secondary teacher preparatory programs to pay no heed to these pressing circumstances in their curricular deliberations may be a grave disservice to preservice teachers and to urban schools.

As stated earlier, the participants in this study have all completed early urban field placements; these placements were in an Ohio public school district. While there are many stereotypical characteristics of urban public schools in American society, there is also a specific definition. An urban school district, as most recently defined by the state of Ohio, is one that has “an average daily membership (i.e. student enrollment) of 5,000 or more and an Aid to Dependent Children population of more than 5 percent” (Ohio Department of Education, 1997, p. 4). At the time of this publication, there were 21 urban school districts in the state of Ohio that shared other specific characteristics, including:
• high dropout rates, suspensions and expulsions;
• a significantly disproportionate percentage of racial minority, special needs and low-income students; and
• disproportionate growth of social problems such as crime, chemical abuse and addiction and teen pregnancy (Ohio Department of Education, 1997).

Nationwide, urban school districts face a significant deficit in resources, high Limited English Proficiency (LEP) rates and disproportionately elevated teacher turnover. Students in these settings must cope with limited resources, crowded classrooms, and high stakes tests that “have the potential of branding low-income students as failures” (Spring, 2006, p. 199). In addition to these formidable challenges, urban schools historically have a difficult time finding qualified teachers to lead the students in their classrooms. Educators at all levels of practice, from entry-year to experienced teachers, are not applying for positions in urban school districts (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003).

The characteristics of the urban schools identified by the Ohio State Department of Education seem almost commonsensical; the composition and problems of urban schools are not a secret. High dropout rates, substance abuse and teen pregnancy are significant problems that occur in many educational settings, but disproportionately in urban school districts in the United States. However, too often the literature is apt to conflate “urban” schools with “multicultural” schools. It is important to acknowledge here that American urban public school districts do not corner the market, so to speak, on multiculturalism; in fact, they are most often more appropriately described as monocultural. Black or Hispanic students overwhelmingly populate American urban public schools, a point made recently by Jonathan’s Kozol’s (2005 a, b) extensive research on urban public schools.
In keeping with the earlier cited work of Leistyna, the vast majority of preservice teachers have been raised and educated in a society in which their identity is linked not to their ethnicity but to their “racenicity”; it is not their ethnic heritage that defines them, but the color of their skin. Leistyna (2005) explains that racenicity is “the result of the antagonistic social relations caused by the unequal distribution of power throughout the society along racial lines” (p. 272). When we consider this imbalance, coupled with the contentiousness of race issues in our social discourse, it is easy to imagine that many of our preservice teachers enter the field with at least some preconceptions and stereotypes of what it might be like to work in the predominantly “non-white” urban schools of America.

It is also significant to note again that preservice teachers are not typically graduates of urban public school districts. Preservice teachers are predominantly and increasingly young, white and middle class females who have had limited exposure to urban settings (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Proctor, Rentz and Jackson, 2001). “The socioeconomic background of teachers shows them likely to be white females…the majority of [whom] do not aspire to teach in ‘urban’ schools” (Kailin, 2002, p. 71). (Furthermore, 88 percent of America’s half million full-time education professors and instructors are white and middle class) (Ladson-Billings, 2001). The differences between preservice teachers and urban school students strongly indicates that when entering an urban school district in a situation such as an early urban field placement, a significant number of preservice teachers will in all probability find themselves in a unfamiliar cultural, social and economic situation (Brown, 2002).
Overview of the Chapter

In light of the different populations of urban public schools and preservice teachers, as well as the pressing concern of urban public schools facing disproportionate difficulty staffing their classrooms, this study in part is constructed to address the issues of Othering, subjugation, race relations and social justice in urban public schools as those issues relate to preservice secondary English/language arts teachers. To inform this study, this review of the literature examines four specific and complementary lines of inquiry. First, I examine urban public schools in the United States, and how most people, and preservice teachers in particular, arrive at their understanding of that milieu. Second, I look at the evolution and construction of the early urban field placement in secondary teacher preparatory programs. The third and final section of this chapter will explicate Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding.

Urban Public Schools in America

Cochran-Smith (2005) cites the fact that in some ways contemporary teacher education is operating with a “market-based model”. She cites a proposal for programmatic reform that calls for “‘tearing down the wall’ of teacher preparation and certification and exposing schools of education to the ‘cleansing waters of competition’” (p. 7). There are an increasing number of policies and laws surrounding preparatory programs. It is their factory-like approach that is one problem with contemporary teacher education. One of the several problems Cochran-Smith identified with this model is that it does not encourage preservice teachers to consider positions in urban schools, nor does it appear to plan to foster those considerations. She contends that this aspect of teacher preparatory programs is detrimental to urban public schools, stating this approach is “for the worse” (p. 8). While urban schools present considerable challenges, they also may offer the possibility of highly satisfying work. For a teacher preparatory program to not
incorporate field placements in urban public schools that allow preservice teachers to experience that often unfamiliar setting is disadvantageous. In fact, urban schools are not the only schools with problems, and it is also possible that the perception preservice teachers have of urban schools is often inaccurate. Before addressing how preservice secondary English/language arts teachers in my class might imagine teaching in an urban classroom setting, it is informative to first critically examine and deconstruct the fact and fiction of how society portrays the urban setting to the preservice teacher.

Representation of Urban Public Schools

Americans living in the suburbs or rural areas, and even those who live within city borders and do not have school-age children, have minimal exposure to what goes on behind the doors of urban public schools. In my experience both as an urban public school teacher and a preservice teacher educator, I have observed that many people frame their understandings of urban schools through news reports, television shows and movies, and second-hand bits of information that are at times the stuff of urban legends. Not only do we often have erroneous ideas about what is wrong with urban schools, but we also may receive inaccurate impressions from the mass media about what is right with them. Here, Kozol gives one example of just how disconnected some Americans, such as those living outside of urban environs, may be from what is actually happening:

Many Americans who live far from our major cities and who have no firsthand knowledge of the realities to be found in urban public school seem to have the rather vague and general impression that the great extremes of racial isolation that were matters of grave national significance some thirty-five or forty years ago have gradually but steadily diminished. The truth, unhappily, is that the trend, for well over a decade now, has been precisely the reverse (2005b, p. 41).

In this section, I examine what Americans seem to know about urban public schools, and what frames those understandings. My intention here is not to present the notion that urban public
schools are entirely misunderstood. Urban public schools face challenges unique to their environment, such as high dropout rates, suspensions and expulsions, and a significantly disproportionate percentage of racial minority, special needs and low-income students (Ohio Department of Education, 1997). The urban school is often not a nurturing environment for the students it serves. As Kohl writes: “the time of greatest need for children to be cared for and well educated is during a time of neglect” (1984, p. 163). My objective here is to begin to acknowledge not only what is problematic, but also what can be good in urban public schools. Too often, though, it is only the trouble that is brought to the attention of those who are not familiar with them.

Urban schools make the news, and the media heavily influences the public’s opinion of urban schools. “As we all know, the culture of media can transform at lightening speed a bad idea into a popular political sound bite” (McNeil, 2000, p. xxi). Big-city politics and school board controversies over funding and other issues, student arrests, fights and poor evaluations from the state are “popular” hot topics in today’s mass media market. Newspapers, websites, and television broadcasts often carry stories about urban public school districts. However, coverage about urban public schools is often negative. While watching the local evening news recently, I heard a story about several students mugged at gunpoint on their way to school. Cleveland Public Schools, approximately 30 miles from my home and one of the most troubled school districts in the state of Ohio, frequently earn top billing for broadcasts with reports of gang fights, crumbling schools, low test scores and various other problems. It is a rare occasion when I hear of a story that sheds positive light on local urban public schools. And, as Nogeura (1999) suggests,

To the extent that the media carries any news of success at such schools it is most likely that it will appear in some human interest story about a single student, teacher or coach, who managed to overcome tremendous odds to accomplish something noteworthy that normally isn't possible or expected for children living
in the ghetto or barrio (no page).

The mass media not only represents what is happening in urban public schools, but also what support they are receiving and the legislation that is being passed on their behalf. Standardization is often reported to be “bringing up the bottom” (McNeil, 2000) and equalizing education across the country. Too often, broad-sweeping statements of school improvement divert attention from those schools that continue to suffer (McNeil, 2000). Kozol illustrates this fact by addressing one of the often broadcast and published claims of the Bush administration, which suggests that the president’s efforts to “challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations [are] making a difference” (Kozol, 2005a, p. 30) He contends that the measurements of No Child Left Behind, such as school report cards and achievement testing, demonstrate that his policies are improving public schools. Kozol cites this contention as “one of those deadly lies which, by sheer repetition, is at length accepted by large numbers of Americans as, perhaps, a rough approximation of the truth” (p. 30). The regular dissemination of inaccurate “sound bites” (McNeil, 2000) such as these continues to mislead Americans to believe that things are getting better in urban public schools (Kozol, 2005a, b; McNeil, 2000).

Another example of this misrepresentation may occur when something positive about urban public schools is included in a media broadcast. One urban public school student’s amazing SAT score may make the evening news, but the true focus of the story is usually how that student overcame the incredible odds of their tragic urban environment (Nogeura, 1999). The focus of the story shifts from the achievement of the student to a sensationalized account of what is wrong with the place where they live. In addition, the perception of inner-city environments may color the view of urban public schools. Often, a person’s exposure to the urban environment is limited to the news broadcasts of crime, violence and debauchery on the evening news, or from driving
through inner-city “no-zones” – pockets where businesses, community services and recreational facilities have pulled out and left abandoned buildings and emptiness (Nogeura, 1999). “Urban schools in the United States are the backwater of public education, and their continued failure blends in easily with the panorama of pathologies afflicting the inner-city and its residents” (Nogeura, 1999, no page). Already possessing their own negative stereotypes, the public perceptions of urban public schools are often shaped by the image of the cities in which they sit.

Mass media reporting is not the only avenue through which many white Americans situate their understanding of urban environments and racial Others. Historically, the movies have fashioned white peoples’ perception of black people, and black peoples’ perceptions of themselves (Stewart, 2005). In her study of “cinema and black urban modernity”, Jacqueline Najuma Stewart addresses the argument forwarded by some scholars in the field that early twentieth century movies served not only as entertainment, but also as a way through which predominantly white immigrants were “Americanized” (2005). It was through the movies, some argue, that “Irish, Italian, Slavic, and Jewish newcomers [learned] how to speak American English and adopt the social customs, middle-class values, and racial ideologies necessary to assimilate into mainstream American life” (Stewart, 2005, p. 5). She further suggests that it was the cinematic representation and Othering of black people that allowed these ethnically diverse immigrants to arrive at their “whiteness” (Stewart, 2005).

Following this progression of thought, I believe that contemporary films may be Othering urban public schools through the perpetuation of pessimistic stereotypes of those settings. “Negative images may make suburbanites less inclined to support inner-city schools...because these movie images may be the only ones suburbanites see” (Toppo, 2003, p. 2). In the movies, urban school settings are consistently portrayed as violent, chaotic environments that are
permeated by deviant student behavior. In actuality, these factors do not exist exclusively in urban schools, nor are they nearly as prevalent as they are portrayed (Toppo, 2003). Hollywood and the entertainment industry may only serve to reinforce the gap that exists between many preservice teachers and urban school populations. Films, in fact, “invite us to experience situations vicariously” (Trier, 2001, p. 129). Increasingly realistic movies provide us with a virtual engagement in new experiences, and American culture is literate in movies; there exists an entire body of literature and discourse surrounding the many facets of that engagement. Elliot Eisner writes most cogently that “literacy…is the ability to encode or decode meaning in any of the forms of representation used in the culture to convey or express meaning” (1994, p. x). Increasingly, contemporary American culture employs movies as cultural text to convey history, emotion and experience; urban schools are also, at times, the setting for films and most representations do not paint a pretty picture.

In 2004, I conducted my own critical examination of cinematic representations of urban public schools. After surveying approximately 30 individuals currently working in New York’s media industry as producers, directors, actors or promoters of cinematic productions and music videos, as well as other people in my doctoral program, I created a list of the following titles to examine: 187 (Reynolds, 1997), Blackboard Jungle (Berman, 1955/2005), Stand and Deliver (Law, 1988), High School High (Bochner, 1996), Coach Carter (Carter, 2005), The Substitute (Mandel, 1996), Lean on Me (Twain, 1999) and Dangerous Minds (Bruckheimer and Simpson, 1995). Each title was identified by one of more of those surveyed as a movie about urban public schools. Interestingly, all of the story lines are even more focused in that they are centered on an urban public school teacher except for Coach Carter, which is the factual story of an urban
school basketball coach, and Stand By Me, which is also a true story about an urban school teacher who became a principal.

To systematically examine these movies, I viewed each one three times. The first viewing was to familiarize myself with all of the movies and begin to extract common themes and occurrences such as fighting or substance abuse. I then reviewed each movie and made notes on the frequency and timing of these common occurrences. During the third viewing, I gathered significant quotations that enhanced my examination of the prevailing themes in the films. While I am aware that this list of movies about urban public schools is not exhaustive, the examination of these films shed considerable light on the representation of urban public schools in American movies.

Despite national statistics cited earlier that teachers are predominantly women, only Dangerous Minds has a female lead character. I found each film presented the urban public school environment in the same, hyperbolic light: violent, chaotic and morally lacking. Each film had least one fight within the first eight minutes of the opening scene, and included the use of weapons throughout the storyline. Every movie included at least one of the following student characteristics or behaviors: smoking cigarettes, using street drugs, and drinking alcohol (often on school grounds); physically assaulting, challenging, or verbally disrespecting authority figures; and subjection and aversion to extreme measures of security. Each school is decrepit and dark, and has metal detectors, gates, barred windows, gnarled chain-link fences, or other physical characteristics that bring to mind a place for incarceration rather than education. Most importantly, though, every movie had insolent, antagonistic, angry, violent, troubled, disillusioned students and a tearjerker happy ending. These common details aside, there were four primary themes that threaded their way through the films.
Throughout these films, the main characters are portrayed as miracle workers. They often have pivotal moments in which the main characters change one student’s life or the entire school. In addition, the schools are developed as places in which only a hero could survive. Other teachers on the faculty tell main characters that the students are “animals” and “trash”, among other things. Therefore, when the main character not only “survives” in the urban high school, but also changes the entire school, the acts are akin to miracles. Even when they are based on true events, as is the case in Stand By Me, Stand and Deliver and Coach Carter, these turning points fall victim to the logistical time restraints of the silver screen. In life, these pivotal occurrences are most often one in a long secession of significant moments that occur before and after them. While it is understood that movies have time limitations, they may also be misleading. For the preservice teacher watching, they may set up false and impossible goals. In truth, the veritable miracles performed in urban schools, or any venue, most often take virtually a lifetime to achieve.

Another prevailing theme that occurs throughout these movies is best summed up in the words of the main character, Mr. Escalante, in Stand and Deliver. Mr. Escalante is a first year, second career teacher working in the math department of a rough urban public school in East Los Angeles, California. In one scene, the principal reprimands the faculty about standardized test scores and tries to convince them to do better. While the other teachers are either argumentatively defensive or remain quiet, Mr. Escalante says, “I could do more.” His words may give viewers the impression that it is necessary for urban public school teachers to be self-sacrificing and “save” students. It is indeed true that teachers in any venue often give up their personal time and money for the betterment of their students. However, in these eight movies, the urban schoolteachers are portrayed virtually as martyrs who become the saviors of students
who desperately need and immediately respond to their efforts. After the ubiquitous first day “flop” in which they are barraged with spitballs or harassed by nasty students, the teachers portrayed in these films are ceaselessly engaging and miraculous. In a silver screen minute, the act of teaching in an urban school goes from torture to triumph, and the teacher leads his or her students on to academic glory.

Nevertheless, not all silver screen representations of teaching are glossy perfection. Unfortunately, even the most dedicated teachers in these movies are portrayed as victims of an urban school system in which they are unsafe and unprotected. For example, in the movie High School High, Mr. Clark (no connection to the lead character of the same name in Stand By Me) enters on his first day of school and encounters the principal, Mrs. Doyle, while searching alone for his new room in the chaotic halls. Seemingly in an effort to discipline the unruly students, Ms. Doyle is poking and striking them with a baseball bat and yelling through a megaphone. Mr. Clark approaches her to ask for directions, but is interrupted by Ms. Doyle. She says: “Look pinhead, I don’t know what nursery school you came from, but here – you screw up, you die. Every bad kid in the city is dumped into our laps.” In cinematic representations of urban schools such as this one, teachers are most often being threatened by their students or subjugated by the system. Urban public school teachers are portrayed as insurgents in a lawless world; it is as if the urban school exists outside the reach of American democracy.

My own assessment of urban public schools’ cinematic representations is not unique. Movies about urban schools “almost always include extreme violence – even murder – a chaotic school and a hard-nosed teacher or principal who comes in to clean the place up, often with a weapon in hand and a lay-down-the-law speech” (Toppo, 2003, p.1). If preservice teachers choose to watch a movie about urban schools, they are often vicariously submersed and engaged in the cinematic
representation of an urban school in which teachers are attacked and harassed and students are embittered and disenfranchised from their education. It may be that it is through the lens of a movie camera that many preservice teachers navigate their pre-understandings and beliefs about urban schools.

Othering of Urban Population

Mass media and movies influence preservice teachers’ understanding of urban public schools because they often have no other opportunity for exposure to that milieu. When predominantly white preservice teachers grow up in the suburbs and attend schools that by and large possess student bodies that look or behave much like they do, urban public students are, to them, comparatively unfamiliar. There is a mismatch between the culture of the preservice teacher and the school districts that may need them the very most. Furthermore, preservice teachers may often be hard-pressed to understand the impact of race and culture, given their relative lack of experience with those from other racial and ethnic groups.

As one author aptly described his predominantly white school students, preservice teachers do not “see their own whiteness and the way it has shaped their lives” (Smith, 2005, p. 31). That divergence generates a feeling of Otherness, and a distinct polarization between those unfamiliar with the urban school culture and the members of the culture itself. “A failed assumption exists that there is a homogeneity of thinking – attitudes and preferences that polarize whites and ‘others’ – and that ‘others’ reside in a comfort zone between and among themselves” (Dilworth and Brown, 2001, p. 645; Eisenhart, 2001). If they are not addressing this homogeneity of thinking, teacher preparatory programs are not only failing the preservice teacher with whom they are charged to professionally prepare for the field of education, but also implying through their lack of acknowledgement complicity to this “Othering”.
For this and possibly additional reasons, it seems at this time more than ever necessary to encourage preservice teachers to decisively examine their own thoughts and feelings about the populations of urban public schools. These thoughts and feelings are generated and reinforced throughout their lives as they negotiate their life experiences and relationships with family, friends, school and social environments, and cultural texts. By facilitating their engagement with their own reflections, they may achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationship to others. By facilitating these connections, we might assist them in achieving a more realistic understanding of society as they situate themselves within it.

Without an understanding of who we are as historical and cultural beings, unable to make linkages to the social and political realities that have shaped our world, we have become vulnerable to ideological manipulation…which reproduces racist sentiments and thus renders us complicit in the injustices inflicted upon “Others” as well as upon ourselves (Leistyna, 2005, p. 277).

Through compassionate conversation and heightened understanding, it is hoped that white preservice teachers might begin to free themselves from some of the impact of society’s injustices and expand their professional horizons to include those who in the past may have been marginalized as “Others”. Husserl writes, “had I the same access to the consciousness of the Other as I have to my own, the Other would have ceased being an Other and instead have become a part of myself” (Husserl in Zahavi, 2003, p. 114). Husserl contends that when people have the opportunity to engage with the life experience of the person who is seen as the Other, not as a mere object but instead within the context of personal relationship, they gain access to a deepened or more “authentic” experience of that person (Zahavi, 1990, p. 114).

In order for preservice teachers to have that authentic experience described by Husserl, they need not only to be exposed to those that are Othered, but also critically reflect upon the similarities and differences discovered in that exposure. “No communication would be possible
between persons who lived in completely different worlds. It is because there is a common human world…that is it possible to establish some degree of communication across cultural barriers” (de Laguna, 1960, p. 786). For preservice teachers, this sort of combination of experiential submersion, communication and analytical reflection is attainable in a thoughtfully constructed field placement. Books about urban education, journal articles and anecdotal stories of other people’s experience teaching in an urban public school can not take the place of actually entering and navigating a purposefully scaffolded urban field placement. Many studies have shown that while preservice teachers are in the field their experience needs to be scaffolded with reflective activities. “The point is to raise questions and make a mess rather than let students off with neat and easy answers. No more raising your hand just to say ‘Racism is bad’” (Smith, 2005, p. 34). Questions need to be raised about issues they encounter in the experience itself: issues of race, curricular and pedagogical challenges, and their experiences in the urban milieu.

One way that this might be accomplished is illustrated in a longitudinal mixed-methods study conducted by Lewis-Charp (2003), in which students at six racially diverse California high schools were observed for more than three years. The purpose of Lewis-Charp’s study was to examine student relations, specifically perceptions of their own race and their attitudes about other races. The study also critically examined how school, families and peers influenced their perceptions. Lewis-Charp found that what students reported on their survey was actually contradictory to their actions in small group discussions. On every survey measurement of racial comfort, white students consistently reported feeling “somewhat comfortable” to “very comfortable”. On the other hand, their observation and interview data “consistently revealed anxiety among white students about interacting with peers and teachers who were not White…White students communicated complex feelings about race and racial issues, including
pride, ignorance, anger, shame, ambivalence, and alienation” (Lewis-Charp, 2003, p. 280). This study may point to a need to further examine and try to understand preservice teachers’ multifaceted emotions concerning racial issues.

Richards, Moore and Gipe (1994) conducted a longitudinal study with 75 predominantly white and middle class elementary education majors in an early urban field placement. The participants were enrolled in a “reading/language arts methods block designated as an early field experience” (Richards et al., 1994, p. 6). Through comparative methods of dialogue journals and other reflective activities, the researchers found the preservice teachers were significantly influenced by their experience. Participants reported that the experience was challenging and unlike any other experience they had. They entered the field with trepidation, and focused more on classroom management and matters of student instruction and emotion rather than content area concerns. Upon leaving the field, participants reported that, upon reflection, the experience was enjoyable and helped them to better understand urban schools.

Also of considerable significance, the participants consistently reported less prejudice towards culturally diverse and at-risk students (Richards et al., 1994). The researchers indicate their findings imply that including a variety of field placements is beneficial in teacher preparatory programs. They acknowledge that it is not easy to measure if the experience was in fact what altered their participants’ initial beliefs about urban public schools (Richards et al., 1994). In keeping with this acknowledgement, it is also necessary to consider the impact that societal conditions have on preservice teachers’ perceptions of students in urban school settings. But what such studies perhaps suggest is the ways that teacher preparatory programs might offset the “Othering” of urban students that can otherwise be so prevalent among preservice teachers. And, there are additional ubiquitous concerns more specific to the secondary English/language arts
content area that may also be addressed by scaffolding preservice teachers’ experiences in urban field placements.

*English/language Arts in Urban Schools*

Teaching in urban settings may be less appealing to preservice secondary English/language arts teachers due to the different language or dialect usage prevalent in urban settings.

“Approximately sixty to seventy percent of African Americans often speak in a different dialect than standard English” (Brown, 2002, p.167). “Ebonics”, “Black English Vernacular” (BEV), and “African American English” (AAE) are other terms that historically have been used to identify non-traditional English spoken by black Americans, including children in urban public schools. Regardless of how it is termed, this unique form of speaking is not simply a corrupted adaptation of mainstream English.

AAE is a variety that has set phonological (system of sounds), morphological (system of structure of words and relationship among words), syntactic (system of sentence structure), semantic (system of meaning) and lexical (structural organization of vocabulary items and other information) patterns (Green, 2002, p. 1).

Although regional differences exist, it is a way of speaking that is used consistently throughout the United States (Green, 2002).

This language differentiation was first formally acknowledged in the 1960s, but that acknowledgement created political controversy and was short-lived (Cazden, 2001). Books using the dialect were created by the Child Development Group of Mississippi for use in the state’s Head Start program. The second time there was a public debate about it was in 1979, when academically unsuccessful black students sued the University of Michigan and won, forcing them to acknowledge “Black English” in reading instruction. In the 1990s, a controversy over “Ebonics” played out in the Oakland, California school system. While its validity and value are
still a point of deliberation in the field, many scholars today identify the dialect as African American Vernacular English, or AAVE. At the center of this debate is the fact that students who speak AAVE are often also in areas with low academic achievement (Cazden, 2001). And yet, many contemporary educators and linguists find great value in the distinction of black American’s speech. “It is the language they heard as their mothers nursed them and changed their diapers and played peek-a-boo with them. It is the language through which they first encountered love, nurturance and joy” (Delpit, 2004, p.36).

While Delpit celebrates the unique dialect of many black Americans, preservice teachers from white suburban areas may not understand its nature and positive value. As noted, the vast majority of preservice teachers are from white, middle-class backgrounds, and they come to teacher preparatory programs with commonly held tenacious assumptions. One assumption may center upon understandings of language in urban school settings.

The first distinction it is crucial to be clear about is the distinction between language itself and the deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs which most people hold about language. It is difficult to over estimate the importance of people’s attitudes and beliefs about language. It is almost impossible, for example, to hear someone speak without immediately drawing conclusions, possibly very accurate, about his social class background, level of education, and what part of the country he is from. We hear language through a powerful filter of social values and stereotypes (Stubbs, 2002, p. 66, emphasis in original).

It is through this filter, perhaps, that preservice teachers perceive communicative language and language instruction in the English/language arts urban classroom. This may be a central concern because “spoken language is the medium by which much teaching takes place, and in which students demonstrate to teachers much of what they have learned” (Cazden, 2001, p. 2). Even without barriers of language and culture, teaching is a challenging task. To some preservice secondary teachers, overcoming those added barriers in an English/language arts classroom might seem impossible.
With the inherent duty of teaching reading and writing in the English/language arts classroom, it could be expected that preservice secondary English/language arts teachers will be more likely to cite language issues as a concern for teaching in an urban setting. "Teachers might be concerned that they will be expected to take responsibility for providing special instruction for speakers of every form of English" (Green, 2002, p. 240). For this reason, cultural language differentiations may be part of the reason preservice teachers avoid teaching in areas that have predominantly non-white students, such as urban public schools. Furthermore, English/language arts secondary teachers, particularly those presently responsible for ninth and tenth grade classrooms, have the additional responsibility of preparing students for not one – as is the case in the content areas of math, science and social studies – but two separately assessed sections of current high-stakes standardized tests. English/language arts teachers are responsible for preparing their students to meet institutionally imposed measurements of achievement and proficiency in both reading and writing.

According to Lisa Delpit (2004), studies have shown that white adults respond very differently to the reading of black children than do black adults. For example, in a study conducted by Cazden (2001) white adults were more prone to conclude from the audio taped reading of black children that the readers came from troubled homes or would not achieve academic success. Black adult listeners, on the other hand, had decidedly more positive reactions. Delpit cites cultural familiarity as the cause for this discrepancy. In light of this study, it is not farfetched to maintain that white preservice teachers may have similar pre-understandings of black students in English/language arts urban classrooms, and may conflate differentiated language usage with challenges to academic success. However, these pre-
understandings are not the only conditions to affect the way preservice teachers think about urban public schools.

Considering preservice teachers in the urban English/language classroom brings its own collection of circumstances and assumptions to the long-standing conversations surrounding secondary teacher preparation. As I have attempted to illustrate here, there exist many challenges and concerns that affect teaching and learning in the urban English/language arts classroom in particular. To begin to authentically address these concerns, “it is essential to consider the classroom communication system as a problematic medium that cannot be ignored, or viewed as transparent, by anyone interested in teaching and learning” (Cazden, 2001, p. 3). In order for preservice teachers to fully grasp the intricacies that live within these settings, it is important for them to gain first hand knowledge of the complexities of urban English/language arts classroom and the pedagogical practices employed therein. Such a submersion may be achieved within the context of a purposefully scaffolded early field experience in an urban school setting.

Field Experience in Teacher Education

The literature on early field experiences, as mentioned earlier, is limited. The literature on *urban* early field placements – for any secondary content area – is meager at best. “A problem with the studies of field experiences [in urban schools] is that …it is difficult to evaluate what the factors are that contribute to positive or negative results” (Proctor et al., 2001, p. 220). From these studies, or the personal reflections of those who have taught in an urban setting, authors have written books designed for preservice secondary teachers to learn about urban public schools. However, reading about another person’s findings or experiences about urban public schools does not allow preservice teachers to have their own authentic engagement with those schools. Submersion in a carefully scaffolded urban field experience is a valuable way for
preservice teachers to achieve that engagement. Accordingly, regardless of the historical circumstance or limitations of research on early field experience, it is possibly the best venue in which to conduct a critical examination of preservice teachers’ experiences in urban public school settings.

Over many decades, some type of experience in a realistic school environment has been a cornerstone of most teacher preparatory programs. This type of internship or practice teaching is a common way to prepare students for many professions, such as medicine. Submersion in the field and engaging with those whom they aspire to join in professional endeavors, gives the pre-professional a deeper understanding of the ways of the profession. “School is a training ground for adult life, and the school must create educational objectives that will permit attainment of those adult behaviors that are not already learned from general experience or that are learned imperfectly” (Block, 1998, p. 16). John Dewey’s essay on “The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education” (1904) makes an important distinction between learning experiences for the purpose of skill development and those to support learning theory. The “attainment of adult behaviors” that Block describes is best achieved through an authentic learning experience; Dewey believed that experience was significant to learning, and preservice teachers required actual sustained experience, in the real-life classroom in order to become effective teachers.

Until the mid-20th century, decisions about field experiences and other practices in teacher preparation were left to those institutions that were doing it, and governmental leaders and policymakers took little interest in what was being done. In 1948 the School and Community Laboratory Experiences in Teacher Education, also recognized as “The Flower’s Report”, was published. A highly significant publication, it “surveyed the varied developments of the 1930’s, organized them into trends and patterns, and dramatized the potentialities of professional
laboratory experiences” (Andrews, 1964, p. 18). Following the “Flower’s Report”, pre-professional field experiences were the hottest topic in teacher preparatory programs, and their creation and development went full speed in the 1950s (Andrews, 1964).

After the 1957 launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik, public schooling found itself in a troublesome situation. Government policies and public discourse pressured teacher education to increase course-related requirements for teacher programs, which resulted in the abbreviation of student teaching and field experience timeframes (Andrews, 1964; Marshall, Sears, and Schubert, 2000). Two significant aspects of teacher education became the need to support the goals and values dominant in American society, and the critical examination of the nature of the learner, or looking at how the learner learns. The key focus of preparatory programs during this time was how to train teachers to meet these objectives (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

The 1980s brought yet a third and different wave of significant governmental involvement in teacher preparation programs. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, and again government policy spurred reform in teacher education. *A Nation at Risk* resulted in an increase in field experience requirements for preservice teachers. At this time, expectations of American schools had shifted once again as the pendulum swung from social concerns back to academic concerns. Consequently, one focus of preparatory programs was “understanding how prospective teachers learned the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to function as school professionals” (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 4). Differences between the achievement of students with diverse ethnic, racial and social class backgrounds, such as those from immigrant groups and different socio-economic groups, also began to increase public interest (Knowles, 2003). Organizations such as The Holmes Partnership (formerly The Holmes Group) and the Carnegie Task Force encouraged partnerships between teacher preparation
programs and school districts to provide a better quality of field experience for preservice teachers. Both of these organizations continue to exist and try to bring about change for the betterment of teacher preparation.

It seems that once the ball began rolling for government involvement in teacher preparation practices and policies, it continued to gain momentum at the beginning of the 21st century. “The question of how the nation’s teachers are recruited, prepared, and retained has become one of the hottest topics in the public and academic discourse regarding education” (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 3). As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the nationwide implementation of No Child Left Behind by the Bush Administration in January 2002 had a significant impact on teacher preparatory programs, and continues to do so at the present time. Significant and escalating shortages in the number of certified teachers applying for teaching positions, especially in urban and rural settings, are resulting in uncertified and out-of-field teachers staffing American public school classrooms. Under these circumstances, there is an increased political focus on the practice of teaching as well as teacher preparatory programs, particularly on their construction, execution and measurable worth (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Grossman, 2003).

Meeting the highly qualified teachers challenge: The secretary’s second Annual report on teacher quality (2003), a component of the No Child Left Behind legislation, gave specific examples of improved teacher preparation through increased early field experience in their curriculum. One example cited was the UTeach program at the University of Texas at Austin, for which preservice teachers were able to enter a field placement in the very beginning of their coursework. In their findings, the report claims that this increase indicates that the teachers emerged from the program better prepared to enter the classroom, and the enrollment in the UTeach program increased considerably (2003). In addition, the report forwards the notion that
this increase in programmatic enrollment suggests that preservice teachers not only benefit from earlier field experiences, but they prefer it.

*Contemporary Field Experience*

The impact of governmental policy has helped to fashion and contour the present-day field experience. As may be expected in this constructivist practice, there are many contemporary definitions of “field experience”. Generally speaking, field experience is a chance to, among other things, test interest in teaching, and preferably should be in a setting different than student teaching. It can be brief or involve an extensive immersion experience in which the preservice teacher is directly involved with both students and teachers. It is ideal for the field experience to occur early in a teacher preparatory program so preservice teachers have a more clear understanding of what it is like to be a teacher early in their collegiate program, providing a first glimpse at whether school and classroom life is truly a good fit for them. An effective field experience should be carefully planned in advance in order to prevent undue stress from lack of communication between the program and the field schools and cooperating teachers. Preservice teachers need to be exposed to a variety of philosophies in the field and observe different teaching strategies and educational settings (Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Grossman, 2003; Richards et al., 1994). An early field experience gives the preservice teacher the opportunity to submerge themselves in the profession of teaching, allowing them to critically examine what it feels like to be a teacher and to decide if the profession is truly suitable for them (Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

As posited earlier, preservice teachers often enter preparatory programs with tenacious beliefs about urban public schools. It is important for teacher educators to not simply provide anecdotal truths and theories that are far removed from the students’ life experiences. To debunk
these persistent and potentially dangerous misconceptions, and foster understanding of the complexities of the classroom, teacher preparatory programs can engage preservice teachers in reflective experiences.

When students examine closely the rich complexities born of social interaction, subjective experiences, dependency and struggle that characterize life in and outside of the classroom, as well as the moral and existential dilemmas that are so much a part of the work of teachers, reality does not take on an immutable and unitary meaning (Teitelbaum and Britzman, 1991, p. 170).

Field experience provides the opportunity for such an examination, or situated cognition: it offers the preservice teacher the opportunity to learn about various aspects of teaching through the application of knowledge to authentic situations (Feiman-Nemser and Remillard, 1996). Ideally, through field placements preservice teachers are exposed to a variety of instructional strategies, and are afforded the opportunity to observe, consider and navigate the moral and logistical problems that realistically arise in everyday teaching.

An effective program incorporates challenging and thought-provoking critical reflection to help preservice teachers make sense of their experience, and may provide support in the form of meetings or seminars throughout the field, preferably led by a teacher educator or someone closely familiar with urban public schools. In a well-orchestrated program, students are placed with experienced teachers for an extended period of time with the expectation of both observing and applying what they have learned in a teacher preparatory program (Richards et al., 1994; Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

Preservice teachers can benefit significantly from exposure to a variety of settings such as those found in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Submersion in a purposefully constructed early field experience allows them the opportunity to critically examine the moral and professional uncertainties that can exist in the profession and reflect upon the practices they
experience in the classroom. Structured learning experiences with an emphasis on values, feelings and attitudes in a congenial atmosphere offer the conduit for cultural learning (McIntyre et al., 1996). One way to accomplish this seemingly arduous task is through the vehicle of a well-scaffolded early field experience, through which preservice teachers are exposed to and begin to familiarize themselves with the range of cultural contexts that frequently exist in schools. “If prospective teachers spend only one semester in one classroom with one teacher before they complete their preservice education, they will not be sufficiently prepared to work effectively with students of diverse backgrounds” (Villegas and Lucas, 2002, p.136). This assertion is, in sum, a contention to support the creation and implementation of a wide variety of early field experiences.

One possible and significant benefit of early field experiences, then, can be to familiarize preservice teachers with urban school settings. “Since experience is often called the best teacher – especially for learning to teach – the call for more field experience in diverse settings comes as no surprise” (Burant, 1999, p. 3). Given the opportunity to navigate field experiences in different schools, preservice teachers may develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of a variety of educational settings in which they may seek employment in the future (McIntyre et al., 1996; Kailin, 2002; Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Richards et al., 1994). A field placement in an urban setting gives many preservice teachers the opportunity to experience an entirely new environment, one with which they are wholly unfamiliar.

By learning about communities with which they have little contact, teachers-to-be can begin to see students from those settings as members of family, community, and cultural groups and become more knowledgeable of and sensitive to values, lifestyles, and cultures other than their own (Villegas and Lucas, 2002, p. 137).

Some teacher preparatory programs are focusing specifically on preparing their graduates for successful careers in urban public schools; they “work for equity and social justice as on
outcome of teacher preparation itself” (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 11). Field experience gives the opportunity to frame and experience these intended outcomes. By giving the preservice teacher an opportunity for submersion in an urban setting, it is hoped that they will be able to find a new orientation to the urban school, and begin to recognize and understand the fundamental differences that may exist between their lived experiences and that of the student in an urban school. Through the social, intellectual, and emotional engagement availed in an urban field placement the preservice teacher may have the opportunity to transcend any possible apprehension or misunderstanding of the urban school setting.

While many studies have been conducted about field placements and urban field placements, few center upon early urban field placements. Of the studies that do focus on early urban field placements, a few informed this study. For example, Burant (1999) also utilized field journals to gather data on her participants’ reflections during an early field experience. She indicated that, as the semester progressed, participants became more comfortable with her and the class setting. Consequently, she indicates, the journal entries included more personal disclosure and intimate insight into the thoughts and experiences of the participants. In the Principles of Teaching course utilized in this study, the field placement did not begin until the class had met for eight weeks. This may have given the participants time to become more familiar with me, the instructor, as well as the rest of the class. Therefore, it is expected that participants in this study were comparatively more comfortable at the outset than those in Burant’s, and for that reason more apt to disclose their personal thoughts and feelings in their field journals. Also like the field journals in Burant’s study, those utilized here included weekly thematic prompts as guiding structures for each entry.
A similar study conducted by Proctor, Rentz and Jackson (2001) examined preservice teachers’ perceptions of an early field experience in an urban elementary school. In their qualitative study, the researchers gave their predominantly White participants, most of whom had never attended an urban school, an open-ended survey about their experiences in the early urban field placement. Their findings revealed positive aspects of early urban field placements as well as some areas in which their teacher preparatory program might be improved. As Proctor, Rentz and Jackson concluded, “best practices for preparing teachers for urban schools include carefully planned field experiences with culturally diverse students” (2001, p 226). Proctor et al. additionally maintain that their findings indicate further research is needed on urban field experiences and their effects.

**Structure of the Early Urban Field Placement in Principles of Teaching**

The early urban field placement embedded in the Principles of Teaching curriculum has been an integral part of this general methodology course since I first became involved with it in the fall semester of 2003. The course is divided into three sections. The semester begins with a unit on curricular design in which preservice teachers learn about teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding (Henderson, 2001) and design a course of study. The second third of the course is comprised of the field experience, which is followed by a unit on pedagogical design. During the field placement, regular course meetings are temporarily suspended. Preservice teachers are, of course, able to contact the instructor via e-mail or phone at any time during their placement should the need arise. Also, there are two required field meetings placed roughly one-third and two-thirds of the way through the field placement. Intended to serve as a time of reflection and debriefing, these field meetings will be described later in more detail.
While the other two instructional units are of great value to the preservice teachers as they prepare for their student teaching year, the early urban field placement is the focal point of the course. “Education does not only occur in classrooms, but around the dinner table…or when kids try to help each other make sense of the adult world, or when a master and apprentice interact on the job” (Bruner, 1996, p. xi). In a sense, the field experience is education in the sense of Bruner’s two latter suppositions. In the field, away from the safe haven of the university and professorial guidance, preservice teachers are like “kids” trying to make sense of the “adult world” of the educational profession. They are “apprentices”, interacting with practicing teachers in the setting of the urban public school classroom. Through their field placement, they may more authentically frame their understanding of curriculum and pedagogy. As Schubert writes,

Those who are most integrally involved in teaching-learning situations are in the best position to create knowledge about a given state of affairs (more than those who enter such situations from the outside and conduct detached, objectified induction to acquired knowledge). This supports the primacy of personal or experienced knowledge (1989, p. 29).

Invariably, going in to urban public schools is of greatest concern to my preservice teachers at the beginning of the course and the greatest memory they take away at the end. In the early urban field placement, preservice teachers are submersed in the irreplaceable lived experiences that cannot be taught in college classrooms or textbooks (Tom, 1991).

Too often, preservice teachers are cast into field experiences alone and under-prepared to navigate them (Tom, 1991). For this reason, I believe structured preparation for the field experience in Principles of Teaching is of utmost importance. Roughly two weeks prior to the beginning of the field experience, a central field placement office at my university assigns preservice teachers to practicing teachers in local urban public schools. Most often, the preservice teachers are placed in a classroom of their content area. However, sometimes this is
not that case because cooperating teachers are difficult to secure. For example, one of the
preservice English/language arts teachers participating in this study was placed in a science
classroom. I encourage my preservice teachers to contact their cooperating teacher by phone or
e-mail to determine their visitation schedule. In the class session prior to entering the field, I
distribute the field syllabus (See Appendix A) and review it with the preservice teachers. Most
importantly, because some preservice teachers have never been in a field placement of any kind,
we review professional behaviors and logistical concerns, such as parking and appropriate attire.
We also review the graded assignments they are expected to complete in the field: a field journal,
 a lesson plan, and a shadow study of a student. At the end of this field preparation meeting, they
are on their way to their early urban field placement.

Preservice Teacher Reflection in Field Experience

In many methods of qualitative research, reflecting on the various data is believed to allow
the researcher to come to a deeper and more meaningful assessment of what is occurring in a
study. Researchers are often encouraged to write personal notes or memos to foster reflection, as
well as preserve their momentary thoughts for future reflection (Maxwell, 2005; Miles and
Huberman, 1994). Dewey writes that reflection “implies that something is believed in (or
disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as
witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as ground of belief” (1997, p.8). In
hermeneutic phenomenology, which serves as the methodological context of this study, the
inherent purpose of reflection is to attempt to understand the fundamental meaning of something
(van Manen, 1990). It is essentially a method that employs multiple layers of reflection and
interpretation of textual data.

Hermeneutic inquiry invokes a venerable tradition of interpretation of religious
texts, wherein scholars would actually write new interpretations on the
interpretations written by previous generations of scholars. This writing on texts has been expanded by phenomenologists to mean reflective reinterpretation of the texts of one’s life (Schubert, 1989, p. 28).

In this study, I employed hermeneutic phenomenology to frame a recursive examination and reinterpretation of the individual reflections of five preservice English/language arts teachers, or, as Schubert writes, “the texts of [their] life.”

There is much in the literature on teacher education that claims that educators benefit greatly from reflecting upon their professional endeavors. It is important to stress that reflection takes many forms and functions. For example, citing their perceived value of using ethnography to scaffold teacher reflection, Teitelbaum and Britzman (1991) write, “student journals, class discussions, verbal feedback, and the like have convinced us of the efficacy of utilizing these strategies. They provide excellent opportunities for students to reflect upon, critique and discuss prevailing and alternative educational goals and practices” (p. 179). Reflection can be individual or shared, written or spoken; sometimes “reflection” is called “inquiry” or “reflective inquiry”. Reflection is almost universally believed to benefit practicing teachers in curricular decision making, maintaining democratic classrooms, developing strong communities of teachers and learners, and achieving a more satisfying and meaningful professional experience (Brookfield, 1995; Brown, 2002; Dewey, 1934, 1997; Henderson, 2001; Henderson and Gornik, 2007; Henderson and Kesson, 2004; Lee, 2005; Shulman, 2004; Tom, 1991).

For example, in a grounded theory approach qualitative study, Lee (2005) looked at teacher reflection in Korean preservice mathematics teachers as they navigated their one-month field experience required in their senior year. She examined questionnaires and journal entries, and conducted interviews and observations. Lee found that, in these various forms of reflection, “there were differences in the content and depth of reflective thinking. Different issues caught
different individual student teachers’ attention in the same context” (p. 711). However, overall she saw significant gains in the complexity and depth of their critically reflective thinking. For example, over the course of their reflections preservice teachers became less concerned with routine discipline issues and more concerned with overall student understanding. To paraphrase, Lee found her preservice teachers to become more thoughtful.

Dewey believed that thoughtful actions were superior to thoughtless actions or those driven by habit or instinct. He wrote “a thinking being can…act on the basis of the absent and the future. Instead of being pushed into a mode of action by the sheer urgency of forces, whether instincts or habits… a reflective agent is drawn…to action by some remoter object of which he is indirectly aware” (1997, p. 14). Reflection allows for conscious decision-making, or as Henderson writes, encourages educators to avoid decisions based on mindless routines and instead “use their intellect for generative [and] generous purposes” (2001, p. 6). It is generally agreed that reflective practice is a necessary and central component of professional growth. As Block writes, “it is the process of inquiry – the production of doubt – that creates the educational environment. The rest is silence” (Block, 1998, p. 15). However, reflecting on their professional journey does not always come naturally to preservice or practicing educators, so it must be encouraged and supported through purposeful scaffolding.

Some educators may find great value and satisfaction in sharing spoken reflection with others (Henderson and Kesson, 2004; Lee, 2005). Shulman stresses the importance of fostering and supporting collaborative sharing. He writes, “collaboration is a marriage of insufficiencies…There are difficult intellectual challenges that are nearly impossible to accomplish alone, but are more readily addressed in the company of others” (2004, p. 494). One key focus of the Principles of Teaching curriculum is to foster and encourage preservice
secondary teachers to share their personal reflections on their unique navigation of the early urban field placement. This act of sharing is intended to scaffold their “authentic learning experiences” (Stein, Isaacs, and Andrews, 2004) in that the preservice teachers’ experience in the field is first situated within their personal lived experience. Each preservice teacher arrives at his or her reflections on their own; to share those with their colleagues often necessitates some narrative explanation of their personal thoughts, feelings or opinions. In turn, to respond to the experiences of their colleagues they must often embed those responses in personal reflections. Teaching this course, I have found that through this sharing of experience, preservice teachers are able to help and support one another. They help one another navigate problems, confusion or discomfort when they share their experiences in the two required field meetings that are embedded in their field placement schedule. In these meetings, I serve simply as a facilitator of their conversation; in fact, I am often a silent observer. This collaborative sharing allows each participant to reflect upon not only his or her own experiences, but also those of their peers. The curriculum is intended to “invite attention to hermeneutic and critical types of inquiry, which contrast markedly with the empirical-analytic mode of inquiry that dominates teacher education” (Schubert, 1989, p. 28). The shared reflections that take place in field meetings are not evaluated in any way; the sole purpose of the meetings is to provide a space for preservice teachers to share their experiences.

Realistically, though, not all individuals initially find reflection and sharing with others to be a fruitful and rewarding personal experience. The participants in this study completed written reflections during their early urban field placements in the form of field journals. Like qualitative researchers described earlier, they composed memo-like journal entries that allow them to reflect not only upon their immediate experience while writing the journal entries, but also on the whole
of their lived experience over the course of the field placement. By preserving them in text, the journals are intended to capture the immediate reflections of preservice teachers as they navigate the field, to be later reflected upon as contextualized moments. “When practices become a text, they must be read not as guarantees of essential truths, or as automatic recipes for action, but as partial representations of particular discourses that implicate the voices of teachers and researchers in larger interests and investments” (Teitelbaum and Britzman, 1991, p. 170). Journal writing creates a partial representation of experience that is at times a valuable metacognitive experience. Very much as if they were conducting research, the preservice teacher is able to recursively examine and analyze their own thoughts and actions, as they are recorded in their journals. “Metacognition – consciousness of how and why one is learning particular things in particular ways – is the key to deep learning” (Shulman, 2004, p. 493).

Reflection scaffolded through journal writing can be a valuable experience that results in a tangible product that may serve a preservice teacher as a source of educative information to review for years to come. “When you tell (through writing) you are making connections, creating patterns, making sense of what seems devoid of meaning” (Greene, 1995, p. 105). In order to write a journal, the preservice teacher must make sense of their new and possible entirely unfamiliar experience. Intangible thoughts, emotion, opinions, and revelations must be captured by the writer and translated into text. “Encompassing the complexity of existence in the modern world demands a technique of ellipsis, of condensation. Otherwise, you fall into the trap of endless length” (Kundera, 2000, p. 71). To write is to condense immense and complex thought into symbols on a page.

However, it is important to bear in mind that preservice teachers are often unfamiliar with journaling or other types of reflection. Evidence suggests that reflective thought can be fostered
and improved through educative programs (Valli, 1997). Indeed, “asking students to write journal entries, but giving them no guidance as to how this might be done, is a mistake” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 97). Without the support of guiding prompts or questions, preservice teachers may become frustrated with journaling expectations, or approach the task with merely perfunctory attention.

It is well worth the time and effort spent to foster preservice teachers’ reflective thinking in activities such as field journals and informal conversation. Possibly, with enough experience in personal reflection they may become lifelong reflective practitioners (Brookfield, 1995). As Dewey (1997) metaphorically presents the “forked-road” scenario in *How We Think*, preservice teachers will come to many points in their careers at which a decision will need to be made. While students’ educational experiences are suspended in the balance, there are but two paths to be taken: purposeful curriculum decision-making or blind habit or emotion. I hope that preservice teachers are prepared to make reflective choices rooted in the needs and desires of their students.

Teaching for Democratic Living through 3S Understanding

*A Brief Examination of the Field of Curriculum Studies*

In order to fully understand Henderson’s (2001) curricular framework that I utilized in this study it is first necessary to briefly observe the larger field of curriculum studies. While this examination is cursory, it is intended only to situate Henderson’s work in the evolution of contemporary curriculum thought. Dewey’s metaphorical “forked road” had lain before those engaged in curriculum studies for many years. Early on, the study of curriculum was not a field of its own. Rather, curricular decisions were based on ideas such as those set forth in the 1828 publication, *The Yale Report on the Defense of the Classics*. This report forwarded the
importance of expanding the mind with knowledge through vigorous cognitive exercises (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 2004). Later, the philosopher Herbert Spencer contributed significantly to this school of thought with his 1860 essay, *What Knowledge is of Most Worth?* Since that time, Spencer’s still unanswered question has permeated discussion about the subject matter addressed in schools (Tanner and Tanner, 2007).

The subsequent emergence of the field of psychology also greatly influenced what subject matter was addressed in schools, as well as how it was taught. For example, the child-study field of the 1890s brought a direct focus on the development of the mind and the desires of the student. The work of G. Stanley Hall was seminal in this movement, and stressed the significance of curriculum decision-makers accounting for the development of the child’s mind, which at the time was revolutionary (Tanner and Tanner, 2007).

As its own field, curriculum studies emerged early in the nineteenth century. Many curriculum scholars (e.g. Henderson and Gornik, 2007; Pinar et al, 2004; Tanner and Tanner, 2007) identify the emergence of the field with the 1918 publication of Franklin Bobbitt’s text, *The Curriculum*. At the time a revolutionary proposition, Bobbitt argued that standards of learning should be set in the form of educational objectives. Much like Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin in 1793, Bobbitt’s standards were intended to make education more efficient in a time when there was nationwide criticism of the proficiency of the American educational system. From that work on, the practice of curriculum decision-making and the qualities of an effective curricular design became the subject matter of a new field: curriculum studies. In the United States and abroad, a “mechanical view of education” (Tanner and Tanner, 2007, p. 8) that consisted of concise measurable learning objectives to provide quantifiable outcomes of learning prevailed. Today these ideals remain present in curricular design; in fact they currently prevail in
what is most often identified as the standardized or institutionalized curriculum in the United States.

In the early 20th century, the work of John Dewey offered an alternative to the direct instruction methodology of the standardization movement. In 1896, the creation of Dewey’s laboratory school introduced a novel dynamic to curricular decision-making. Through this work, Dewey endeavored to discover “the direct, present experiences of children from which more organized and technical knowledge would grow as children progressed through school” (Tanner and Tanner, 2007, p. 35). In contrast to others in the field who stressed the importance of outcomes, Dewey’s work centered upon the significance of active experiences for the moment. He wanted to understand how people understand, and thought that experience and reflection were fundamental to foster understanding (Henderson and Gornik, 2007; Pinar et al, 2004). Also of central significance to Dewey’s work was the precept of democracy, not as a form of government but as an experience through which society can be improved (Pinar et al, 2004; Tanner and Tanner, 2007). This focus on democracy will be examined more closely later in this chapter.

Dewey’s work remains central to the field of curriculum studies today, but it did not change the course of standardized education entirely. In 1949 Ralph Tyler, a doctoral student of Bobbitt’s, introduced what has come to be identified by those engaged in curriculum studies as the Tyler Rationale (Eisner, 2001). The piece, entitled The Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction, was distributed in the form of a course syllabus to his curriculum students at the University of Chicago. Tyler’s work is also a systematic approach to curriculum, but he refined Bobbitt’s methodological approach to curricular design. Tyler believed that in order to create effective curriculum learning objectives must be clearly identified prior to embarking upon instruction. Although Tyler surely shared Dewey’s belief in the significance of experience, his rationale is
also squarely rooted in the importance of “observable behavior as evidence on learning” (Eisner, 2002, p. 16). With the purpose of providing a guide for curriculum decision-makers, Tyler identified what he viewed as the four fundamental goals of education. To paraphrase, Tyler advised them to focus on these questions: (a) what are the educational *purposes* of the school, (b) what *experiences* are likely to achieve these purposes, (c) how can the experiences be *organized*, and (d) how can we *measure* if it works and purposes are attained? Tyler proposed a discipline-centered curriculum framed with measurable behavioral objectives (Tyler, 1949). His work, along with the work of others like Jerome Bruner and Benjamin Bloom, marked the advent of the structuralist approach to curriculum, which dominated curriculum decision-making in the U.S. throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and still does to the present day (Pinar et al, 2004).

Clearly, there are many who believe that Tyler’s rationale is one of the greatest contributions made to the field of curriculum studies. Eisner writes that Tyler “shaped the field of educational evaluation, he provided the curriculum field with a model of planning that has not yet been surpassed” (2001, p. 57). However, not everyone was in full agreement with Tyler’s work (including Eisner himself). For decades, there have been curriculum scholars working to find a viable alternative to “surpass” Tyler’s rationale. Those working in the field of curriculum studies were increasingly uninvolved in the creation of curriculum being implemented in American public schools, and were also displeased with the curricular decisions being made. “A small but sufficient number of [those in the field of curriculum] had quietly spent the 1960s working to push the boundaries of the Tylerian tradition” (Marshall et al, 2000, p. 102). Opponents of Tyler’s work include many outstanding scholars in the field of curriculum, including Huebner, Eisner, Greene, and Kliebard. The primary reason for this push was they perceived that the predominant curriculum decision-makers, working from Tyler’s rationale, were overly
concerned with a discipline-centered structure and generated curriculum in isolation from those for whom it was intended (Pinar et al, 2004). One additional point of contention was what knowledge and experiences were to be included in the curriculum (Marshall et al, 2000).

After many years of quiet effort, a significant change came in 1969 when Joseph Schwab wrote “The practical: A Language for curriculum”. This publication is identified by many as evoking the “death of the curriculum field [through] the first of a decade of attacks” (Pinar et al, 2004, p. 176). Schwab’s work had three main points: (1) the field of curriculum was dead; (2) the field had blindly relied too much on theories that had little to do with curriculum work; and (3) there needed to be a renaissance in the field that could only occur if curriculum work was no longer strictly theoretical in nature but instead practical and eclectic (Marshall et al, 2000; Pinar et al, 2004). Schwab said that there is not, nor will there be in the near future, one single theory that encompasses the vast field of curriculum studies, and that a more eclectic approach should be taken to curriculum development (Marshall et al, 2000). It seems that the field was ready for this call to action, and Schwab’s work influenced the initial stages of what was to become know as the Reconceptualization in the field of curriculum studies. By 1970, the field underwent what Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (2004), as well as others, identified as a “paradigm shift”. Other curriculum scholars viewed the emergence of more humanistic approaches as a “reassertion of earlier dominant interests” (Pinar et al, 2004, p. 186). Since that time, many curriculum scholars have worked to reframe the field and make it less behaviorist.

Tyler’s traditional paradigm not only served as a “point of departure by many writers sympathetic to its general orientation” (Posner, 1998, p. 83) but also for those who hoped to develop an alternative that would have a more significant influence on practice. Many believed, as Schwab did, that curriculum decision-making required more thoughtful deliberation to link
theory with practice than was afforded in Tyler’s rationale. For example, Decker Walker wrote:

“a practical approach to curriculum improvement is the only way to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It allows us to bring ideas to bear on curriculum in a way that common sense approaches do not” (2003, p. 216).

Walker developed his own, naturalistic model for curriculum decision makers, and included three specific elements: the curriculum’s platform, its design, and the deliberation associated with it. The platform is the foundation on which the curriculum stands; it consists of the beliefs of what can and should be learned (Posner, 1998; Walker, 2003). The platform is to be determined by research, theory and experience. The design portion of the model is essentially how the learning will take place. Though the illustrations were not explicit, Walker believed it necessary to provide many examples of instructional strategies and procedures (Posner, 1998; Walker, 2003). Through these first two elements, Walker posited to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Walker’s third aspect, deliberation, echoed the work of Schwab and is perhaps the most different from Tyler’s work. Walker stated that the platform and design of a curriculum should be realistic rather than strictly theoretical. He believed that it should be the result of collaboration and deliberation among those who have a stake in the curriculum. Walker understood that inviting many people to contribute to the decision-making may prove complicated, but encouraged “artful” deliberation. He wrote:

Recognizing that curriculum problems are fundamentally practical and that deliberation is the essential method for resolving them in a principled way merely starts us off on the right foot. Much artfulness is required if we are to reach a sound resolution. There can be no rules for doing good deliberation. It requires the artful use of many skills (2003, p. 237).
Walker’s approach to curriculum design, and its incorporation of artful deliberation, offers much creativity and flexibility for curriculum decision makers. In his work Walker invites not only teachers, but also “school leaders, parents, and other interested parties” (2004, p. 214) to work together to create or improve curriculum. However, while it can be argued that “other interested parties” may include students, Walker does not explicitly include them in curriculum deliberation. Moreover, his model is more squarely focused on what should be taught and how than on for whom the instruction is intended. Therefore, it is essentially a discipline-centered model of curriculum design.

There are many other scholars who have generated their own models or foundations for curriculum. Eisner forwards the notion of “curriculum as aesthetic text” (Pinar et al, 2004, p. 183) and Sears has written about the “cyber curriculum” (Marshall et al, 2000, p. 230). Since this 21st century “Reconceptualization of curriculum” (Pinar et al, 2004, p. 39), child-centered writers such as Jonathan Kozol and Herbert Kohl have gained both voice and credibility in the field (Pinar et al, 2004). Dewey (1916) focused much of his life’s work on bringing democracy into the curriculum, and contemporary curriculum scholars have followed in his footsteps. One such scholar is James Henderson, who created a three-pronged framework with which to approach curriculum: teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. It is through this lens that I approached the curriculum of the general methodology course in which this study took place. And, while I see incredible value in the work of many others in the field, I believe that Henderson’s framework may serve as a viable alternative to Tyler’s (1949) rationale. In this study, I have examined Henderson’s work both in my own teaching practice as well as through the shared experiences of some of the preservice teachers to whom it was taught.
Henderson’s 3S Framework

In the second edition of *Transformative Curriculum Leadership* (2000), which James Henderson co-authored with Richard Hawthorne, there is a brief reference to what is identified as “3S learning” (p. 4). 3S learning is offered to the reader as a transformative education. In 2001, Henderson published *Reflective Teaching: Professional Artistry Through Inquiry* and transformed 3S learning into an intricate and valuable approach: teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. He generated the idea of 3S understanding to illuminate and give voice to the three fundamental elements of student learning.

In the later text, Henderson writes of employing teaching for 3S understanding to facilitate student learning in the K-12 classroom. In this study, I suggest that we approach teacher preparatory programs through the lens of this framework, which may enhance and enrich the experiences of the preservice teachers. As was explained in a previous section, preservice teachers are not considering positions in urban public schools. This study was intended to discover whether or not teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is a viable avenue to provide authentic learning experiences and to evoke critical conversations in teacher preparatory programs, particularly as they relate to urban public schools. The three elements of student learning identified in the democratic 3S framework include: subject learning, social learning and self-learning.

Henderson (2001) wrote about the idea of student subject learning within the context of constructivism. The social-constructivist framework, which emerged in the early 1980s, draws on cognitive theory, constructivist theory and sociocultural theory, and purports that intelligence develops and changes over time. One facet of constructivism maintains that all students can learn and therefore deserve an equal opportunity to do so. Metacognition is a key facet of developing
deep understanding, according to the constructivist framework. “What is taken in to the mind is socially and culturally determined” (Shepard, 2004, p. 1619), so students should be challenged by experiences in a democratic learning community. Learning should be shaped through prior knowledge and authentically connected to social and cultural experience (Shepard, 2004). In keeping with this framework, Henderson stresses “the use of thinking-centered, performance-based activities” (2001, p. 9) in students’ subject learning. He proposes that students subject learning be authentic experiences, ones that relate to and are grounded in the lived experience of the student. This proposition is in keeping with phenomenological inquiry. “When students of teacher education seek meaning phenomenologically, they inquire about the essence of pedagogic life” (Schubert, 1989, p. 30). Student subject learning ought to provide engagements that allow the student to construct their own meaning through experience.

Unfortunately, though, many teacher preparatory programs are a series of disconnected, isolated courses and experiences (Tom, 1991). Effective strategies, such as providing connected experiences and problem-based learning, are frequently absent (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Too often, content methodology courses exist in severance from submersion in the field experience or the student teaching classroom. Furthermore, as Tom (1991) asserts, field experiences and student teaching assignments often receive little support, structure or scaffolding. “Student teaching, having no specialized content but involving field work done off campus, is generally the province of the lowest-status teaching personnel: graduate students and adjunct instructors” (Tom, 1991, p. 15). Too often, preservice teachers navigate their field or student teaching experiences with little guidance or support from the university.

In light of this, to best foster student subject learning -- in this study a deep understanding of the subject matter of English/language arts pedagogy in the urban classroom -- it would appear
that an effective vehicle would be an urban field placement embedded within and intricately tied to the content of a methodology course. First, the navigation of a field placement is certainly an “authentic problem” with “real-world significance and a messy open-ended character” - both characteristics of activities that facilitate students’ subject learning (Henderson, 2001, p. 9). “The subject-centered classroom is characterized by the fact that the third thing (the subject matter) has a presence so real, so vivid, so vocal, that it can hold teacher and students alike accountable for that they say and do” (Palmer, 1998, p. 117).

Those individuals who can best provide scaffolding for pedagogical reasoning and problem solving should facilitate the early field experience in order to engender student subject learning (Tom, 1997). Ideally, the instructor of the methods course in which the field experiences are embedded would guide and scaffold the placement. In doing so, course instructors can incorporate the thoughts, emotions, experiences, ideas and observations that preservice teachers experience in the urban school as the centerpiece of the coordinating course. This integrated understanding would provide for preservice teachers a richer and more meaningful experience. For example, they would not only examine the pedagogical strategies in English/language arts, but also be able to reflect upon how and why those particular strategies were selected and then applied to meet the specific needs of students in an urban school. In doing so, teacher educators might be able to facilitate their students in creating their own “connections to the big themes of the human conversation” (Goodlad, 2004, p. 91).

In a study conducted by Moore (2003), it is suggested that an English/language arts teacher preparatory curriculum that assimilates educational theory with practice might serve as an effective venue in which pedagogical reasoning and decision-making might be addressed. The purpose of this longitudinal qualitative study was to examine the preservice teacher’s application
of constructivist learning theory in the field placement classroom. Instead, the researcher determined that preservice teachers focused more on logistical pedagogical issues. Moore writes that her preservice teachers became “bogged down with procedural and management concerns” (p. 32). At this point in their professional development, the students were unable to integrate concepts learned in their methods courses with their field experience, as was hoped by the researcher.

Moore’s conclusions are in keeping with Henderson’s concept of student subject learning. Based on her findings, Moore suggests that in order to better facilitate preservice teachers’ understanding and assimilation of educational theory and practice, preservice teachers need more extensive opportunities in authentic field experiences. Submersion in purposefully scaffolded field experiences might allow the preservice teacher to see beyond the day-to-day “survival strategies” utilized in the classroom, and be able to critically reflect upon the practice of urban school pedagogy. That navigation and subject matter learning happens in the space between their past conceptions and their future as teachers, or their lived experience in the classroom. However, Henderson does not propose that subject matter learning occur as an entity unto itself. Instead, he moves to scaffold subject matter learning with social learning.

“The beholder, the percipient, the learner must approach from the vantage point of her or his lived situation, that is, in accord with a distinctive point of view and interest” (Greene, 1995, p. 31). As posited earlier, American society is replete with social stereotypes and biases. Preservice teachers arrive in their preparatory programs with a life history of submersion in the knowledge, views, opinions, presumptions and imaginings of their families, peers, the media, and the dominant culture at large. “Classrooms are not limpid, tranquil ponds, cut off from the river of social, cultural, and political life” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 9). In fact it is society, our culture and
politics that influence the very tenor of every classroom. For example, as illustrated earlier in this chapter, the inequities and divisions that exist in our social milieu influence legislation and funding which in turn impact public schools (Anyon, 2005, 1997; Spring, 2006). When preservice teachers engage with the subject matter of teaching and learning, they do so having been saturated in the social, economic and political environment in which they were raised, and they bring with them an understanding of society filtered through the conditions found in that environment. This saturation generates a set of pre-understandings that are at times accurate and other times incorrect. “Misunderstanding can begin to build those transformational bridges between the array of understandings that you might have in your head and the misconceptions, misunderstandings and difficulties they have in theirs” (Shulman, 1990, no page). Regardless of their precision, it is preservice teachers’ pre-understandings that are inextricably intertwined with their body of knowledge. In order to recognize what a student knows, it is at times necessary to bring to light what they do not know or understand.

To develop students’ social learning in a democratic environment is to “address fundamental questions of fairness and justice [and]…foster a critical awareness of equity issues” (Henderson, 2001, p. 13). It is imperative to acknowledge, not ignore, pre-understandings and apprehensions, as well as embark upon critical conversations about the condition of urban schools. Through students’ social learning both in the methods classroom and in the field, they may begin to acknowledge and celebrate individual or group differences, and cultivate within themselves a deeper understanding of themselves and others. “When beginning teachers come in to minority communities, many are unable to understand the students’ home language, social interaction patterns, histories, and cultures” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 134). In this venue, the preservice teacher is able to critically examine and confront societal representation of urban schools. In
Henderson’s (2001) framework of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding, the importance of connecting societal learning with subject matter learning is highly significant. However, Henderson includes one more facet in his 3S framework: self-learning.

Paulo Friere writes: “Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important” (1970, p. 73). It is that process of inquiry, that decision-making, that is fostered in students’ self-learning as defined by Henderson (2001). Over the span of a lifetime, human beings develop and are perpetually transformed as a result of their lived experience. This personal growth can be embraced and fostered in a classroom by providing for the preservice teacher an environment in which individual differences and experiences are both acknowledged and celebrated for their uniqueness. When teachers recognize and cultivate students’ self-learning, the student in turn will grow both socially and emotionally (Henderson, 2001).

Through their self-learning, or their view inward to gaze upon their personal beliefs system, preservice teachers may begin to recognize their place and condition in their continuous journey to becoming a teacher. “Any authentic call ultimately comes from the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self” (Palmer, 1998, p. 29). Through the act of quietly listening and carefully attending to that voice, a preservice teacher may realize how they observe and confront the pedagogy and societal biases of urban education. They may begin to sense a dichotomy between a true democracy – a society in which each member has a voice, and no individual or group is marginalized or subjugated – and the reality of life in the urban school.

Van Manen (1990) writes that “to believe in the power of thinking is…to acknowledge that it is the complexity and mystery of life that calls for thinking in the first place. Human life needs
knowledge, reflection, and thought to make itself knowable to itself” (p. 19). The Principles of Teaching curriculum is designed to, among other things, evoke this kind of complex thinking through the 3S framework. The structure of the course, specifically in the form of guided discussion or journaling, is designed to encourage preservice teachers to ask themselves critical questions, that is, to more closely examine what they observe, think and feel in regards to urban schools. They may consider the dynamics of social justice issues they observe in that facet of society differently than they would on their own or in an unscaffolded experience.

This is suggested in Goodlad’s research; in a large sampling of colleges and universities, the researchers asked preservice teachers what they perceived their purpose as educators would be. Goodlad wrote:

None got even close to suggesting serving their schools in a democratic mission. Few said anything about purpose beyond attending to their future pupils’ classroom learning. Connecting their school to some larger public good was seen as the possible responsibility of the principal (2004, p. 308).

But through the facilitation of the seeking of themselves and their perception of urban school pedagogy, the preservice teacher may begin to at least more deeply appreciate the multiple facets of the urban school, and at best discover their possible place within them. Through the experience, preservice teachers will be faced with and possibly find cause to more critically reflect upon their own thoughts and feelings – either positive or negative – and find where those fit in to their authentic social experience in the urban public school. In addition, they will need to determine if their own experiences negated or enforced those pre-understandings.

When preservice teachers enter the field placement they learn about themselves as they make decisions in the field on their own. They will be engaged in the environment physically, mentally, and emotionally; they are walking the halls, listening to students, making pedagogical decisions as they teach their course-required lesson plan, and entering relationships with people
in the school. “One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face” (Greene, 1995, p. 10). It is through this view that they might examine their experiences as they relate to the pluralism and power dichotomies embedded in our society, and how they might imagine and identify elements in an ideal democracy.

Self-learning may be foreign territory to preservice teachers in some teacher preparatory programs. Over a decade ago, Schubert asked this key question that remains highly relevant today: “Drawing upon the phenomenological, …is teacher education willing and able to acknowledge as valid the knowledge created by teachers as they interact with the context of their teaching situations?” (1989, p. 28-29). Should they choose, teacher educators may answer “yes”, and validate the knowledge constructed through the scaffolding of a purposeful and reflective early urban field placement. One example of 3S learning through an early urban field experience is elucidated in Burant’s (1999) qualitative case study. Through multiple literacies facilitated in their elementary and middle school teacher preparatory program, Burant’s preservice teachers demonstrated subject, self and social learning as they navigated an early field placement in an urban school district in the American Southwest. For example, in her field reflection, one participant, Cindy, wrote of her thoughts about the school prior to going there:

I honestly had no idea what to expect in this area…I may have thought it was a little on the “ghetto” side…I am only familiar with the “U” area and the homes up in the suburban hills, so when I first saw the trailer across the street from the school, I am sure I assumed the community was a poor and uncaring place, kind of like its surroundings, rundown (Burant, 1999, p. 26).

Cindy came to discover that while the school did possess this shabby exterior, it was a place with true value. The author writes that Cindy “grew to ‘treasure the atmosphere’ and ‘love the kids’ in this context” (Burant, 1999, p. 34). This shift in understanding demonstrates growth on many
levels. She gains a deeper, more intimate understanding of herself in reflecting upon her own considerations. She discovers one small yet significant aspect of society: a rundown building can be the home of compassion. At another point in her journal, Cindy writes about how she learned though the course of her early field experience a great deal about classroom management, one significant component of preservice teacher subject matter. This study not only begins a conversation about preservice teachers’ 3S understanding of urban schools, but also how that conversation can be enhanced by looking at that understanding in the context of an early field experience. Burant’s findings might serve to inform how such as examination could help teacher preparatory programs foster preservice teachers to consider employment in urban school settings.

Teaching for 3S Understanding in Teacher Preparatory Programs

I was unable to find any published studies in which Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding was implemented in secondary teacher preparatory programs. Indeed, there are programs fostering reflective practice and subject, societal and self-learning across the globe. However, one intention of this study is to explicitly demonstrate how Henderson’s (2001) framework for teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding might be of value when preparing preservice teachers, particularly when navigating an early urban field placement. In doing so, teacher educators may assume a role in discovering a part of the solution to the desperate condition of urban schools today.

In this study, teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is the framework with which I have framed the Principles of Teaching course. I have done this because I believe that Henderson’s (2001) democratic elements of student learning will best scaffold preservice English/language arts teachers’ early field experience in an urban public school. Without making the 3S connections, I believe the subject matter may be deemed inconsequential in the
experience of the preservice teacher. If what preservice teachers learn is important only in the
teacher preparatory classroom, the subject matter is left behind when they leave that classroom;
the preservice teacher may not find the subject matter important enough to carry in to their future
lives as professionals to apply what they have learned outside of the school walls. In the case of
this study, I believed it would be valuable to scaffold the subject matter of my Principles of
Teaching course – secondary curricular and pedagogical methods - to the experiences and career
aspirations of my preservice teachers and their society at large. After engaging in several
graduate courses rooted in teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding, the
curriculum for the Principles of Teaching course utilized in this study was reframed to facilitate
preservice teachers’ 3S understanding.

In Principles of Teaching, a secondary education general methodology course, my students
were preservice teachers seeking licensure in Ohio’s four core content areas. The intention in
that reframing was to take a fresh approach to teaching both the state and national standards. In
keeping with contemporary American curriculum expectations and structure, the course
presented the preservice teacher with the national standards for their subject area. Secondary
math, science, social studies and English/language arts teachers across the United States are
expected to align to one degree or another to content standards. State standards and benchmarks
are generally built around the standards set at the national level.

In an effort to best prepare my preservice teachers to effectively and appropriately align their
classroom curriculum to the standards, I used the national standards to guide the development of
a course of study. Applying traditional methods of instructional goals and measurable objectives,
preservice teachers worked closely with critical colleagues (Brookfield, 1995) to develop a
semester-long (18 week) course of study. Not only did this facilitate thinking about long range
instructional planning and decision making, but it also helped to prepare them for success on the Praxis II Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) test, a requirement to receive professional licensure in many states, including Ohio. The course was also intended to evoke critical thinking as well as encourage preservice teachers to become reflective creators of curriculum. By facilitating an inquiry-based learning experience, promoting engagement in dynamic critical conversations and scaffolding the standards as guides to be examined rather than laws to be followed, preservice teachers developed an interactive and expansive relationship with their content standards. While subject matter is clearly significant, this curriculum was also intended to guide preservice teachers to discover moral, transformative value in teaching for social and self-understanding.

Throughout the semester, time was set aside for conversation and deliberation with critical colleague groups, as well as whole class discussions. I also visited with groups one-on-one to evaluate and facilitate individual understanding. When deliberating about teaching for subject, self and social understanding, it was hoped that the preservice teachers, either in whole group or team discussions, would explore their own 3S understanding about curriculum design. For this reason, there were also many student-driven group discussions in the course. As a participant observer, I guided the discussions toward teaching for 3S understanding for democratic living when it was necessary. My overarching goal in the course was to facilitate a positive experience as preservice teachers navigated their own understanding of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding and the use of the standards in their content area. To determine to what extent that goal was met, I needed to make use of a method that would allow me to become intimately familiar with the individual preservice teachers’ experiences.
Conclusion

This study considers preservice teachers’ understanding as they negotiate their experience in an early urban field placement in an effort to discover whether or not one particular curricular framework, teaching for democratic experience through 3S understanding (Henderson, 2001), is a viable avenue to scaffold that understanding and evoke reflection upon that experience. This examination may bring to light a number of issues and concerns, including the possible apprehension of preservice teachers in coping with an environment different from what most are familiar with. It is hoped that the preservice teacher will realize that “it is possible to teach well in urban schools [and urban school students] can learn and become fully engaged in learning that opens them for productive futures” (McNeil, 2000, p. xxiv). Teaching in an urban public school can be a wonderful and rewarding experience. By studying the reflections and experiences of several preservice teachers, it is posited that teacher preparatory programs might do well to engage in similar study as a part of their own programmatic and curriculum decision-making. Teacher educators might discover valuable ways to renegotiate those decisions to best engage their preservice teachers with urban public schools.

Urban schools in the United States are often disparaged in the mass media and bear the burden of many critical stereotypes that may influence the preservice teachers’ thoughts about teaching in urban public schools. It would seem that it is time to examine how preservice teachers perceive urban schools and urban classroom pedagogy, and how they consider and cope with societal representations of urban schools. “There is only one honest way to evaluate the many varieties of good teaching with the subtlety required: it is called being there” (Palmer, 1998, p. 143). Field experience allows the preservice teacher to “be there”, and paying closer
attention to what is happening when they are there may give rise to a new understanding of how to best prepare them to engage in urban schools.

The projected demographics of urban schools and preservice teachers suggest that the two populations are going to remain quite different for some time to come. Within the next few decades, it is estimated that there will be more children of color than white children in schools (Delpit, 1995; Dilworth and Brown, 2001). “Currently, ‘minority’ students represent a majority in all but two of our twenty-five largest cities, and by some estimates, the turn of the century will find up to 40 percent nonwhite children in American classrooms” (Delpit, 1995, p. 66). While there is currently a teacher surplus in suburban school districts across the country, the projected demographics of teachers in the United States indicate there will be a drastic shortage of teachers in the very near future (Clewell and Villegas, 2001; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Statistics also indicate that the demographic of preservice teachers is not changing. The relative majority of preservice teachers “have never seen the inside of an urban school; most have never closely interacted with African Americans” (Richards et al., 1994, p. 5). The space between these two populations is wide, but not nearly as vast as it will become in the near future.

It seems that teacher educators cannot prepare preservice teachers to work in urban public schools unless they familiarize themselves with those settings and how preservice teachers experience them. Nor can we accept the experiences preservice teachers have in a non-urban field placement as indicators of how those same individuals will experience urban public schools. As Bruner writes, “to take a cultural view of education does not really require constant cultural comparison. Rather, it requires that one consider education and school learning in their situated, cultural context” (1996, p. x). Certainly, many preservice teachers may already realize that teaching in an urban public school is different from teaching in other settings. Perhaps, then,
“curriculum debates must be redirected to the …development of autobiographical, aesthetic, intuitive, and proleptic experience, and the socio-cultural and sociopolitical relations emerging from an understanding of the individual in relation to knowledge, other learners, the world, and ultimately the self” (Slattery, 1995, p. 257). To foster authentic curriculum deliberation, teacher educators must elucidate and understand preservice teachers’ inhibitions and concerns before they can be mitigated. Only after attending to the voices of preservice teachers will teacher educators be prepared to thoroughly examine their own practice in preparatory programs.

Research Gaps

Like other inquiries, this study is an effort to expand the currently limited and somewhat inconclusive literature on early urban field placements, as well as preservice secondary English/language arts teachers’ pre-understandings of urban schools. As cited earlier, several studies examine various aspect of field experience in urban schools. Some of these studies focus on preservice teachers entering urban elementary settings. Other studies look at how preservice teachers, regardless of their content area, navigate an urban field placement or early field placement. However, there are two predominant gaps concerning the impact of urban field placements on preservice teachers: the examination of the construction of the field experiences themselves and how preservice English/language arts teachers experience them. Proctor, Rentz, and Jackson (2001), determined that “further research is needed on the types of field experiences in urban schools that are related to positive outcomes for preservice teachers” (p. 226).

The literature on teacher preparation evidences little in the way of teachers’ thoughts, ideas and beliefs pertaining to early field placements in urban settings. It is hoped that this study will provide a platform of sorts to those authentic voices. Aoki (1992) writes, “By ignoring the lives of teachers and students, they are cast into nothingness.” Too often educational researchers
“deny the humanness that lies of the core of what education is” (p. 18). This study endeavors to actively seek that “humanness” and to listen intently to the voices of preservice teachers as they share their pre-understandings and thoughts about urban schools. Through this work, by sharing their words with those who might best serve them, preservice teachers may be acknowledged and validated.
CHAPTER THREE: THE METHOD

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Through the findings of this study, it is hoped that faculty in teacher preparatory programs might be encouraged to further reflect upon their own curriculum decision-making and discover valuable ways to enhance their programming to better serve their preservice teachers. Hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen, in part, because of its distinctive approach to the life-worlds of the participants and the authentic respect and consideration for the pedagogical experience. “The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful” (van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Phenomenological work looks closely at how incidents and experiences naturally occur (Zahavi, 2003; van Manen, 1990). Recently phenomenologists have begun explicating their procedures, although it has historically been called the “method without techniques” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 2).

Hermeneutics is a very old term that is familiar in many fields, including philosophy, theology, literature and the social sciences, and has many definitions and connotations (Gallagher, 1992; Rykwert, 1984). van Manen offers a designation for the purpose of qualitative research in education. He defines hermeneutics as “the theory and practice of interpretation” (van Manen, 1990, p. 179), and synthesized these two elements in a specific research approach; the essence of lived experience is embodied in language through a reflective process of recursive examination and consideration. Hermeneutic phenomenology “combines both interpretive/hermeneutic methods and descriptive/phenomenological methods for the purpose of
examining the lived experiences or life worlds of people being studied” (Hatch, 2002, p. 29). It is a “human science” in that it studies human beings and the way they relate to the backdrop of their lifeworlds (van Manen, 1990). “Hermeneutic phenomenology is a philosophy of the person, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, or the social” (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). Each participant’s experience is approached as exceptional and interpreted as specific to the individual. Instead of examining the experiences as one large set of data, the experiences are individually and separately examined in order to capture the lebenswelt, or the quintessence or deeper meaning of the participants’ individual voices. This type of reflective examination is “discerned by looking at experience from within, as lived by oneself” (de Laguna, 1960, p. 781). Lebenswelt approaches relationships by subjectively acknowledging the space between individual voices rather than examining their inherent differences (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Gallagher, 1992; Barbaras, 1991).

The purpose of data collection in hermeneutic phenomenology is to gather information about the lived experiences of the participants in order to better understand their engagement with a particular human phenomenon, and examine the vast and changing exhibition of the lebenswelt. It has a broad scope; therefore, “to deal with the inexhaustibly open and ever-changing phenomena of the Lebenswelt, a richer more flexible, and more far-ranging mode of expression is required” (Wild, 1958, p. 461). The data include varied textual representations of the lived experiences of the participants. Descriptions of these experiences are sometimes gleaned from personal interviews, observations, and close examination of literature (Hatch, 2002). Personal interviews with the participants provide insight into the experiences of the participant, and serve two distinct purposes, as cited by van Manen:
(1) [The interview] may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon, and (2) the interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 66).

Through these various textual representations of human experience, hermeneutic phenomenology provides the opportunity to gather a clear picture and deep understanding of a particular human phenomenon.

To interpret data using this method, phenomenologists recursively read the gathered texts in their entirety and reflect upon them in an effort to realize the essence of their meaning. Phenomenology does not adhere to strict laws of more traditional qualitative data analysis and interpretation such as coding or sorting. Instead, it seeks to achieve a “practical understanding of meanings and actions” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 8). While phenomenological interpretation often stops at this point of understanding, hermeneutic phenomenology takes the analysis one step further and attempts to construct a “coherent, internally consistent argument” about the phenomenon in the findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges the participant’s indivisible connectedness to the world and that we learn through that relationship. “All human activity is always oriented activity, directed by that which orients it. In this way we discover a person’s world or landscape” (van Manen, 1990, p. 182). As human beings trying to situate ourselves in the world, we enter new circumstances or engagements in different ways depending on our own prior life experience. van Manen writes that

to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching – questioning – theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully a part of it, or better, to become the world. Phenomenology calls this inseparable connection to the world the principle of “intentionality” (van Manen, 1990, p. 5).
Each individual has his or her own life story, the events of which mold, guide and shape a person’s understanding of new experiences. Similarly Gallagher, citing the foundational work of Husserl, notes significantly that all experiences have their own horizon. It is through engagement and experience that all things, or horizons, might become known or familiar. Referring to a phenomenological description of experience, Husserl writes,

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\text{it is not open to doubt that there is no experience, in the simple and primary sense of an experience of things, which grasping a thing for the first time and bringing cognition to bear on it, does not already ‘know’ more about the thing than is in this cognition alone (Husserl in Gallagher, 1992, p. 60).}
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In Husserl’s theory of intentionality, he professed that every person’s life has “horizons,” and for that reason “there is no isolated primal impression, there is no pure self-presence” (Zahavi, 2003, p. 97). Every human experience brings with it previously constructed impressions or pre-understandings, so that no experience is purely devoid of consideration. Pre-understanding is how an individual thinks about these ever present horizons prior to experiencing engagement with them. Pre-understanding is explained by Blumenfeld-Jones as a process that “is cyclic in character: we experience the situation in the light of our pre-understandings of what that situation might me. We, then, project using our theories and pre-understandings, where the experience might be leading” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2005, p. 13). Through the lens of our pre-understandings, we navigate the unknown events or circumstances that lay before us on the “horizons” of our life journey. Hermeneutic phenomenology posits that it is with these untouchable and ever present horizons that we are either consciously or unconsciously occupied; it is in them that we construct our knowledge of the world (van Manen, 1990; Zahavi, 2003).

I elected to utilize hermeneutic phenomenology for this study for several reasons. First, my intention in this study is to give voice to individual preservice teachers as they share their experiences in the course and the field experience. A distinct purpose of this approach is to
authentically engage with individuals as they experience a phenomenon. Second, participants are perceived not as subjects to be analyzed but as co-constructors of the body of knowledge examined. Other studies examining preservice teachers in urban field placements cited here have utilized Likert-scale or short-answer surveys as their method of data collection. However, in order to gather more authentic voices of the participants as they engage in the experience of the early urban field placement, this study will employ more personalized and open-ended methods of data collection.

Validity and Reliability

The very nature of hermeneutic phenomenology has a “natural” validity in that “the events and settings studied are uncontrived, unmodified by the researcher’s presence” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 278). Hermeneutic phenomenologists do not seek external validity in that they do not propose a causal relationship between the specific personal experiences of their participants and those of a general population. Instead, they seek to contribute one set of observations and interpretations of a particular phenomenon, which is in keeping with what Maxwell (2005) identifies as “external generalizability”. He suggests that “the generalizability of qualitative studies is usually based not on explicit sampling of some defined population to which the results can be extended, but on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases” (2005, p. 115-116). The purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology is to develop a theory about social phenomenon through the close examination of participants submersed or engaged in that phenomenon.

Reliability of the findings in a hermeneutic phenomenological study may be established through the replication of questions in different forms of data collection. Since “reliability is threatened by any careless act in the measurement of assessment process” (Lincoln and Guba,
hermeneutic phenomenologists must remain ever vigilant in their recursive examination of textual data, maintaining a watchful eye for inconsistencies or changes in the data as the study progresses. For example, if a participant writes in the first entry of a journal that she is an equestrian, and later reports in an interview that she is afraid of horses, the researcher should reexamine the data collection methods and instruments to insure their dependability and accuracy.

Credibility

To achieve a high level of credibility in this study, I have utilized four suggestions made by Lincoln and Guba (1984): prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks. First, I have sustained prolonged engagement with the participants in the study. Having known them in the capacity of their instructor for several months prior to the beginning of the study, I became familiar with their individual personalities, the way they work in a classroom and interact with their peers, and their unique professional aspirations. This familiarity has also served to build trust between the participants and myself.

My second effort to increase the credibility of my findings is through persistent observation. “Persistent observation adds to the dimension of salience to what otherwise may appear to be little more than a mindless immersion” (Lincoln and Guba, 1984, p. 304). I have taught in the secondary education program at the university for three years, and in my capacity as instructor have visited many of the urban field placements sites where my participants were placed. I am consequently intimately familiar with the preparatory program, and personally acquainted with the field sites in which my participants are engaged.

Lincoln and Guba also stress the importance of triangulating data to improve the credibility of the findings of a study. One way to achieve triangulation is to collect the same information at
different times. In this study, I am collecting and verifying the participants’ thoughts and reflections throughout the course of the study. For example, in their field journals, the participants are asked if they would or would not want to work in an urban school and why. This question is asked again in the first interview. Before the second interview, I can compare the answers given at different times. The question is again asked at the end of the study in the final reflection. By asking this same question in different ways (a field journal reflection, a personal interview, and a final written reflection of the study) over the span of several months, I am able to verify the consistency of the participants’ responses.

Finally, member checks were conducted throughout the study in order to ensure that my interpretation of each participant’s shared lived experience is accurate and complete. Member checking can be both formal and informal (Lincoln and Guba, 1984). In addition to informal member checks throughout the study, I conducted a formal member check in the second interview, approximately halfway through the study, by asking each participant to confirm the accuracy of the data collected.

Participants

This study examined the experiences and reflections of five preservice English/language arts teachers. All of the participants were enrolled in the undergraduate secondary education program in the College of Education, Health and Human Services at Kent State University, a large midwestern public university. Having passed a selective admissions process and been admitted to advanced study in the secondary education program, participants were enrolled in a junior/senior level secondary general methods course: Principles of Teaching (ADED 32142). The preservice teacher participants were seeking eventual teacher licensure in secondary Integrated English/language arts (INLA).
While I served in the capacity of instructor at Kent State, this teacher preparatory course and the early urban field placement embedded within it was designed to facilitate Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. Typically, this course occurs roughly two semesters prior to their student teaching field experience that is embedded in their final year of coursework. Most frequently, preservice teachers enter Principles of Teaching with little or no field experience. Of those that have engaged in a field experience, only a small portion of preservice teachers has been in an urban secondary setting.

To determine the sample population of this study, I invited all of the secondary English/Language arts preservice teachers to take part in the study regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status or any other categorical delineation. There were approximately twenty-five potential participants of this nature. From the eight eligible volunteers, I randomly selected five participants. I selected five to allow for a variety of individuals to contribute. Because of the depth and breadth of the examination, engaging more than five participants in the time available for the study would have jeopardized the hope of realizing the rigor of focus that is intended.

All of the participants were white and four were female. At first glance seemingly disproportionate, the demographics of this participant group effectively characterized the general population of preservice teachers. Statistics indicate that “for the foreseeable future, prospective teachers will continue to be predominantly white, middle class females under the age of 25 years” (Proctor et al., 2001, p. 219). Prior to embarking upon data collection for this study, I obtained all necessary clearance from the Kent State University Institutional Review Board, and strictly adhered to appropriate human subjects protocol at all times throughout the course of the study.
Similar to hermeneutic phenomenology, the purpose of Pinar’s (1976) method of *currere* is to examine the participant’s unique experience in the phenomenon of becoming an educator. Both constructivist approaches, hermeneutic phenomenology and the method of *currere* employ data-gathering methods that collect personal reflections. Because of the possible obstacle of conducting my dissertation with van Manen’s “method without techniques” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 2), I opted to employ the method *currere* as both a guide for my research and a framework for my findings. William Pinar first presented the method of *currere* in 1975 at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association. That paper was then published in a (1976) book that Pinar edited with Madeline Grummet. The method of *currere*, which Pinar has expanded and clarified over the years, focuses not only on deliberation of the past but also the future.

Essentially, the method of *currere* serves as scaffolding for the purposeful reflection of “one’s own experience in light of excavations of one’s past, multiple narratives of one’s present, and anticipations of one’s possibilities” (Pinar and Grumet, 1976, p. xi). Pinar designed the method of *currere* to be utilized by an individual researcher as a method of self-reflection. *Currere* scaffolds the examination of oneself by looking at one’s own life story of becoming an educator; it seeks to capture its *lebenswelt*. This method is phenomenological in that its intention is to achieve a more intimate understanding of one’s own individual lived experience of becoming a teacher. For this reason, *currere* is not proposed as simply a checklist or process to work through, but instead as a life-long reflective endeavor for personal and professional growth. From the culminating stage of *currere*, Pinar (2004) writes, participants emerge as “public intellectuals”, ready to more purposefully engage in their ongoing journey of becoming
educators. *Currere* has four steps designed to guide this dialogue and reflection: regression, progress, analysis and synthesis.

**The Four Stages of Currere**

The first step of Pinar’s method of *currere* is centered on reflecting on one’s evolution as an educator. In this step, “Pinar proposes that we enter the past, live in it, observe oneself functioning in the past but not succumb to it” (Slattery, 1995, p. 57). Through purposeful remembering in the regressive step, one captures events, people, places, experiences and any other factor that has contributed to one’s journey. Significant societal issues that have impacted one’s professional growth may come to light, such as cultural influences and issues of social justice and equity. Pinar (1976) calls this the “biographic past”, which he claims is “usually ignored. Ignored but not absent. The biographic past exists presently, complexly contributing to the biographic present” (p. 56).

Pinar includes this reflection on the biographic past because one’s past is intimately related to one’s present; the choices, habits and relationships of today are a direct result of the events, people and experiences of the past. He writes:

> The regressive phase of *currere* is not about wandering around in one’s own house of mirrors, Narcissus-like, but remembering that the language we speak now derives from what and whom we saw through our windows as infants and children and young adults. Recalling these lost languages provides passage to our past, with silenced elements of ourselves, with the world we knew as children and which inhabits the world we know now as adults. Engagement with the world, pedagogical or legal or illegal, as in civil disobedience, keeps one eye looking out the window, where the worlds of past, present and future collide in he chaos and order of the historical present (1994, p. 265).

The phase of regression is first because it is foundational; in order to fully understand the present self, one must purposefully consider the past. Pinar creates the metaphor that the writing out of the past in the regressive step of *currere* is like creating a picture. He writes: “holding the
photograph in front of oneself, one studies the detail, the literal holding of the picture and one’s response to it suggestive of the relations of past to present” (1976, p. 58). Through the reflection in this first step of currere, the participant learns about his or her own unique journey of becoming a teacher.

The progressive step of currere is second. In the progressive step, Pinar calls for a purposeful reflection upon the future. Etymologically rooted in the Latin terms pro and gradi, “progression” literally means, “to step, go before” (Slattery, 1995). This step “goes before” the future; one imagines the future in as much detail as possible, not just simply by imagining “someday”, but more methodically considering life in a week, a year, a decade, etc. Although currere is conceived as a method of looking at one’s professional journey as an educator, Pinar stresses the importance of directing one’s focus to goals for both the personal and the professional life, and examining how those intertwine. Pinar says that in looking at what is to come, “we have found that the future is present in the same sense that the past is present” (1976, p. 58). The progressive step should be a recursive examination in order to increase the likelihood that one’s imaginings are authentic and not colored by specific or subjective events occurring at the time of the reflection.

Analysis, the third step of currere, requires that the pictures of the past and future created in the regressive and progressive steps are temporarily set aside, so that one may concentrate on the present. In the analytical step, Pinar suggests that, through the first two steps, one has achieved a critical distance from the past and the future so that the present can be more judiciously examined. Returning to the metaphor of the creation of photographs in each of these steps, the picture of the present is created. It is then placed with those pictures created in the two previous steps, and the participant can examine the three holistically. When examining the three pictures
together, Pinar asks the key analytical question: “What are their complex, multidimensional interrelations?” (1976, p. 60). Once their connectedness has been discovered, one might more clearly see the evolution of their journey of becoming an educator – where one has been, where one is going, and the multifaceted influences that occur along the way.

Finally, synthesis brings this newly acquired understanding of one’s journey to bear on the journey itself. Pinar says that in this fourth step in currere all of the aspects of one’s private and professional life are integrated as a sum total. “Make it all of a whole,” he writes. “It, all of it - intelllections, emotions, behavior” (1976, p. 61). Synthesis is both a momentary decision and the beginning of a lifelong endeavor to consciously engage in a holistic approach to one’s academic lived experience. One captures the essence of oneself, and emerges from the currere experience ready to embark upon an integrated journey as a public intellectual actively engaged in one’s development as an educator.

**Currere as Critical Framework**

In this study, the four stages of currere provide a guide for the examination of the “story” of the participants’ professional development. Pinar initially created the method of currere to be employed by a researcher as he or she engages in personal reflection. For the purposes of this study, I have modified Pinar’s method to serve not as an individual endeavor, but as scaffolding for my participants’ reflection upon their experience of participating in the Principle of Teaching class and its early urban field placement. I have made this modification for the purpose of both simplicity and uniformity. An additional modification is that, rather than have the participants study the method independently and independently generate their own curreres, I will provide guidance and assistance throughout the process. As Pinar wrote when he explicitly invited researchers to modify his method of currere: “we must be utilitarians” (1976, p. 55).
Here, *currere* is utilized in the interview process as a way to structure and guide the participants to a better understanding of their experiences with urban public schools. Reflecting upon their own *curreres* may serve to be of benefit to the participants. Through the examination of and reflection upon the way they approach and engage in an early urban field placement, I hope that both they and I will gain a better understanding of how they envision urban public schools. *Currere* serves to organize and scaffold that examination. Through their engagement with the process of creating their *curreres*, the participants may find a new and more meaningful understanding of not only themselves as evolving teachers, but also the possibility of including urban public schools in that evolution. “We cannot fully and fruitfully engage in meaningful dialogue across the differences of race without doing the work of personal transformation” (Howard, 1999, p. 4). Through the work of *currere* in this study and the engagement of that dialogue in the early urban field placement, I hope that each participant can achieve a heightened degree of personal growth and understanding of the way they think and feel about urban public schools.

**Data Collection**

It would have been ideal to initiate this study at the beginning of the semester in which the participants were enrolled in the Principles of Teaching course; to do so would have imparted more depth to the process. However, due to the time limitations of this study, that was not possible. Two different types of textual qualitative data were accumulated after the participants completed a field placement in an urban middle or high school setting. The first type, their field journals, was selected to enhance the thorough examination of both the participant’s understanding of urban schools before engaging in the field placement as well as their experience in the field placement. The second type of data collected was generated through personal
interviews, which were intended to more clearly illuminate the participants’ consideration of urban public schools and Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in the Principles of Teaching course. Through semi-structured interviews, more rich insight into the reflections of preservice English/language arts teachers in regard to urban schools were revealed through the more intimate venue of casual conversation. The interviews were constructed for the preservice teacher participants to reflectively examine their experience in both the Principles of Teaching course and the urban field experience. Throughout the course of the data collection, the participants were guided to move through the four steps of currere. Both the first and second interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Audio recordings were destroyed immediately upon transcription.

The preservice teachers completed semi-structured field journals, required and evaluated components of the Principles of Teaching course, throughout their field experience. Because “it is likely that [field journals] may contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value” (van Manen, 1990, p. 73), they were the initial source of data to inform this study, and helped me to frame the questions in the first personal interview. The journal themes were selected in order to scaffold and direct preservice teachers’ observations through the facets of their 3S understanding of teaching and learning in urban public schools; they focused the participant’s reflection on their self-learning, subject matter learning and social learning. The journal themes also prompted the participants to focus on their observations of teaching (or perhaps not teaching) for democratic living in the urban public school classroom, specifically their interpretation of student subject matter learning, self-learning and social learning in their urban field placement. The prompts consisted of multiple questions within each of the following thematically organized entries:
1. Thoughts about urban schools prior to entering the field experience
2. Reflections and feelings after the first week of the experience
3. Perceptions of teaching and learning in the field
4. Perceptions of communication in the urban classroom
5. Perceptions of pedagogy in the urban classroom
6. Final, post-field experience reflections

Each entry had these overarching themes listed in the directions the participants received in class for their field journal, as well as more detailed and focusing questions listed under each theme (See Appendix B).

The initial entry, completed prior to entering the field placement, had two significant purposes. First, it was an opportunity to gather the participants’ pre-understanding of urban schools. Second, it laid the foundation for the first or regressive step of currere in that it evoked the examination of past lived or existential experience. In this first step, Pinar (1976) explains, “one returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present” (p. 55). These field journals served to encourage preservice teachers to reflect upon and capture the significant aspects of their experience in an early urban field placement. As van Manen writes, “keeping a regular diary may help a person to reflect on significant aspects of his or her past and present life” (1990, p. 73). Because of their structurally progressive nature, the field journals shed light on the evolving experience of the preservice teacher in the field placement.

First personal interview

The first interview for the study occurred immediately after the completion of the course and after I had read their field journals. In order to encourage and support individual understandings, the structure of the interviews was unique to each participant and his or her reflection in their
field journals. Throughout the interviews, I guided the participants to share memories of events or other significant experiences, or “personal life stories” (van Manen, 1990), they may have had in their early urban field placement with open-ended questions that evolved over the course of the conversation, such as “What was the most memorable experience you had in the field?” Additional questions focused on the answers that were given over the course of the interview. The regressive step took place not only in the first journal entry, but also in the first personal interview. Individualized and specific questions in the first personal interview allowed for a more vivid picture of the participants’ experiences and reflections. Also scaffolded in the first personal interview was the second or progressive step of currere. In the progressive step, preservice teachers look toward their future and imagine what may occur on their journey of becoming professional educators. It is the step in which the preservice teacher looks ahead “at what is not yet the case, what is not yet present” (Pinar, 1976, p. 58). To facilitate these first two steps of currere, questions in the first interview were centered more on the participants’ personal lived experience both on their journey to becoming educators and their thoughts, feelings and observations in their early urban field placement.

Second personal interview

The second personal interviews occurred approximately two months after the first interviews and served to engage the participants in the third, analytical step of currere. In this step, Pinar calls for an examination of both the past and the present in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of oneself. He asks “how is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?” (Pinar, 1976, p. 60) To facilitate this engagement, I prepared an individual timeline of each participant’s currere, generated through my own reflection on the
field journals and first personal interviews. I summarized how each participant described their journey of becoming educators.

The creation of this timeline served as a focus and reference point for the second interview. Through this outline, the participants were able to examine how they reflected in their field journals and the first interview upon both their past and present thoughts and feelings about urban schools. I also encouraged them to reflect upon how their lived experience in both the course and the urban field placement may or may not have affected their currere thus far. Additionally, as stated earlier, having the participants review my interpretation and synopsis of their curreres served as a member check (Lincoln and Guba, 1984) for my interpretation of their experiences and increased the credibility of the findings of the study.

Final reflection

This reflection facilitated the preservice teacher’s entry into the fourth and final step of Pinar’s currere, synthesis. The purpose of synthesis is to continually seek a deeper understanding of oneself and the present through self-reflection. As Pinar explains it, synthesis is a lifelong journey. Unfortunately, within the time constraints of this study it was impossible for me to determine if the participants will engage in urban public school settings again in their professional endeavors. However, this final reflection served as their first step on that journey, and the reflections indicated that they all continued to deem reflection on their professional evolution a valuable aspect of becoming and being a teacher. It also gave the participants a sense of reflective closure on their participation in the study.

Participants were given a few specific and reflective questions at the end of the semester following the Principles of Teaching course, which was about five months after the first interview in the study. This final reflection was conducted through eMail because it provided the
participants an extended amount of time to consider their responses to the questions, rather than feel more pressured to respond immediately as in a personal interview milieu. The text generated in personal reflective writing may be different from that which is verbalized. In the final reflection, participants were able to review their answers prior to sharing them, and make sure the text accurately conveyed what they intended to communicate. The questions for the final reflection were: (a) through the experience of participating in this study, have you achieved a deeper understanding of yourself as a teacher, and if so, how; (b) has participation in the Principles of Teaching class and the coordinating urban field placement influenced your journey of becoming an English/language arts teacher, and if so, how; and (c) if at all, how will teaching for democratic living (for students’ self-learning, subject matter learning, and social learning) continue to be a part of your professional work?

Unfortunately, several of the participants did not respond when I requested their final reflections. This is perhaps because it was the end of the semester, and the participants were preoccupied with final exams, going home for the summer, etc. After a second request, I did not write again. It was not in my IRB to invite them in for a third interview, so I moved on with my analysis without that final reflection.

Data Analysis

I collected and photocopied the field journals of all of the participants and immediately returned the original copies to the participants. I also transcribed the personal interviews. These data allowed me to listen to two different voices of each of the participants: their written voice as they reflected on the progression of their experience in the field and their spoken voice as I engaged them in reflective conversation. “Hermeneutic phenomenology…assumes that multiple, socially constructed realities exist and that the meanings individuals give to their experiences
ought to be the objects of study” (Hatch, 2002, p. 30). In this study, each participant’s self-reported lived experience and engagement with the course and its early urban field placement is valued as unique to his or her own life experience; the way the participants’ pre-understandings evolve and impact their perceptions of their horizons as future teachers is just as significantly distinct.

van Manen (1990) writes that human science research of this kind emerges with the study. As I recursively examined the data I hoped to bring to light the individual experiences of the participants. This examination took place roughly once every one or two weeks over the course of the study. As data sets were added, I organized the texts into “reconstructed life stories” from the data for each individual participant. In an effort to “give shape to the shapeless” (van Manen, 1990, p. 88), textual data was organized to reproduce the essence of the four steps of each participant’s currere (Pinar, 1976).

Once the curreres were constructed, each one was examined through the thematic lens of the facets of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding (Henderson, 2001). One of the notions concerning themes, van Manen writes, “is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience” (1990, p. 87). Through the recursive examination of the texts of their personal interviews and field journals, this study endeavors to reveal how navigating the background of an urban field placement may affect the way the participants understand the urban public school.

To achieve this recursive examination, each participant’s data was regularly read and re-read. Incidents or individuals significant to the participant’s currere timeline were highlighted first. Then, after the second interviews when the participants had the opportunity to reflect and comment on the currere timelines I created, as well as add to them if necessary, each set of data
was used to write each participant’s narrative from their early days of deciding to be a teacher up to and including their engagement in the Principles of Teaching class, their reflections upon that class and its early urban field placement, and their reflections and thoughts about teaching for 3S understanding. In addition to constructing the *currere* narratives of the participants, I also expanded upon a portion of my own narrative which is shared here as the last section of chapter four. In the interest of brevity and focus, I included only the facets of my *currere* that are related my experience in this study. However, my narrative serves to not only shed light on the reflective process of *currere*, but also provides multifaceted insight into the study itself.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Max van Manen wrote that “the purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something” (1990, p. 77). He went on to write that this task is “both easy and difficult” because it is basic human nature to try and make sense of the world, yet often the “essential meaning” of a word or idea is painfully elusive. To illustrate this dichotomy, van Manen offers the example of trying to explain the essential meaning of “time.” He writes,

What could be more easily grasped than time? We regulate our lives by time. We carry the time around on our wrist. And we reflect on past time and anticipate the time to come. We even talk about the time going by, sometimes fast, and other times more slowly. And yet, when someone asks us “what is time anyway?” we are quickly at our wits end to describe it (1990, p. 77).

Capturing one’s lived experience, or lebenswelt, is a perpetually elusive task, yet it is one aspiration of hermeneutic phenomenological research. To endeavor to achieve this end, in this chapter I share the participants’ lived experiences that I have sifted from the textual representations of their time in the Principles of Teaching course and its embedded early urban field placement. “An authentic speaker must be a true listener…able to listen to the way the things of the world speak to us” (van Manen, 1990, p. 111). A common manner of sharing hermeneutic phenomenological work is through the writing of anecdotes or stories. “Anecdote can be understood as a methodological device in human science to make comprehensible some notion that easily eludes us” (van Manen, 1990, p. 116). The currere narratives in this chapter are the result of my listening to what five preservice secondary English/language arts teachers wanted to say about their experiences. Through the recursive examination of textual representations of their lived experiences, I gathered and constructed currere narratives, or the
anecdotal stories of the five preservice secondary English/language arts teachers\(^1\) who participated in this study.

Table 1:

\textit{Participant demographics}\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>RACE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of the study, I collected the participants’ field journals. Throughout the remainder of the study I conducted and transcribed two personal interviews with each participant, and one interview via email. As I described in chapter three, I employed the methods and precepts of hermeneutic phenomenology in the examination of this data. A naturalistic approach to the authentic textual responses of the participants, hermeneutic phenomenology does not combine the data or code for themes. Therefore, after gathering the field journals and first set of interviews, the data was separated into five text sets; there was one text set for each participant. From that point and for the remainder of the study, each participant’s text was approached, read and reflected upon as a unique and individual representation of their experience.

\(^1\) To preserve the anonymity of the participants and the teachers, students and others they have encountered over the course of this study, pseudonyms have been used throughout this work.

\(^2\) Participant’s age and race are self-reported. The two participants for whom age is omitted did not respond to the final journal entry, in which I asked them their age.
The text sets were approached and organized through the lens of Pinar’s (1976) method of *currere*. From each text set, I created a unique *currere* timeline (See Appendix C) for every participant, which was brought to the second personal interviews to serve as a focal point for that discussion. From their reflections upon their *curreres*, and further reflective conversation about their lived experiences of becoming teachers, I have created a *currere* narrative for each preservice teacher. This chapter presents those narratives.

The next five sections of this chapter are articulations of each participant’s unique *currere* narrative. Within the narrative, I have embedded the individual voices and reflections, often using the participant’s own written or spoken words. Each narrative is divided into five sections. Every story begins with elucidation of the participant’s reflections upon the four steps of their *currere*: regression, progression, analysis and synthesis. In scaffolding these reflective steps, I tried to become familiar with how each participant considered urban public schools, as well as the origin of those understandings. I also learned about their experience as they navigated an early urban field placement, and how they reflected upon that experience in retrospect. The participants shared the multifaceted hopes, apprehensions, achievements and disappointments they have experienced as they have found their way on their journey of becoming a teacher, and the many people, places and experiences that have both helped and hindered them along the way.

Metaphorically, each piece or strand of information that the participants disclosed was one small thread in the larger tapestry of their lives. Each participant’s *currere* narrative was constructed by weaving together the threads of the thoughts and reflections that they chose to share with me in the field journals and both interviews. The stories in the narratives evolved after many recursive readings of the texts, both on my part and by the participants. Each is incredibly complex and layered; at times they are spun together from my reflections upon the participant’s
reflections of their own, previously documented reflections. Of course, these stories are in no way exhaustive; they are really a brief glimpse into the multifaceted lives of each participant. Each section concludes with a more holistic examination of their shared experience of participating in a course designed to facilitate their understanding of 3S understanding. The final section of this chapter is my currere narrative of the experience I have had conducting this study. As each of my participants was on a journey of becoming a secondary English/language arts teacher, so am I on a journey of becoming a researcher in my field. Like my participants’ stories, this currere narrative is merely a glimpse of my multifaceted journey. There are many other experiences and decisions that have shaped my professional life, too many to be relevant here. But some of those experiences shaped this study, and having engaged in this work will shape my professional life to come. I hope that sharing this facet of my own narrative will lend richness to this chapter and further elucidate the process of currere.

Jill

Regression

In terms of demographics, Jill is a typical preservice secondary English/language arts teacher. She entered her undergraduate program immediately after high school. In her reflections, she often considers her parents, who are married, and her sister, Julie, with whom she is very close. Jill is quite close to her immediate and extended family, and often mentions family gatherings. Jill describes her parents as caring and open-minded, sometimes questioning their daughter’s decisions but ultimately giving her the freedom and support she needs. An Italian immigrant, her grandfather has had an impact on the way Jill considers issues of race. His conversations often turn to issues of race; his perspectives about race issues are also often in opposition to Jill’s. For
example, Jill shared in an interview the fact that she had dated a few men who were racially mixed. When I asked what her parents thought about her choice, she answered:

> It took awhile for me to like say something to [my parents]. And still, it is still a touchy subject because my dad’s dad is the 100% Italian you know straight from Italy, and it’s hard for him. I never talk to him about it because you can’t change an older person’s way of thinking but my parents, um, they were all sketchy at first about it, (but) they say they want me to be happy so it wasn’t as big of a deal.

Jill grew up and attended high school in a Pennsylvania town that she described as “suburbia-city.” Her fellow students were white, and she consistently describes her school as not very diverse. Grades were very important to Jill and the other students in her school; most were highly competitive and the majority went on to college. In her first interview, she described what she recalls most about her alma mater. She also took care to distance herself from her recollections of her peers and their environment, which she described as a generally “close-minded.” Jill said:

> Everyone wore mostly the same clothes; everyone came from like a good family and had money and that. I mean, I don’t want to make myself sound like that, but a lot of people were closed-minded at my school and I saw that…There wasn’t a lot of diversity in my school compared to Middleton.³

She graduated with nearly 200 students, and guesses that maybe 10 were black, and even fewer were Asian or of other racial identities.

Early in her high school career, Jill’s friends were generally white and very similar to her. She liked to play basketball and her coach, who was also her guidance counselor, influenced and helped her grow both on the court and personally. In her junior and senior years of high school, Jill “started to get a broader range of friends.” This expansion in her social circle was due in large part to her participation in basketball. Her best friend, Jill said, was significantly different from her, and she and her family continue to serve as a strong influence on Jill.

³ To preserve the anonymity of the participants and the school district, the pseudonym “Middleton High School” is used throughout the study.
[My best friend] was raised by only her mom and her dad was in jail like since she was born. Totally different from mine because my parents are still together and I have a sister and she has like a stepbrother that she doesn’t really talk to that much. So just hanging out with her family, her mom and such has opened me.

In eleventh grade, Jill’s English teacher was also a considerable influence on her future. She took an interest in Jill personally, and developed in her a passion for English/language arts. This teacher eventually played a part in Jill’s decision to pursue a degree in secondary English education, and Jill had many positive memories to share about this influential figure from her adolescent years.

My English teacher my junior year influenced me to be a teacher because before that I never wanted to teach and um she helped me through problems with friends – stuff like that, normal teenagers seem to go through– I just learned a lot from her. The books that we read and how she taught them differently she influenced me the most…we read like uh books from like now – not Shakespeare, nothing like that.

In her later high school years, Jill took several English/language arts electives to help her decide what she wanted to teach in the future. She also worked at a camp for at-risk girls in middle and early high school, and that experience also shaped her goals and direction. In her first interview, Jill described her recollections of the camp and the campers, and the impact that experience had on her.

[My experience as a camp counselor] helped me learn so much about different backgrounds. They were at such a young age, the girls knew so much about gangs and drugs and sex that I was taken aback by that. They were junior high, early high school age. There were a lot of sports, because they don’t get a lot of that at home. Plus there were packets of stuff like nature, first aid and stuff. They were like foster kids and they just paid like $50 each when it really cost like $1500 but they were sponsored by doctors and other people.

Jill also remembers one particular experience from her teacher preparatory program that greatly influenced her thoughts and feelings about becoming a teacher. It was a course about education in a democratic society, in which she learned about multicultural education. Jill remembers that she learned a lot about diverse populations in this course, which significantly influenced her
thoughts and feelings about accommodating diversity in the classroom. Jill described that influence in her second interview, as well as how it affected her interaction with her grandfather.

Since I’ve come to school here I’ve just – I’ve become more opinionated because I have learned so much in college that now I feel like I have actual knowledge to like back up things you know – you’re wrong in saying that. But I think that it’s just more of a respect thing and I know there’s no point in arguing and I’m not gonna change [my grandfather] and causing this whole thing. I wanna keep talking to my grandfather, but when I go to his house and he says things like about professional sports and it’s only white people in the stands and blah blah blah, I just wanna say something so bad but I just decided to let it go because it’s not worth it.

Throughout the course of this study, I had many occasions to gain insight into Jill’s early understandings of urban public schools and their origins. Jill said she imagined what an urban school would be like, but never really knew “the true definition” of an urban school. She had heard stories from her collegiate peers about other preservice teachers’ negative experiences in the early urban field placement. She also said that movies influenced her ideas about urban schools. In her first interview, she cited the movies Dangerous Minds and Coach Carter that influenced her thoughts about urban schools. She said, “Before going to our urban observation I just thought OK the school I go to is gonna be this ghetto – quote unquote ghetto – school and be all black kids.” She also said the media has influenced her beliefs about urban public schools. She imagined that hearing about “guns and stuff in the media…violence, and stuff like that, and drugs” has given not only her but also other preservice teachers pause to wonder about the safety of urban public schools.

Because Jill is in her third year of her preparatory program, she has become familiar with the various communities surrounding the university. Consequently, she also brought to the field placement specific notions of the Middleton School District. Her engagement with Middleton High was both her first urban field placement and her first high school placement. Prior to entering the field, Jill heard negative rumors and news reports about the school district. In her
first journal entry, she wrote that she expected Middleton to be more culturally diverse than her high school, and that she imagined the school would be larger in both size and class population. In her first interview, she shared some of what she heard and how it affected her thoughts about Middleton.

I heard before that it was, you know, there’s a lot of like different races - a lot of black and white. A *lot* of black people live in Middleton. I’ve been to Middleton a few times and I’ve seen it… I like heard…the high schools are bad and there’s a lot of fights and blah blah, so [I was] a little nervous at first because [I was] thinking, what if I see a fight?...[I imagine] violence, physical fighting. But I think more, like, when you hear about guns and stuff in the media, gangs and stuff like that.

Jill also shared that she remembered being quite apprehensive about entering the urban public school. She said, “I was scared. I’m not gonna say I was like Superwoman and I didn’t care. I was scared.” Regardless of her fears or apprehensions, she was excited to go into her early urban field placement. Because of the influences of her experiences both in high school and as a camp counselor, Jill sincerely wanted to work in an urban school before she even set foot in one. In her field journal, Jill wrote about why she hopes to work in an urban public school. She imagined it would be a challenge, but wrote “it is a challenge that I am willing to work for and just knowing that I have helped…students that are in need, is all I need to know that I have…succeeded.”

Perhaps because of her optimism and excitement, Jill’s field experience was a positive one. She got along very well with both her cooperating teacher and the students with whom she worked. Some of the words she used to describe her cooperating teacher include “awesome,” “nice,” and “cool.” Jill shared that she felt fortunate to have had such a great placement. She recalls often comparing her own high school experience with the environment she was observing. She saw many differences; Middleton students were generally not as motivated as her own high school peers, and only a small percentage of the students she observed seemed motivated to excel academically.
[A few] cared about their grades. The periods I was in, they could care less because the teacher said that most of them don’t go to college. They don’t have a very good like college rate, I guess. In my high school, it was good – yeah, they have this poster up in the guidance office and they say where everyone’s accepted. I think the majority of students in my high school go to college. Academics was big in my high school. They really cared about it. I mean there were slackers, but academics was a big deal.

Jill also observed that the Middleton students had neither the resources nor the parental support she remembers from high school. When talking to some of the teachers in the building, she was told the students come from low-income families and they “don’t come from good families and stuff like that.” Reflecting on the parental support she remembers in her own high school environment, she said “compared to my high school where like they may have come from better families and get pushed at home as well as at school.” She also saw similarities. In an interview, Jill said, “there was a drug bust but I wasn’t there that day and that happened at my high school so that didn’t affect me.” Later, she said “there were a few girls in Middleton that were the typical high school student - concerned with their peers, boys, stuff like that.” But overall, she said, “I loved going there. I really like every one of the students. Really!”

It was unclear to me exactly why Jill was so enthusiastic to work in an urban public school, and at times wondered if she was so adamant, perhaps, because of my role as her instructor. It appears that an intrinsic drive to help students has guided Jill’s professional evolution. She seems especially inclined to strive to help those that she perceives as the underdogs. This was evident when she was reflecting on why she wanted to work in an urban public school setting so much more than a non-urban setting. Jill said:

I would rather help - even if they don’t want the help – I would rather help kids like that or teenagers like that than work in a snobby rich school district. Which could be considered my own. I’d never want to go back to my own high school and work. Not that I hated it but just because I wanna do something else, or just broaden my own knowledge, but I feel like I’m helping so much more when I go to an urban setting, or when I worked [at the camp for at-risk girls] this summer. Even though the kids
didn’t want the help and they hated you, I felt like I did make an impact on their lives. And I know that I did on a few girls, because they said - you see it.

In addition, Jill often wrote in her field journal about how she helped various students. For example, she helped a student with “severe ADHD.” She said that her teacher referred to the student as “slow,” and Jill was proud of the fact that she helped him write a paper for English class.

*Progression*

Because she very much enjoyed helping the campers, Jill plans to again serve as a camp counselor at least one more summer before she graduates. She hopes to move out of Ohio after graduation, and possibly work someplace further west such as Las Vegas. She feels that when she graduates she will be at a time in her life when changes such as these would be best made. She said, “I really want to move away…I just wanna move away, be on my own because I don’t have any attachments besides my family and friends here, so I feel like I'm young, I wanna do this.” Jill has given a great deal of thought to how she will pursue the journey of her career, and is very motivated to explore her options. For example, when asked what kind of school she would like to work in, Jill replied:

I know people always say it’s hard, being in an urban school. It’s a hard thing, and everyone says teaching your first year is the hardest and if you get past that you’ll be fine. So I would like to start out in an urban just because if I do end up hating it at least I could say I tried it. Because I don’t want to regret –ten years down the road – saying ok I really want to do this but I'm in a place in my life right now where I can't move, I can't work here because of whatever circumstance. I want to be able to do it now and see if I like it or not.

Jill imagines that, as an English/language arts teacher in an urban school, she will face many challenges. She talked about the considerable amount of “slang” that she heard in the field, but also indicated that she felt that the students made a conscious decision to speak “proper English” when addressing their teacher or another adult. Jill attributes her ability to understand the
students’ speech to her experience as a camp counselor, where she was first exposed to African American Vernacular English (AAVE). In an interview, she recalled hearing AAVE from her campers:

It was a lot more slang just because [the campers] weren’t in a school setting. And half the time – they were like 12 years old – I would have to be like, what are you talking about? Like I have no idea what you’re saying!

In addition, Jill expressed concerns about the literacy levels of the students she observed. She said that she was very surprised at their inability to employ appropriate mechanics in their writing. In her first interview, she remembered having these thoughts when grading project papers for her cooperating teacher: “A lot of them could not make complete sentences or um complex sentences. They were either simple sentences or they were just fragments. And the punctuation and just basic grammar was just so below10th grade level.” Jill attributes the low literacy levels she observed mostly to the urban school system. In a conversation with her cooperating teacher, Jill learned that she found it difficult to accommodate the vast array of ability levels in her classroom. In an interview, Jill recalled that conversation

I think in urban school there are a lot of kids just thrown in. My [cooperating] teacher told me that she cannot teach the students with the learning disability and parent them because there’s gonna be conflict with the middle students that are fine …so she just has to do one concept and just hope that, for now, it’s enough for everyone. I think that’s hard.

Regardless of the challenges she perceives she will face, Jill is very motivated to become an urban public school teacher.

In addition to exploring all of her options as a teacher, Jill is also considering eventually becoming a guidance counselor. Because she often refers to her hope of “helping students” as an influencing factor in her decision to become a teacher, this possible career move seems natural. As mentioned earlier, she often cites both the basketball coach (who was also her guidance
counselor) and English teacher who influenced her career choices as caring people who took the
time to listen to the personal concerns of students, which was also how she described her
cooperating teacher at Middleton. Jill clearly hopes to become this kind of teacher. In her field
journal, she wrote about her perceptions of her cooperating teacher in this light:

In between classes, she talked to me a little bit about how she thinks that teachers
need to be very outgoing, humorous and attentive to each of her student’s lives. She
said it is especially important for a high school teacher to be interested in what
students had to say and to not get upset about things. And, always remember to laugh.
I think, even though I just met her for the first time, that [my cooperating teacher] is
the teacher that we are all striving to be, the teacher that is interested in students’
lives, wants to be there and do their job and truly loves teaching kids.

Jill is open to many possibilities as she continues her journey of becoming a teacher, and in the
time I have known her, her drive to be the best teacher that she can be has only grown stronger.
Jill is remarkably confident and assured that she has chosen the best field in which to pursue her
career. She is dedicated to helping students under any circumstances, and believes that is the
inherent duty of an educator, to help all students. She said:

I don’t think it matters what environment they’re in. and I feel like when preservice
teachers or teachers say well, it’s because they come from a bad home. That’s not an
excuse as to why they can’t learn… Well I think that’s just an excuse. And I think that
it might be our fault. We need to work harder then…. We’re in the profession to help
Teach kids and help them become better people not just like in school but in life.

Analysis

Upon examining the currere timeline⁴ that I constructed from her field journal and first
interview, Jill said it was “good” and did not have any additions or corrections to make. She said
that, looking over her timeline, she realized that as a high school student she believed her school
was diverse, but has since come to discover that it was not. In her second interview I asked if
there were events in her timeline that, at the time they occurred, she did not realize would affect
her experience as a developing educator. Jill answered:

⁴The full text of Jill’s currere timeline can be found in Appendix C.
I would say probably my high school, just being in high school. I thought it was kinda diverse but now I see it wasn’t really a diverse high school but, I think that’s good in a way because now I’m just seeing what there really is out there. But that kinda shaped me because there’s a lot more out in the world that I need to see than what I thought I already saw.

She said that her high school experience shaped the way that she has considered both teaching and urban public schools. In particular, she cited her experiences in her English classroom, which will be described later. She also believed that holistically examining her professional development thus far through the articulation of her *currere* was useful in her progress as a professional. She said doing a *currere* narrative is valuable because “sometimes people don’t look at how the past has shaped, you know, they just look to the future - the progressive. It’s good to mention, and make sure the stuff about your past is in there.”

To further facilitate Jill’s analysis of her professional development, I asked her about how she has reflected on it in the past. Prior to her participation in this study, Jill had participated in only two scaffolded reflective experiences that she could recall: a field journal in an earlier education class and the field journal in Principles of Teaching. Looking back, she felt that the first journaling experience was not a positive one. She recalled that the professor did not give scaffolded prompts, and instead simply required a journal to be completed for a grade in the course. Jill found it to be very different from the structured reflections in Principles of Teaching, and somewhat frustrating. She said she “didn’t really know what to write.” When Jill compared that journaling experiencing with the one in Principles of Teaching, she said that she appreciated the structured prompts for the Principles journal. “The questions were right there so you knew exactly what to look for…you’re not just going in there and writing about what the kids were doing. You actually had like a specific path to take.”
Jill also added that the scaffolded reflection of currere would have better served her had she started it earlier in her career. Looking back, she now believes that she did not conduct any sort of formal reflection prior to her participation in this study. She now sees the value in self-reflection, and even considers facilitating currere narratives in her future English/language arts classroom. Her engagement with the analysis step of currere seems to have been a valuable lesson for Jill; it appears that seeing her timeline was both an enjoyable and productive experience for her.

Synthesis

In Jill’s final journal, she wrote that she has “definitely achieved a deeper understanding of myself as a pre-professional, and almost done student!” throughout the course of this study. Though she did not specify how, she felt that she has developed her own perceptions of what theories and ideals she will embrace as an English/language arts classroom teacher. Teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding seemed to resonate with her the most. In her final journal, Jill wrote:

Teaching for a democratic living, in my opinion, is essential to the education of students, particularly high-school students. I think that if a student learns about themselves as a person, then the subject, they will quite possibly be able to connect it to their own life in some way. It is definitely possible to connect all three ways, but just on the level of connecting the subject matter in only one way is being successful.

She also wrote that she still plans to seek employment in an urban school setting, “especially” after her experience in Principles of Teaching. She said that she feels it is her calling to teach in an urban public school, and that she has the empathy and knowledge to work with students in an urban setting. She wrote:

I would rather teach students that are a little “rough around the edges” than students that have tons of money and “no problems” in their life. After working at the summer camp for underprivileged, inner city kids, I know I definitely want to teach in an
urban setting. Even though you deal with a different set of problems, I think it is a life lesson that I will carry with me forever.

Jill wrote that she believes English/language arts can be an enormous influence in students’ lives “whether they know it or not, and with the right tactics that I have learned in the [Principles of Teaching] class, it is possible to reach the students that need the most guidance and support.” She wrote that she continues to believe that teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is “essential” when developing curriculum for secondary English/language arts.

Jill’s Understanding of 3S understanding

Throughout the course of her journal and interviews, Jill demonstrated a relatively strong grasp of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. She gave several examples of her own experiences with subject, social, and self-learning. Again, it seems as if learning about teaching for 3S understanding was an enjoyable experience for her, and she plans to use her knowledge of 3S in the future. While she is not currently engaged in curricular or instructional planning in her methods course, she says she has a “good general understanding and [will] maybe apply it in my own way.” In the future, she plans to utilize the 3S framework in her planning because “it is good that [my students will look] at how they can apply the subject to themselves and how they can apply it to their surroundings, their environment, and society. I think that’s a benefit, because they’re making connections.” Jill believes she experienced the value of teaching for 3S understanding in her Principles of Teaching class.

When I asked her if she felt that the course curriculum was designed to facilitate her 3S understanding, she said “yeah, definitely.” She cited one particular activity, the instructional strategies project, as an example of that experience. In this assignment, small groups engaged the remainder of the class in a unique instructional strategy. As was true for all of the class assignments, they were also expected to demonstrate how 3S understanding could be fostered
within the strategy. For various reasons, preservice teachers were not always able to implement their own lesson plans in the field; this assignment was intended to allow them to experience planning and teaching for 3S understanding. Jill said that she found the instructional strategies assignment really helped her to understand teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. She recalled that, prior to that assignment, “it was hard for me to connect all three [social, subject, and self learning]. Like, I understood it or whatever, but I had to work harder so they could understand it and apply it to them so they would understand all three.”

Looking back, however, Jill does believe that she was not taught for 3S understanding in high school. She said that some of her teachers might have connected the subject matter learning to self-learning or societal learning, but never did they connect all three. “I think some teachers just used subject learning, or sometimes I think they just do the two way with society and not connect to the self which is harder because then you don’t understand the concept.” While Jill had never previously learned about teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding, she seems to have come to the Principles class with a strong sense of its importance. Jill’s thoughts may be rooted in the experiences she had with her most influential English/language arts teacher in high school. She often emphasizes that teacher’s interest in students’ personal thoughts and feelings, and that she was also willing to share her own. For example, Jill described how her teacher would lead class discussions about books that “had to deal with adolescent problems.” She said

[My teacher] was laid back and I think that was important and she also argued with students and a lot of kids didn’t like that because they hated when people argued with them – friends or teachers – they thought it was rude or whatever. But I thought that it was interesting because she didn’t just want to agree with what you were saying just because you were the student and you’re allowed to say whatever you want. She’d argue with you to the point that it was – not that she was yelling at you – but a heated discussion. Some of the times people would get so angry she would have to stop the discussion. I can't remember what it was about – like problems like abortion that we had to do speeches on. Sometimes teachers can take it too far, but she was just
expressing her opinion. With her, she seemed to balance it, but she pushed you to your limit.

I think this reflection not only demonstrates Jill’s innate inclination to teaching for 3S understanding (i.e. choosing books that connect to students’ lives, sharing opinions and connecting class material to societal issues such as abortion), but also her developing conceptions of equality in the classroom (i.e. her English/language arts teacher mitigating power structures through an equal sharing of different opinions, respecting student views, and maintaining a classroom environment of balanced respect). This early in her professional career, it is not surprising that Jill does not use the terminology that may be associated with her inclinations and conceptions. However, I can imagine that Jill will eventually arrive at a place in her journey of becoming an educator in which she will seek new ways to promote social justice in the classroom.

There were a few times over the course of this study when I observed Jill actively struggling with issues of racial equality, as well as understanding her own and others sensitivity to racial diversity. When reflecting on a black teacher in her high school, Jill talked about a “problem” he faced that she was dissatisfied with. She said, “There was this big rumor that he used to be a Black Panther and he has a tattoo on his arm that he had to like, cover up and stuff. Like the school makes him cover it up.” She said she “never had a problem” with people of different races, and mentioned several times her own interracial dating choices. She also recalled an argument between her and her sister Julie’s boyfriend at a family gathering. Julie’s boyfriend, who was studying to be a doctor, said that he had no intention of accommodating non-English speaking patients, and that they needed to learn English. When relaying this to me in an interview, Jill said, “I’ve learned so much about how you can’t be like that. Like closed-minded
and only think one way. How are you going to be a doctor? Especially…where there is so much diversity. You have to adapt! That’s not right.”

Jill has clearly developed a strong sense of social justice and has also observed what she views as inequalities between urban and non-urban public schools. She feels that students in Middleton do not have the same opportunities that other students in non-urban settings are afforded. When asked what they were missing, she replied, “A good school environment, like the building was run down. I think it could have been a lot better if they got some money to put it into the classrooms. When the classrooms are freezing, you can't learn like that.” She also sincerely believes that, regardless of their lack of opportunity, these students have the same abilities to learn and flourish as those who have more. To support this claim, as well as to inspire her at-risk campers to work to excel beyond their circumstances, Jill often shared the success-story of her best friend in high school.

Like my best friend has risen above [a lack of resources]. She goes to school on a full scholarship. I tell so many [of my campers] that. That my best friend was in your exact same position so just keep pushing yourself and you’re gonna go somewhere. Don’t give up just because of your surroundings. There is an out to what you may think is such a bad life. There is a way you can rise above.

Through expressions such as these found throughout the textual representations of her experience as a developing teacher, Jill has shared her profound desire to nurture and support people in her future career.

Mary

Regression

Mary said she grew up in middle to upper middle class “white suburbia.” She describes the people in her community and social circle as having “Leave it to Beaver” families. Growing up, Mary was an avid reader and close to her parents. Her mother is a nurse. Though I do not know
why, Mary did not indicate her father’s occupation; she only said he did not complete college.

Her uncle, with whom she also appears to be close, is a teacher in an urban public school near her home. He often told Mary and the rest of her family stories about the problems he experienced working there. In her first interview, she shared this memory of her uncle’s anecdotes:

He always shared…stories about the lack of respect the kids have and you know, he’s taught there for quite a while and has a heart for the kids, but at the same time he is always really discouraged by the way that they treat the teachers and educators in general, or anybody in a position of authority.

Mary attended public school until she was in the fourth grade, then was home schooled from fifth grade until the end of her high school career. In her early adolescence, Mary recalls being extremely shy and struggled with what she termed “social issues”. She described herself at that time as being “socially retarded,” and attributed the condition in part to her sheltered upbringing. In her first interview, Mary described the people with whom she socialized in this way:

[They were] unrealistic in their expectations of the world because they were unaware of what the world was like. Um many of these kids were from very conservative Christian homes where pretty much all they knew was what their parents taught them. When they graduated from high school they went on to very conservative Christian colleges where that whole thing was just reinforced, so they lived in a bubble their whole lives and then they continued that bubble into their adult lives. Like most of them, those of them who have gotten married, are married to people just like them and they just continue the cycle, you know? So that was something. I knew that I was in the bubble and I wanted to break out of that, which is why, you know I made a lot of effort to do stuff outside of those groups.

Mary said that her parents were different than the other parents, and encouraged her to pursue her own interests and “be aware of what was going on” in the world. She eventually grew out of her painful shyness, and attributes that fact to the experiences she had that were more diverse than those of her peers. She worked at McDonald’s, where she met people from outside of her “bubble” of home-schooled peers. She also did volunteer work and planned some social
engagements for a group of home-schooled teens, such as taking drama classes and attending an event at a local dinner theater. When she completed her home schooling, Mary felt that she had two career options: teaching or nursing. She believed these were her only options because both would satisfy her “passion for people.” After completing her high school requirements she went to a small, Christian college, but had no idea what career path she wished to pursue. She also worked at a summer camp that was sponsored by the college. Mary described the campers as teenagers who were “dealing with a whole bunch of different issues.” It was in this venue that Mary discovered her desire to work with young people.

After completing one year at the Christian college, Mary transferred to a local community college to pursue a career in education. Her parents were very supportive and positive about Mary’s decision, as was the guidance counselor she met at the community college. It was there that she found the desire to pursue her licensure in secondary English/language arts due to the influences of an energetic teacher who helped her to enjoy writing. In her first interview, Mary described that teacher as “very dynamic, very interactive with us, very challenging in, um, the way she presented the material.” After finding the desire to teach at the Christian college, and the passion for English/language arts at the community college, Mary again transferred to the four-year university and teacher preparatory program at which I met her. Mary said that her parents were supportive of her move: “They said, like, we could see you being good in this area because you enjoy working with people.”

Unfortunately, Mary found her education coursework to be less than rewarding, and did not feel she was being prepared to teach. In an interview, Mary described her dissatisfaction and frustration with her first education course this way:

We discussed just issues the whole semester. We talked about gay and lesbianism. We talked about home schooling. We talked about racism. All of these very
controversial issues were discussed, and I think we opened the book up maybe once. It just was not discussed in the classroom. I felt like, what are they preparing me for? Are they preparing me to be a lecturer on homosexuality or racism? Well, that’s not what I’m interested in. It’s not that I am unaware of them, or don’t understand what they are. I mean I think it’s good to have an understanding. Like, if you’re preparing me to be a teacher, I want to learn what am I supposed to go up there and say. You know. How am I supposed to like, pract – like really teach? How am I supposed to do this? I felt like maybe they should’ve started off with some of this instead of just kind of giving what I thought to be like bullshit lecture topics that anybody could’ve gone up there and discussed. It was basically just a discussion forum.

She did enjoy her first early field experience in another course, which took place in an urban elementary school. She said, “I think most of what we [preservice teachers] learn actually comes from our field experiences, which is good. You should learn by experience.” She said she enjoyed the teaching she observed and the students she met. Unfortunately, her experience was not as positive in the early urban field placement in Principles of Teaching.

Prior to entering the field, Mary had many ideas about what an urban high school would be like. She said she had “a few misgivings [because her] field placement school was…rumored to be one of the toughest neighborhoods.” Even though he worked in a different school district, she said some of her knowledge came from her uncle and the stories about his rough, disrespectful students. Mary said “being a white girl from a suburb, you’re kinda brought up in fear of what goes on in, like, the inner city. I was nervous… you know for my own safety, what the environment was going to be like there.” Mary attributes her apprehension in part to the fact that she had not experienced a lot of diversity growing up. In an interview, she explained it this way:

I had African American friends or people who were of other races, but they were always white, for lack of a better term. They were like me in every sense of the word except their skin was darker or a different color or whatever so I didn’t ever really experience African American culture in an urban setting. I think it was fear of the unknown.

She also said some of her thoughts about urban schools came from the movies and from the media. She observed that movies about urban schools present an exceedingly negative portrayal
of that milieu, and represent urban schools as “really violent and very, like, if you’re white you don’t go there.” She said she thought the same was true of the news reports she has seen about urban schools; they serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes. She said, “when there’s stories about an urban school it’s always about a shooting or someone getting mugged or some guy, something happens to him down there.” Mary’s thoughts about urban schools were wholly negative, not only about the students, but also the teachers. In the first entry of her field journal, she wrote, “my impression of intercity teachers is that they are drained, frustrated, and overworked and that the job itself is very difficult.”

Her second journal entry began with this sentence: “It’s worse than I thought.” Unfortunately, her cooperating teacher in her early urban field placement was in fact all of the things Mary imagined her to be. In her field journal, Mary wrote, “[my cooperating teacher] was very nice but my impression that she was at her wits end was a correct one and my conversations with her only strengthened my impression that urban teachers are drained and frustrated.” Mary sensed tensions between the teacher, who was employing relatively traditional methods of lecture and skill-and-drill worksheets, and the students, who were more interested in downloading music on the classroom computers and socializing with their classmates. In her conversations with students Mary learned that some of them adamantly dislike the teacher; talking to the cooperating teacher revealed that she was thoroughly discouraged. Mary often shared her disbelief about the events that she witnessed. For example, she recalled this incident at the beginning of a class:

The teacher kicked like five or six kids out of the classroom before the class even started. Like, she was like, “I can't teach this class anyway so I’m gonna get the worst of you guys out of here so I can teach the rest of you.”
When I asked her how the students reacted, she said with surprise, “They didn’t react at all. They
didn’t really care. I mean this was like a daily occurrence.”

On one such occasion, Mary decided to try to help the ejected students and took some
worksheets out into the hall. She remembered thinking, “well I’ll just see. Whatever I can get
done would be more than what they would get done anyhow.” Mary relayed the remainder of the
story to me with a mix of pride and disbelief. After she talked to the students for a while they
worked in pairs and, with her guidance, completed the work she had brought out for them. This
experience reinforced in Mary her belief that classroom management in urban public schools
makes it nearly impossible for teachers to do their jobs. In an interview, she estimated that “5 out
of 20 kids know what is going on” in the classroom at any given time. She said this is because
the teachers are constantly dealing with discipline problems while they are trying to teach.
“Much of [the instruction] gets lost. The kids come away with questions, not understanding what
is going on.”

Mary witnessed many power struggles and clashes between the teacher and students during
her field placement. Furthermore, the conflicts she witnessed were not limited to her observation
classroom. In one journal entry she described this scenario:

Students get kicked out…but then they just sit out in the hallway doing nothing until
another adult happens upon them and yells at them for being out in the hallway. Of
course the students get irate with both teachers and the situation usually ends with
much screaming and yelling from both the students and the teachers and the students
are sent to the principal’s office under threat of suspension. It is not a good situation,
and I wish I could say that I only witnessed one episode of this kind, but I have seen
several since I have been here.

Another incident that shocked Mary occurred outside the cafeteria after lunch between a vice
principal and some girls in the hall. Mary described that confrontation in her first interview:

I’ll never forget this. We were in the lunchroom, and the vice principal who was a
male – he was African American – he was monitoring as the kids were filing back
towards their classrooms and everything. These two girls were kinda standing off to the side a little bit, and the one girl was tying a ribbon in the other girl’s hair. He kinda, like, tried to usher them along, and immediately there was a reaction on the part of the students. I think initially they just kind of stood there silently and didn’t respond to him at all while he was talking. And he kinda came over there, um, and they started yelling at him that he couldn’t tell them what to do and blah blah blah. And then he laid a hand on one of the girl’s shoulders and it was just like firecrackers went off. She started screaming at him and saying “don’t you touch me! Don’t you lay a hand on me!” Um, just very very much a violent reaction to something that maybe I wouldn’t think twice about or, um, and so I was shocked as I’m watching this interaction - not only because she seemed to have no qualms about reacting this way to this guy, but just the very nature of the reaction. Um, so, he kinda took her off to the side and I didn’t overhear everything that was said, but she showed up in class later that day as though nothing was done about it, it seems. So [that] was definitely imprinted in my head.

It was these events and many others like them that made Mary very unhappy, uncomfortable and discouraged in her early urban field placement. Even the students themselves reinforced Mary’s negative impression of the school. She said, “[The students] would tell me themselves that the kids are bad. That’s what they told me! They said don’t come here and teach here. The kids are all bad.”

It may not have helped Mary’s experience that, due to a limited number of English/language arts teachers who agreed to act as cooperating teachers for this field placement, Mary’s field experience was actually in a math classroom. She did have the opportunity to observe one English/language arts classroom as she followed a student for a day during her shadow study, a required assignment for the Principles of Teaching course. Unfortunately, that was not a positive experience either. The teacher was using a movie as an instructional tool to demonstrate setting and theme. Although Mary thinks it was an appropriate strategy to use, she described the film itself as a “poorly done movie . . . [that] was consistent with what a lot of the kids watch today. Like a kid movie. She was trying to appeal to them.” Mary recounted that, to make matters
worse, the teacher had to turn off the movie many times due to the fact that students were talking and not paying attention.”

However, not all of Mary’s experiences were negative. She did have some positive encounters working in the hall with individual students who were kicked out of the classroom. She really seemed to enjoy helping them individually. At the end of her field placement, Mary said that she would definitely miss the students with whom she worked.

Mary traveled to Thailand over winter break as a volunteer to assist with the tsunami relief efforts of her church. The experience there profoundly impacted her professional journey. Upon her return to the States, she decided not to continue in her teacher preparatory program because she realized she did not want to become a teacher. In her final interview, after she shared this decision with me, I asked her where she was going to take her talents. She replied:

I want to take them somewhere where they can be used directly with kids. Like, my passion lies with wanting to make a direct impact on these kids’ lives. I didn’t think I could do that as a teacher, so I don’t know whether that will take me overseas, or it will take me on more of a short-term thing where I can go overseas and teach English.

Progression

Mary’s goals and plans have changed dramatically over the course of this study. Prior to her trip to Thailand she intended to become a teacher, but definitely not in an urban school. In her field journal and first interview, she imagined the greatest challenge teachers face in urban schools to be classroom management, and firmly believed that different disciplinary strategies are needed to improve teaching and learning in urban public schools. For this reason Mary said at that time that she did not want or feel prepared to work in an urban school setting. Finally, she added “I’m sure my family would strongly discourage me from ever teaching [in an urban public school] unless I found an overwhelming call on my life to do so. They would fear for my safety.”
In the first interview, I asked her about what she imagined teaching English/language arts in an urban public school might be like. While she was not placed in an English classroom during her field placement, she did have the opportunity to observe one English classroom, as well as teaching and learning in an urban public school setting. Mary indicated, as she had in the past, that she imagined classroom discipline to be the primary challenge. When I asked her about language in the classroom, she said that she had never really thought about it. In retrospect, she recalled hearing a lot of double negatives and incorrect English. She said, “it wasn’t as bad as some people might think it is… I never had any problems with it while I was there, and it wasn’t an issue.” Mary also added this observation: “it was interesting to me that the only teacher that I heard correcting them was black, though. She was the only one who was attempting to kind of make their language more correct.” I would like to emphasize, though, that language in the classroom was not a concern that Mary voiced independently. As is evident in many of the anecdotes she shared, Mary said that she primarily imagines the greatest challenge of teaching English/language arts in an urban public school would be classroom management.

**Synthesis**

Mary was less than enthusiastic about urban public schooling during the Principles of Teaching course, her early field placement, and the first portion of this study. For the second interview and final journal entry, though, Mary’s goals and plans changed dramatically. I must admit that, in retrospect, I am not overly surprised about the new path she chose. Prior to beginning the official interview, Mary told me of her plans, concerned that this new information would eliminate her from participation in the study. She said she truly enjoyed taking part in the study, and that some of our conversation in the first interview helped to solidify her decision to leave education as well as the university at large. I told her that she was absolutely invited to
remain in the study, and that her experience was in fact important. I then showed her the *currere* timeline I made for her, and she was excited and surprised to see what she had said and written. I told Mary that the authentic lived experience of her decision to leave teaching was unique, valuable and appreciated. In fact, I felt privileged that she chose to remain in the study even after choosing to leave the university.

We also harkened back to August, when Mary came to me in private and shared that she was unsure about going to the field, and perhaps hesitant about becoming a teacher at all. As I have done with so many other irresolute students I have encountered while teaching this course, I assured her that she would most likely discover her true feelings through the early urban field placement. The field experience, though, was not the only influence on Mary’s ultimate decision. After her experience working in Thailand, Mary realized that she did not want to be a teacher at all. She discovered that she wants to work “where people need people to directly interact” but is unsure of where that is. In her second interview, she shared this revealing recollection of her thoughts while volunteering abroad:

> In Thailand, I was able to visit orphanages and just like play with the kids, and just like love them and show them that somebody cares. Even if it was just for three days, you know? And so I desire to do more of that. You know, if it would be in an urban-type setting where I’m going in to a school and showing those kids that somebody’s really caring about them, you know, I don’t know how I would do that, but that would be something I would definitely be doing. Um, showing them that there’s people that are thinking of them outside of their community and who are enough to go in and want to help them out and desire that they learn, uh, wanna see if they can help them learn better.

I asked her what caused her to change her mind about becoming a teacher. She said it was not one occurrence, but instead a compilation of smaller events. She realized that, prior to entering the teacher preparatory program, she was unsure of what being a teacher really meant. In her second interview, she said

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5 The full text of Mary’s *currere* timeline can be found in Appendix C
I don’t know what I thought [teaching] was going to be, but whatever the expectation was, it didn’t fit with what I was seeing in my classrooms and learning. And when I was actually in the field placements, I further realized that maybe I had a romanticized idea of what teaching was, and the reality was different.

Mary said that looking over her currere timeline in the second interview was of great worth to her, and participating in the study and the reflective process of currere was also valuable.

Looking back has helped me to figure out what my strengths are, what my interests are, and where I don’t want to be. Um, and it’s through dwelling on the past that I figured out some kind of direction of where I want to go in the future. So, I definitely think that looking in a kind of removed type of way at your past actions or involvements in a good way to establish a future direction.

Because of her own positive experience with currere, and the belief that it helped her to make critical decisions on her professional journey, Mary suggested that the method of currere should be incorporated into teacher preparatory programs early on so that all preservice teachers are encouraged to critically examine the career path they have chosen and why they have chosen it.

She said:

[Preservice teachers] should be encouraged to look back upon their experiences, whether they had experiences that would lead them toward teaching or if this is something they just randomly chose. And then, you know, look ahead and see what maybe they want to do. And [currere] is all those things. So yeah, this is all good. But I definitely think it should be used early in the process. Not now. In the beginning.

Looking back over her development as a preservice teacher and recalling her experience in the program, she seems to regret that this kind of reflection was not facilitated sooner. Mary advised me to use currere with my own future students early in their preparatory program to help them better understand the choice they made to embark upon the journey of becoming an educator. She suggested that I not only “show them what it means to be a teacher, but have them compare that with why they think they want to be a teacher.” She went on to add that I may discover that the ideas preservice teachers have about being a teacher may be very different from what may be actually occurring in secondary classrooms. Mary said,
I think if you can help students understand that at the beginning, it will also help them to realize whether this was for them or whether this is not for them. That way, they will still have time to make a relatively easy change to another major if they so choose or move on more passionately in their desire to push ahead with the program.

Mary’s analysis of her currere timeline was insightful, and I was fascinated that she found it to be of such value to her as she considered her future plans and voiced her sentiment that she wished someone had facilitated that type of reflection for her earlier. It is also remarkable that her early urban field placement did not dissuade her from considering future employment in an urban setting in a capacity other than that of educator. In fact, Mary was a bit surprised to discover that she wholly enjoyed the urban setting and considers working in that milieu in the future. Mary was instead dissuaded from being a teacher. She said her resolution was not exclusively a result of her participation in the field experience; she said it was a culmination of experiences in her preparatory program, but that her time in the early urban field placement did influence her ultimate decision.

All in all, Mary has very much appreciated and enjoyed her participation in the method of currere thus far. My experience working with her has been profoundly valuable in furthering my understanding of the benefits of scaffolding reflection in preservice teacher preparatory programs. Unfortunately, Mary did not respond to my requests for a final journal entry. For that reason, I am unable to know if she is synthesizing what she has learned and engaging in the fourth step of her currere.

Mary’s Understanding of 3S Understanding

Her introduction to teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding shook the foundation of what Mary thought curriculum should be. Prior to entering the Principles of Teaching course, Mary said she had minimal exposure to curricular planning of any kind. Like
many other preservice teachers described in chapter two, Mary also thought that writing
curriculum and lesson plans was simply an endeavor of common sense. When I asked her what
she thought about teaching for 3S understanding, she answered:

I just remember…having to totally rethink like how I thought about [instructional
planning] because I always thought well, it was just something that needed to be
done, that it was just like this is our goal for today or this lesson. You’re gonna learn
how to read, or something like that. But I hadn’t thought about how it actually relates
to the person, or how it relates to where they’re at in society. So, for me, it was good
to kind of rethink that and reprocess how I thought about planning. I hadn’t done that
before.

She also stressed that perhaps she “unconsciously thought” that teaching for self-learning and
societal learning did not apply to high school students. Then, when using teaching for 3S
understanding while writing her course of study, she realized that they do apply, and in fact may
even help students to better understand the subject matter. She also specifically added that she
believes teaching for 3S understanding is most useful in an urban public school setting. Referring
again to her observation that she believed “only five out of twenty students knew what was going
on in the classroom at any give time,” Mary said that teaching for 3S understanding might help
more urban students to better understand the material. This belief stands in contrast to what she
actually observed in her field placement. She said she saw almost all subject-matter learning, and
teachers were “just pounding whatever was being taught in their heads.”

Reflecting on her own learning, Mary recalls that in her home schooling she often connected
what she was learning to her own life experience as well as societal conditions that she heard and
read about. She also remembered that she did not do this for subject matter she did not enjoy. For
example, she said, “I hated history, so I just skimmed it. I never took the time to apply it to what
was going on in my world or myself. A lot of it was just subject matter learning, probably most
of it.” She does see great value in teaching for 3S understanding in teacher education courses, but
has not seen it happen in her own classes other than in Principles of Teaching. She said employing the precepts of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in preparatory programs is very useful, and “can enable them to teach wonderfully! Um, that’s my personal opinion. Because I don’t think they’re being engrained with this sort of thing.”

Mary’s positive reaction to the notion of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding might be perceived as somewhat contradictory. First, it seems that she views the role of teacher to be that of caretaker, and believes that teachers need to know their students in order to be truly successful. To facilitate self-learning, a teacher must possess at least a cursory understanding of their students to guide them in the right direction. However, when she was taught for societal learning in her own teacher preparatory course, she rebelled against the connection. At the end of the second interview, I asked Mary if she had any other thoughts or reflections that she would like to share. This is a portion of what she said:

Other than [Principles of Teaching], all my other classes were just bullshit. They were just someplace to go, um, and talk about issues. That’s fine if you’re going to be a political analyst or something, but like, to be teachers, we needed more than that. With you we got it.

In a course in which it appears that the professor may have been attempting to make connections between the subject matter and societal or self-learning, Mary was wholly dissatisfied. She wanted the nuts-and-bolts of teaching, or a “how-to” guide, and feels that she got them in Principles. This response, while genuine, stands in contrast to both my intentions in the course as well as how she viewed the importance of making 3S connections in the secondary classroom.

In this manner, and in additional ways, Mary also seems to “Otherize” the urban public school population. What is good for her instructional experiences is not perceived to be necessarily good for theirs. In reflecting on her textual representations of her thoughts and feelings in this study, there were several times that I perceived Mary unconsciously viewed
urban public school students, or in some cases specifically black students in that milieu, as the Other. As was discussed in chapter two, a distinct polarization may occur between those unfamiliar with a culture - in this study the urban school culture - and the members of the culture itself; in the literature, this polarization is often called “Othering”. As Husserl wrote, only when a true understanding of the Other occurs will the Other no longer remain a separate and distinct entity. Instead, the individual can achieve a deep understanding of the Other, and not see the Other as so different from the self (Zahavi, 2003). Some examples of how Mary Otherized the urban school population she encountered in her field placement include:

- My main goal now…is to find a way to break the mold that society has formed for [urban students] and in many ways that they have accepted.

- Even though I had African American friends or people who were of other races…I didn’t ever really experience African American culture in an urban setting.

- [In a conversation, a student told Mary that she wanted to be a secretary after she graduated]. I was a little taken aback by that…I felt like, you know, there’s no goal there. But I also don’t have a great comprehension of where they come from.

- A lot of African Americans shoot themselves in the foot because um, to be smart to them is to act white, and that’s a very negative stereotype to them.

- (When asked where urban public school students fit into society) I think they’re where they are at right now in this urban setting. That’s where their place is. Not that I desire their place to be there. But it is. That’s where society sees them. In many ways I think that’s where they seem themselves.

- I think students can learn to be productive citizens outside of a poverty level environment.
I wholly believe Mary when she says that she wants to find a way to work with youth in one capacity or another, and do not contend here that she is consciously prejudiced or malicious toward urban youth. However, perhaps because of her exceptionally limited exposure to urban settings as a child, she views students in urban populations as very different from herself. While Mary is different from the urban school students in some ways, she does not seem to see the similarities that also may exist. Still, she does not rule out the possibility of working with urban youth. At the end of her second interview, she said she wants to go where there is a need for help. She said, “There’s need other places…and that’s where I want to go. I don’t know where that will be. Maybe it will take me back to the inner city schools. I don’t know.”

Kate

*Regressive*

Kate grew up in what she referred to as “suburbia” and described as a “predominantly white township” not far from the university campus where she is now in her third year of the secondary education program. Kate remembers that there were approximately 12 black students in her high school, which had a population that was close to two thousand. She is deeply committed to her family, her fiancé, and her future as a teacher, and she has a contagiously positive attitude. For example, her first journal entry concluded with these words:

> I am determined to have a positive outlook on [my field experience]. I will walk into that school as a professional. I will smile and do my best to make a good impression on the students and faculty. I will treat this like it is my first teaching job. In doing this I will be motivated to work myself to the fullest extent of my abilities.

It seems that Kate was quite sheltered growing up. She said her high school was run like a “tight ship,” and the administration was “over protective” of students. She perceived her community as very stable; the schools had “a lot of money” and offered a vast array of opportunities for
students. Her passion for drama gave her an appreciation for those course offerings. When I asked about her high school, Kate answered that, with the help of her drama teacher, she was able to “run” the theater program for two years. “What student gets that? I mean, it was a great experience for me!” Kate has many positive memories of her high school career, particularly of her tenth grade English teacher. She described him as creative, exciting, and “he taught you MLA without even knowing it!” She also added “He was always available after school, and he’d come early. As long as you weren’t interrupting a class he was in, he would talk with you and give you all the time in the world.”

After graduating from high school, Kate went to what she described as film school. Her dream was to be a movie director. However, many aspects of her life changed after her first year there. She recalls:

> My grandparents got sick, and I fell in love with my fiancé, and a lot of stuff went down at home so I moved back. I actually worked on a movie. It was really cool, and I was all set to do it, but I just had to give it up… I got really depressed after I have to give it up…

> After she returned home, Kate was unsure of what career path she wanted to pursue. For guidance, she called her drama teacher, who advised her to consider pursuing her licensure in secondary English/language arts education. Because she was very supportive and positive, Kate took her advice and immediately enrolled in the program in which I met her.

Kate says that she has enjoyed the secondary education program thus far. She had one early field placement in a rural middle school that she truly enjoyed. However, her understanding of urban public schools made her wary of her early urban field placement in Principles of Teaching. Kate was genuinely “scared” before field experience, and that fear came from rumors from parents, students and friends. In her first field journal, she wrote about what she was thinking before she went to Middleton High School:
I was always told that the kids there were mean and did not care about school. I have heard so many stories of gangs and fights. I really am a little nervous to find out if all these rumors are true. I really hope they are not. I have to have faith that the field office would try their hardest not to put its pre-service teachers in any danger, so that helps calm me down a bit.

Kate also remembers that she often heard bad things about Middleton High School on the news, and saw TV shows about violence or other problems in urban schools. Her fiancé expressed his concern for her safety, but was supportive. Her parents, on the other hand, did not want her to go to the urban field placement at all. Regardless of these negative influences, Kate still maintained a positive attitude about her field placement and said that she “kind of wanted to teach in an urban school.”

On her first day, Kate expected the school would be a “horrible chaotic mess.” In was not long, though, before Kate was pleasantly surprised to find that she enjoyed being in Miss Tyler’s classroom. Over the course of her placement, she had many conversations with Miss Tyler, often about the students in the school. Miss Tyler had graduated from Middleton High, so Kate seemed to believe she had a lot more insight into the students’ lives. However, Miss Tyler also served to reinforce the negative thoughts that Kate had about urban public school students before she entered them. She told Kate that her students regularly came unprepared to learn, are distracted in class, never do homework and are lazy, rowdy, and disrespectful. In her first interview, Kate recalled this conversation she had with Miss Tyler:

Most of [the students here] are on a bad track, [Miss Tyler] said. You know, they’re all going to fall through the cracks…they are in gangs, some of them skip; they get arrested. She asks kids who come to her class and try to skip “how many days were you in jail?” you know, “what was your sentence” or “when’s your court date?”

However, in an interview I asked Kate if she observed these characteristics in the students while she was there and she said she did not. She did not see fights and thought that most of the

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6 A pseudonym
students’ behavior was more typical than not. She described the only misbehavior she observed as

normal high school chatter. I’ve seen that in my school and other schools that I’ve been to. It was just that one day. So I didn’t think really anything of it. I’ve seen kids get in trouble for skipping, or coming in to class late, but nothing major.

Kate believed that Miss Tyler spoke to the students in that way because she was really concerned about their lives and their futures. Miss Tyler also told Kate that her classroom is not decorated because “it looks like a mess and her stuff would just get ripped down anyway.”

This was Miss Tyler’s second year of teaching, which greatly impacted Kate’s experience. As is the case in so many understaffed urban districts, Miss Tyler was certified in secondary English/language arts, but responsible for Arts Focus Communication, a class she told Kate that she was not certified to teach. In addition, Miss Tyler elaborated that she had no control over the curriculum because of the Ohio Graduation Test. In her field journal, Kate made this observation:

Because Miss Tyler is a second year teacher, she has a lot of pressure on her to teach the OGT well. She is forced to basically teach to the test. I asked her why she did this and she said that it wasn’t a good idea, but if the school lost funding because the students didn’t do well, she would be the first teacher to be replaced…She teaches right from the OGT manual provided by the school.

Kate also said that she “learned a lot about the bureaucracy of teaching” from Miss Tyler. For example, Kate was not permitted to choose the content of her lesson because she had to follow the OGT manual. She wrote her lesson plan, but her efforts proved to be in vain. Kate wrote in her journal, “[Miss Tyler] did not let me teach my own lesson; she never gave me a reason.” Instead, when the time came for Kate to teach, Miss Tyler took her lesson plan and gave her another one that Kate had never seen. Then, immediately after she began teaching the lesson plan that was given to her, Miss Tyler was called to the office and Kate was left alone with the class
and the company of a hall monitor. One young girl became rowdy and talkative as soon as Miss Tyler left the room, and Kate had to remove not only her but also her friend who was also misbehaving. Kate did not include anything in her journal about the hall monitor offering her assistance during the altercation. Once Kate successfully removed the girls from the classroom, the remainder of the lesson went well. Kate reflected in her journal about Miss Tyler’s reaction to the situation.

Miss Tyler was very upset with the class when she came back, but I talked to her about the problems. She seemed to understand after that. She said that the kids are very routine. Anything out of the normal upsets them. My teaching was what upset them especially because their regular teacher was not in the room.

Kate later said she was quite discouraged about that experience immediately after it happened, but after thinking about it further decided that it was a good learning experience, though she did not add why.

Kate had a lot of positive experiences, too. She enjoyed the fact that Miss Tyler allowed the students to listen to any music “regardless of its content” as long as the students were working quietly on their worksheets. Kate was also pleasantly shocked that students listened to her after she removed the two rowdy girls from the room when she was teaching the class. Once they were quiet, Kate had a wonderful and productive conversation with the class about the topic of the short story they were reading, The Bet. She also wrote that she worked with several students in the computer lab and helped them with writing, which she truly enjoyed. Hearing AAVE in the classroom also impressed Kate. She was learning about it in a linguistics class at the same time she was in the field, and she said “I thought it was kinda cool to hear it, and you know, learn about it at the same time!” She thought AAVE was “interesting” and was also positive about the prospect of someday teaching students who spoke AAVE. She shared her thoughts on this possibility in an interview:
Sometimes I think it would be a problem because there is Standard English and you have to follow Standard English to some point. Um, we were in the computer lab one day and I was helping the kids write an essay. And they write like they talk, so that’s a problem, because if they speak AAVE they’re not going to write it in Standard English. So you have to teach them what the standard is, and they have to know why. They think it’s one way and it’s another, so it’s a lot more explanation. But I don’t think it’s something that you couldn’t, like, get around.

Kate seems to be an incredibly positive person who has taken the best out of every experience she has shared with me.

_Protective_

From the time when she decided to pursue her degree in secondary English/language arts, Kate has had the desire to teach children who have difficulty learning. She also wants to teach theater in a school with a “permanent theater program,” and would much prefer to teach theater than English/language arts. In her final field journal entry, Kate wrote that she would “love to teach in an urban setting.” She said that she imagines that if she worked in an urban school, she would have to work harder to motivate the kids and to help them to pass the OGT. To accomplish this, Kate thinks that it would be best for her to visit the students’ parents in their homes, but did not elaborate on either how she would accomplish that task, considering the student load generally carried in secondary settings, or what she would do in those meetings. When I asked her if she would conduct home visits if she was working in a suburban district, she answered “Yeah, but I think it would be more urgent for me to do it in an urban school because the kids need you more there.”

Interestingly, Kate imagines that she should work in a suburban school for her first year because she believes it would be easier to “adjust to the profession.” Then, she imagines, after a few years in a suburban setting she might move to an urban school. In her second interview, Kate seemed far more concerned about imagining the future of urban public schools than her own
future. She repeatedly steered the conversation toward what should be done for urban public
schools. Kate seems deeply concerned about the inequalities the urban schools face, and she
wanted to discuss how to manage that imbalance. One of the problems Kate noted was that the
urban school students do not have the same variety of classes to choose from that she had in high
school. When I asked her why she thought that was, Kate immediately replied:

I think a lot of it’s funding. Um, I think another part of it is, um, teaching. Like
they’re having trouble finding teachers. Who wants to teach in an urban school, you
know? Most people are afraid it, from what I’ve seen.

I then asked her she imagines urban schools might attract more preservice teachers like her to
consider applying to jobs in urban schools. She said that preservice teachers probably are not
applying to jobs in urban settings because teachers in urban schools do not make as much
money. Finally, Kate also imagined that it might be because they are afraid. She said:

Most people have that prejudice that urban schools are bad. It’s like bored into your
head. If you don’t grow up in an urban area, you have this huge, like picture of what
it’s supposed to be and it may not necessarily be that way... [The prejudice] comes
from the environment. If you grow up in the suburbs, you’re conditioned by society to
think that [urban schools] are bad...It comes from your parents. It comes from your
friends. It comes from the teachers in your school. It comes from competition
between the school football teams. It’s just everywhere.

Kate is very cognizant of the fact that the students she observed did not have the resources
available to them that she had, and seems eager to find ways to improve urban public schools in
the future.

Analysis

Going to the third step of currere with Kate proved to be easier that the second step; she was
more reflective about her personal development as a professional. In her second interview, Kate

7 While this statement is not accurate for all urban school districts, I chose not to correct Kate during this
interview.
was very excited about her *currere* timeline\(^8\). After reading it, she exclaimed, “this is really cool!” Kate thought that looking at her *currere* timeline helped her to reflect upon her professional development. She said:

> This really puts it in to perspective, like this is what I’ve done and this is what I think I want to do. And then once you read through it, you’re like oh, wow! There’s no more mess!

She said there was not anything about the *currere* timeline I constructed for her that she would change. She also said that it made her realize what an impact her drama teacher had on her both personally and professionally. Kate did not realize her influence at the time because she really had no plans to enter the field of education. In retrospect, though, Kate remembers her drama teacher encouraging her to go into teaching, and she “just kept brushing her off. Then, when I was sitting down and thinking about what I wanted to do when I left film school, I was like let’s go be a teacher.”

Seeing her *currere* timeline caused Kate to reflect again on her first early field placement. Looking back, she realized

> In the first observation I was in a suburban area and it was a middle school and I learned about how to teach and how to teach lessons and how to reflect on how lessons worked, but I didn’t learn about how to interact with students. I didn’t learn how to interact and make things better for them. I just learned about making the lesson go smoother. I didn’t get as much out of it as I did from the urban setting. I think in an urban setting it kinda forces you to get that experience where you’re into everything all at once instead of just the teaching.

Remembering how she felt after completing her early urban field placement, Kate realized she was wrong before she went. “I heard a lot of rumors about [the] high school, and I thought it was going to be this really horrible, chaotic mess and I was really really scared. But once I got there, I realized that rumors are rumors.” Kate did not just allow her own considerations of urban public schools to change over the course of the field placement, but she also shared what she learned

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\(^8\) The full text of Kate’s *currere* timeline can be found in Appendix C
with others. As she described in an interview, Kate had occasion to visit some of her own high school teachers after she completed her field placement. The experience she had there sheds interesting light on the way Kate’s community views urban public schools, as well as the way her own thoughts and feelings about them changed throughout the field placement:

They asked me where I had been field placed and I told them…and they were like (takes in a big audible breath, as if in shock) “how horrible!” you know and I was like “no, it’s really not.” They were like taken aback because all of the rumors they heard were wrong.

Not only did she tell her high school teachers that she really enjoyed her early urban field experience, but also her parents and her fiancé. Kate said that her parents really changed their minds about the school, and even apologized for being so worried.

For other preservice teachers, Kate believes that they should begin their currere narratives much earlier than she did. She explained that she thought it was a good opportunity for preservice teachers to reflect upon what they have done through their professional development, and to determine if their experience was a good one. She added, “I think it’s a really nice tool for people that are having a hard time deciding what they want to do, or for, you know, people who don’t have everything sorted out in their minds.” Kate suggested that there should be an entire class about currere. At the very least, she firmly stressed that it should be incorporated into the Principles of Teaching curriculum. She added, “[Currere] seems like a really simple thing. It kinda makes me wonder why we haven’t done this before.”

Even though she found her currere reflection to be invaluable, it was a very novel experience for her. Prior to writing her field journal for Principles of Teaching, Kate cannot remember any other occasion she had to participate in scaffolded reflection. She did not even like to journal. When I asked her if she did any reflective journaling in her first field placement, she answered, “No. [The professor] just said go to the field.” She hesitantly admitted that at first she did not
enjoy writing the Principles of Teaching field journal either. As the experience progressed, though, she began to see more value in it. She said:

Once I was doing it, I sorted out all my thoughts and I put them on paper, I realized it was really good for me. When the experience happens in field, you go through it automatically and you think how could I have done that better. My initial reaction is usually what I go with, like when I first think about it again. But then, when I sat down to journal even just a couple hours later, I went through that experience again, I was like wow! I came up with a whole different solution than I did initially, and the second solution is better usually.

She also enjoyed the reflective conversations we had in the field meetings. She remembered, “our class had a lot of good and bad experiences that we all related to. It was easy for us to…think about other situations and what we may have done in them if we were in somebody else’s situation.” Even though she seemed to genuinely enjoy engaging in reflection, Kate did not complete her final journal entry. Unfortunately, then, I am unable to determine is Kate has moved to the fourth and final step of her currere journey to synthesize what she has learned.

Kate’s understanding of 3S understanding

Just as Kate said she found currere to be commonsensical, she remembers that when she first learned about teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in her Principles of Teaching class she thought “Oh yeah! Well, that makes sense.” After we talked about it in class, she said she could not imagine herself teaching in the future without taking in to account the teaching for 3S framework. “How are you gonna teach somebody if you’re not connecting it to them and the world they live in?” she asked rhetorically. She also added that all preservice teachers might not feel the way that she does about the 3S scaffolding, but believes that it is invaluable in the English/language arts classroom.

Kate recalls that most of her own high school teachers did not teach for 3S understanding. In fact, “most of them just stood there and lectured.” She said it was almost all subject matter
learning. However, Kate believes that her tenth grade English teacher gave her a framework for understanding teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. When I asked her why, she explained:

> We watched some really really graphic movies, like “Johnny Got His Gun,” a bunch of war movies with blood and guts. But he really connected it to, like instead of, you know here’s a bunch of blood and guts, he asked this represents what in society?…Like racial issues, instead of being like, OK, here’s a Civil Rights movie, he would ask what racial issues do we have today, in your world? What do you guys encounter every day? And there were a few kids in the class that were from like, the projects and stuff, and they were talking about all the stuff that they experiences every day. It really really was good for the kids like me who didn’t have that, who didn’t encounter those experiences.

Kate told me other ways that her teacher promoted self-selected reading material in the classroom and facilitated student learning at each individual’s pace. She also shared that when she was teaching her lesson in the field she found it very valuable to connect the reading to the students’ personal experiences. She said she spent twenty minutes trying to facilitate a discussion about a short story in the literature anthology entitled *The Bet*. Running out of ideas for a dwindling discussion, she asked the students to share what was “wrong in their world,” a question that directly connected to the theme of the story. “It really spawned the discussion!” Kate remembered. “The only way to get them to talk about the book was to ask them a question about them first, and then finding some way to roll it back in to *The Bet.*”

Kate also specifically indicated that teaching for 3S understanding is a necessity in an urban public school. She said teaching for 3S is important is all school settings, but added:

> Being in an urban school, you have to teach for 3S [understanding]. If you don’t connect it to them and you don’t connect it to the world they live in, they don’t learn. Like some of the kids I encountered. Most of them were really open with things they could relate to. If you asked them questions about stuff they didn’t think they needed to know, they just tuned you out.
I believe that Kate is going to be the kind of teacher who makes 3S connections for her students, and I imagine that she will be work diligently to facilitate a democratic classroom. Kate has faith in urban public school students, and is absolutely optimistic about their potential. In her final journal reflection, Kate wrote, “I am now proud to say coming out of it that I was wrong…the students are not bad, they are mostly just misunderstood.” This is one example of Kate’s personal growth over the course of this study that was evident in her field journal. She considered her prior understandings of urban public schools and, finding them tenuous, formed a new understanding. She reflected upon her own high school experience and the opportunities that were afforded her, and compared them to what she saw in the field. Within Kate’s new understanding of the urban public school is an acknowledgement of inequality, a firm belief that in a democracy it is hoped that all things are equal, and an indelible optimism that someday they will be.

Joe

Regressive

Now in his mid-thirties, Joe has taken a unique journey of becoming a preservice English/language arts teacher. He has a clear and passionate vision about where he wants that journey to take him; he wrote in his field journal, “I would love to work in an urban setting, in fact that was my goal from the minute I decided I wanted to be a teacher.” It is perhaps significant to reiterate the fact that Joe is a white person. In his field journal and his interviews, he often makes reference to his interracial marriage and the three daughters he has with his wife. Until the age of nineteen, Joe lived in small town that he described in an interview as a “very small, rural snotty little suburb” and an “extremely sheltering, non-diverse, elitist community” in
his field journal. Joe never felt accepted in his community. He said it was “all white. All white. I saw one black kid the whole twelve years I was in school, and he was just passing through.”

Joe lived with his father and younger brother, but never mentioned his mother at any time during this study. Unfortunately, I did not realize this omission until the interviews were completely transcribed. Joe said that his father and the rest of his extended family are “extremely racist.” He illustrated this by sharing some of his childhood memories in an interview:

[My dad]…always said…“I have nothing against black people, but I would never want one for a friend. I won’t have any black friends, and they won’t eat at my table.” That was his favorite saying. Um, he was just extremely racist from the time I was growing up…when I got into my teenage years I started listening to rap and started playing basketball. I used to be with a lot of different types of people – my cousins used to be like “why are you listenin’ to that nigger music?” They were very militant whites. You know “when the shit hits the fan, it’s us against them. Are you with us or are you with them?”

Joe remembers that he always felt like an outsider and was uncomfortable with his family’s opinions, and still feels that way now. “To this day I can't figure it out,” he said in an interview. “It’s always an uncomfortable situation with my family.” He never agreed with his family on issues regarding race, and had many positive memories of interacting with black people through basketball and music in his later high school years.

Joe was very unhappy with the experiences that he had in school, and did not receive any parental support or guidance from home about his education. In an interview, he shared this childhood memory:

My dad would work. He would go to work at like 5.30 in the morning, so it was me getting myself and my brother ready for school…So when I was 7 I was getting me and my brother ready for first or second grade. From that time I had to grow up real quickly…My dad wasn’t there when we had to go to school, so he was not there to say “OK you have to go to school. You have to get good grades.” He never said anything like that to us.
The only teacher that he recalled treating him with care was one in junior high school. Joe does not remember exactly what grade he was in when he had that teacher, but even though he does not remember how, he does have a vague recollection that the teacher always let the students know that he cared. Joe described him as a “normal person” and does not remember any other teachers like him. He attended a very small high school, and Joe wrote in his journal that every single person in the school was white. He described his impression of the teachers in his school district as uncaring and burnt-out. “They were just there to get their paycheck,” he said. Joe was a poor student and did not care about school. He maintained a 1.5 GPA and was absent for almost 100 days of his senior year of high school. Joe remembers toward the end of high school that his dad wanted him to drop out and “get a part-time job to help with the family and stuff.” Instead Joe continued to attend school, earned his diploma with his graduating class of 78 students, and immediately enlisted in the Army.

When I asked him in an interview if he thought he wanted to be a teacher when he left high school he immediately answered, “No. Definitely not! Not in a million years.” He did not have much of an idea about what he wanted to do in the Army or how long he planned to stay. In his journal, Joe wrote about one vivid memory of his early experience in the service. He said that the Army had the saying: “You are no longer black or white, you are green.” He recalls feeling “relieved” when he heard that. He reiterated his appreciation of the motto and further elaborated upon his memories of when he first enlisted:

In basic training right off the bat I got selected as one of the leaders. So, they put me in a leadership position right off the bat, and a lot of the drill sergeants took me under their wing and showed me how I was supposed to do things. That kind of lit that spark. I thought about career military.
He was selected to train new recruits and people he called “troubled soldiers.” He truly enjoyed the work that he did in the service. I got the impression it gave Joe a sense of purpose he may not have felt before. In an interview, he described his role as an Army instructor:

I used to teach classes, um, to new soldiers when they would come in. Most of the people I dealt with were troubled soldiers, people that were getting chaptered out for one reason or another, whether it was behavior or people that couldn’t pass their physical fitness test. I had a class just for them and I was basically their, their father for twelve hours a day. Um, so that was kinda cool to me.

While he was still teaching Joe had the honor of being selected for Special Forces recruitment, but immediately thereafter he tore his rotator cuff. He was on medical leave for nine months, and then required six additional months of rehabilitative care. During that time, his first daughter was born. As becoming a parent often does for many people, the event instantly changed Joe’s ideas about the future. In an interview, he remembered his reaction:

As soon as I had my daughter I thought, I don’t wanna [go in to the Special Forces]. Because my priorities changed to, uh, I didn’t want to go in the field for a month. As soon as she was born she was my whole life. I couldn’t leave her for any amount of time. We went on deployments [in the service] a lot, and I didn’t want to do that. That’s when I decided I was going to do my thing and get out.

Joe left the Army soon thereafter, and embarked upon various kinds of employment. Immediately after leaving the Army he began working for the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Washington DC. He recalls that it was very demanding work, and the most stressful job he had to that point in his life. For the most part, the inmates he worked with were mostly black. Unfortunately the competitiveness among the prison employees became more than Joe chose to deal with, so he accepted a position working in a warehouse. He enjoyed the comparative freedom of the warehouse after the rigors of the Army and working in the prison, but the work was extremely physical and exhausting. After his second hernia surgery, Joe decided to get out of that line of work and was hired by a small private investigation business. He said he “loved
it,” but it, too, was stressful and taxing work, and Joe burnt out quickly. He knew that he needed to make a change.

He considered becoming a mechanic or a journalist. Then one evening he and his wife had a life-changing discussion. In an interview, Joe shared his recollections of that memorable event:

Me and my wife sat down one night at the dinner table. I told her, I said I’m burnt out. I can't do this anymore. I need to find something. I knew busting my ass at a warehouse or something wasn’t going to do it. Not for long. So we started racking our brains trying to think of something that I wanted to do. And then I remembered when I used to teach in the Army and that was the coolest part of the Army for me, because I got to see that light. That little light – boing! You know, that little light that goes on in somebody’s head when they actually get something. And that was cool. It took me a while to realize that that’s what I wanted to do. But uh, the more – I was like yeah. I want to teach…I was terrified to go back to school and I kept putting it off. Like yeah, I’ll get to it next semester, then next semester, and I did this for maybe two years and finally I was like, alright, I’m gonna bite the bullet. And I did it. I’m glad I did.

When I asked Joe why he decided to pursue his licensure in secondary English/language arts, he replied that he initially began his program in social studies, but decided that his interest in history was “more like a hobby” than something he would like to teach. He then chose English/language arts because of his passion for reading and writing.

If there’s one thing I really actually love to do, it’s express myself and I’ve learned that I can do that in writing in ways that other people can't, and if I can share that with passion with kids and let them see that there are so many opportunities that the English language is gonna open up to them, then that’s what I wanna do.

Prior to entering the early urban field experience, Joe remembers that he was not worried or nervous. He was actually very excited to begin his fieldwork, and said that he could not understand why his peers were so apprehensive about going to an urban public school. He attributes his many life experiences to forming his understanding of urban schools. He wrote in his first field journal entry that, because he not only worked in the DC Metro area when he was with the Federal Bureau of Prisons but also lived there, he feels very accustomed to the urban
communities. “I am quite familiar with the urban environment, and I consider myself to be quite comfortable in that type of setting.” Joe also had very vivid expectations of the students he would encounter in the urban school. He wrote that he expected to see “tough, hard-edged” kids, and “the kid with a chip on his/her shoulder is what I’ll be up against.”

In his first interview, Joe talked about the media’s portrayal of urban schools, and how that may affect people’s perceptions. He believes that the media is part of the problem, but not just because they give people who are unfamiliar with urban settings a negative perception of those settings. He said “the inner-city schools [are portrayed] as the tough, hard-edged kids that nobody can reach, and the violence. The guns, the knives, everything.” He believes this also affects the student population in inner city schools. He said it was like they were “chasing their tails”; the media wanted to vilify urban settings and the students in those settings want to live up to the image the media portrays. Movies, Joe said, are not very different. He explained his thoughts in this way:

Like take Dangerous Minds. That, for the most part, is accurate as far as the location goes, and the appearance and everything. But I think people [who are not familiar with urban settings and watch the movie] misunderstand the fact that that’s not an everyday occurrence. Those days that they are showing in that movie cannot possibly be an everyday occurrence. So, whereas stuff like that might happen, I don’t think it’s, uh, an everyday occurrence. And that’s what I think a lot of movies and media is trying to portray is that it is an everyday occurrence.

Joe also added that rappers add fuel to this fire. “All their videos are either violence or nudity or women,” he said. While he added the caveat that he does necessarily think that the rappers are doing a bad thing, he does believe it is a negative image of a lifestyle that many urban school students attempt to emulate.

Before he was to begin, Joe drove to Middleton to make sure he could find the building. He lived relatively close to the school, but said his community was “what would be construed as a
rich neighborhood” and that his daughters go to an “immaculate, beautiful” school. On the other hand, Joe wrote that when he drove up to Middleton High, what he saw was “kind of disturbing.” He described his first impression of the school in an interview:

There were windows busted out. Trash was laying everywhere. The bushes, the grass was just overgrown. The bushes were just growing in to the building. Um, just cracks running down the side of the building. They had chain link fences that were just rusted and falling apart, which obviously has to be some kind of safety hazard, you know. I mean, can you say tetanus? Geez. Uh, anybody that’s ever dealt with a chain link fence knows it’s got jagged edges, and this is all rusted away. I mean it was just disgusting. Everything there was filthy. Um, it looked like nobody cared. It was like it was lost.

Apparently, the field placement office initially placed Joe with a teacher who did not desire to work with a preservice teacher. Unfortunately, this is not the first time a preservice teacher has shared having this experience with me. In the past, the preservice teachers have left the building and returned home to call me, or the field placement office, for help in solving the problem. Not Joe. He took matters in to his own hands, and although I am not sure how he accomplished it, secured two new cooperating teachers with whom he could work. While he handled the situation without complaint (I did not know about the problem until after their field placement had concluded), Joe wrote this insight in his final journal entry:

The actual experience I had was fine, however, the teacher that I was supposed to be with was very rude, and people like that should be weeded out before students, such as myself, step foot in the building...had I been stuck with this woman, my whole experience may have been ruined, potentially souring me on my dream of teaching in an urban school. I would like to not hold anyone responsible, but the “dinosaur” (her words, even though I agree) that I was supposed to be with is a disgrace to the teaching profession and this should have been foreseen by either the university or the high school. The worst thing you can do for a future teacher is to stick them with an old battle-axe who has lost her passion for students and for teaching altogether, if she ever had it to begin with.

Consequently, during the field Joe worked with two cooperating teachers who Joe found to be quiet different from one another. Joe remembers that he was “a little uncomfortable at first” in
the field, but quickly became relaxed. He described both of his cooperating teachers in detail throughout his field journal. He described his first cooperating teacher, Ms. Bass, as a white woman about his age who had prior experience teaching in a rural setting and is “motherly” toward her students. Joe wrote about how Ms. Bass described her experience when she first joined the faculty at Middleton. She said it was, “culture shock, because the value systems were some completely different than what she was used to. She said that the kids walked all over her in the beginning and she had to learn how to pick and choose her battles.” Joe also added that he believed that she is still learning. Ms. Bass also shared what she perceived to be the difference between teaching in an urban and a suburban setting. In his field journal, Joe wrote:

She said there are major differences to be expected in an urban setting, like obviously differing values and morals of the students, differing sense of time, and restriction of lesson plans. She told me that the major difference in the lesson plans because in urban settings there are far fewer parents involved which leads to a much more lenient interpretation of what is “acceptable” and what isn’t. She reiterated the fact that lesson plans she has taught in an urban environment wouldn’t even have made it past the front door of the other schools she has taught at, mainly because of, which I interpreted as, bureaucratic politically correctness.

Ms. Bass advised Joe to teach in an urban school, and told him it was a very rewarding experience.

Joe said she is almost always focused and straight to the point in her classroom, and there is “rarely any light hearted monkey-business.” Ms. Bass most often maintains control of the classroom, and the students do a lot of independent worksheets and seatwork. Joe said there were a few times, though, when the students were out of control and Joe said he had to repress his “dominant, alpha male, Army developed leadership personality.” He also said he had to restrain the urge to “wrangle her kids into submission” out of respect for Ms. Bass. Joe thought to do so would be “counter-productive” and he “didn’t want to step on the toes of this woman in any capacity, let alone in front of her students.”
Joe also observed Mr. Chase, a retired principal who returned to teach English/language arts when the district could not fill the position. He wrote in his field journal that he found the teachers he observed to be completely opposite of one another. Joe wrote that Mr. Chase was “an older grey haired white man with a bunch of past experiences in this urban school…a completely laid back guy with whom I could be comfortable with.” Joe describes Mr. Chase’s classroom management as very different from that of Ms. Bass. Even though he said Mr. Chase was “strict, hard nosed and kept the kids in line,” Joe wrote that he maintained control in his classroom through joking and playing around with the students. Mr. Chase was the “unquestionable leader” of his classroom, and would “force [his students] to think and respond.”

Joe enjoyed observing both teachers, and felt that he learned a lot about teaching English/language arts in an urban school. One example of what he learned from each teacher as Joe reported in his field journal is:

The kids read from their books out loud, but occasionally Mr. Chase would stop the reader and interject some words of wisdom and ask questions…he made sure he threw out no rhetorical questions and demanded an answer for every question he posed.

Ms. Bass was involved [with her students] by the way she was helping the kids get from one point to another in their computerized reading lesson. Without her help they would have meandered throughout the Internet world until they were wrangled back into the lesson by Ms. Bass, which happened anyway.

Joe did not write much, though, about English/language arts in his field journal. He was far more focused on how each teacher managed his or her classroom. Joe reported that his perceptions of teaching English/language arts in an urban public school did not change at all while he was in the field, nor did his thoughts or feelings about urban public schools themselves. He wrote:

Because of my previous experiences and lifestyle my perceptions of urban schools did not change at all [in the field placement]. I was pretty sure of what to expect and I made sure to not sugar coat things in my mind for my benefit. I know that these students are hard-edged kids who have lived a hard life, and have a hearty dislike for
anything with which they are not familiar, but I also reminded myself that they are still kids with pliable young minds. I expected to have fun, and I had fun.

Joe said the only real change in himself that he can imagine that resulted from his early urban field placement is that he now feels more strongly about wanting to work in an urban school.

*Progressive*

Joe is certain that, upon graduation from his preparatory program, he will seek an English/language arts position in an urban public school system. In his final journal entry, Joe wrote:

> I expected to be a teacher in an urban setting before my observation, and I feel even stronger about that choice now as well. The only thing that has changed in my mind is my desire to obtain my goal. This experience has just helped to refocus my mind, and reinforce what I already knew.

He is also confident that his family would support him in this decision. This is due in part to the fact that Joe has significantly distanced himself from any family members who “don’t care to open their minds and think liberally.” In an interview, I asked Joe what he thinks the greatest challenge will be teaching English/language arts in an urban public school. He answered, “That’s an easy one. You’ve got to teach the kids English.” Joe said it is important to have a deep understanding of what is important to the students, and believes that he does. Joe gave this example:

> You have to know where these kids have been. You have to know something about them. You have to know what makes them tick. A lot of behaviorists talk about the old reward factor as far as, uh, you know everybody likes behaviorists. You gotta know what’s a reward to these kids, because what’s a reward to one person might not be reward to another person. So, whereas you go into, say uh, a suburban school, and you have a bunch of, say 5th grade students. A reward to them might be a candy bar or something. But a reward to urban city kids might be completely different. Because, I mean it’s all how they grew up and the types of situations they’ve been placed in since they were young. So, if you try to develop some kinda lesson plan that’s rewarding for certain types of students, it may not be rewarding to other types of students.
He went on add that he believes that many of his peers in Principles of Teaching will not be successful teaching English/language arts in urban schools because they have “always aspired to what their parents have set up for them” and they are not prepared for the reality of urban public schools.

I also asked Joe if he thought language would be a factor. He replied that he thought it would be a great challenge to overcome. He said the difference in language was “along racial lines more than anything else.” He believes that he is very familiar with the language he expects to hear in urban public schools and does not anticipate significant difficulty. Again, Joe expressed his thoughts that that his peers would not meet with such success. He said, “There’s such a difference when it comes to language that if, if you have no idea about urban language and urban words, or just their ideas, then you’re gonna struggle with some of the things that they talk about.” He also cited the example of Ms. Bass, whom he perceived as having minimal experience with black culture and being relatively unsuccessful in understanding the language of her students.

One of Joe’s predominant goals is to help students who are challenged in various ways. In his field journal, he wrote:

Since my days of teaching in the Army I have had a love for taking the kid nobody wanted, the kid that was impossible to reach, under my wing and molding a student of life. Where others tend to see trash not worth saving, I see a Picasso, merely covered in dust.

He believes that he can accomplish this both in the classroom and on the sporting field. Joe aspires to be a coach when he secures a teaching position, and is optimistic that his past experience will help him in that realm. “I’ve coached many teams: soccer, I’ve coached baseball, I’ve coached softball, football. I’ve coached everything, and everything I’ve coached has been with older kids or adults,” he said in an interview.
Joe also feels that he is best equipped to help urban public school students because of his own experiences. His difficult past and dislike for school, he believes, will help him to better relate to his future students. He said,

Most of those kids [in urban public schools] are what I used to be. They hate school. They don’t wanna be there. I mean, not all of them obviously, but for the most part they are really shunned by their society, probably even their family, you know? Everything about that makes learning harder. To deal with a teacher that just doesn’t understand that, I think, is just so much harder. Now, I really wanna be that one teacher that gets it.

**Analysis**

Through the examination of his *currere* timeline⁹, Joe realized just how much his personal life has affected his professional journey. He was already cognizant of the fact that his children were a predominant influence on his career decision, and also that his parenting style changed when he realized that he wanted to become a teacher. In his second interview, he said:

I just started taking more of a teacher role with my kids as opposed to just a parent. I would look at things different because I think the most rewarding thing for me, whether it be in the Army or one of my kids, is that light bulb that goes off. My daughter doesn’t always get things on the first try. I mean she’s brilliant, but the challenge for me is to explain things a million different ways ‘til she goes “Oh! Ok. I get it!” That is worth its weight in gold for me. And working with my kids, that was just the last nail in the coffin. I know that was the final piece. I knew [teaching] was what I wanted to do.

Looking back on his childhood, Joe has also come to recognize that the racist behaviors he remembers from his family were not only focused at black people, as he thought they were then. In an interview, he said, “now that I look back it was just minorities in general, not just a black thing.” Joe also did not realize at the time how much his experience teaching in the Army would influence his professional journey in the future. He stated several times that his experience in the service is ultimately the foremost motivation for his enrollment in a teacher preparatory program.

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⁹ The full text of Joe’s *currere* timeline can be found in Appendix C.
In an interview, he said, “Even at that point [while I was teaching in the Army], I liked what I was doin’ there but it didn’t dawn on me that I wanted to, that I could even teach.”

Joe also looked back on the regressive and progressive steps of his currere with pride. The progress he has made, he said, is “not even fathomable to most people.” Joe felt that taking part in the process of currere would help him remember his long and winding journey of becoming a teacher, and also may give him the impetus to continue on that journey in the future. He also thinks that the process of currere would be valuable in this way for practicing teachers who are burnt out. He said he imagined that if teachers had a copy of their curreres with them, and could reflect upon them every day, it might bring back the passion for teaching some educators may have lost. He also believes that the process is common sense and that he “recognized it from somewhere,” but could not recall where. He asked when it was created, and when I told him he responded, “that makes me wonder why it wasn’t around before that!”

Joe also appreciated the reflection he did in his field journal. He said it was a “good tool,” but only if it was done according to the framework and not written at the last minute. In an interview, Joe said that he believes that journal writing can be very useful in assessing changes over time. He added,

You can actually say this day I had a revelation. It might be something really little, but it might feel really, you know, big. One thing I remember in my journal was watching the way one of my teachers just interacted with one of the students. It was nothing huge, but to me, just watching it, it was really special. It was like, OK, file that in my mind somewhere, and I’m gonna use that approach.

He also mentioned that he had previously written a journal in his university orientation class a few semesters prior to Principles of Teaching. He said he found the experience to be very enjoyable, and also likes that he can now go back and read that journal and realize the progress he has made in his professional journey since then.
Synthesis

In his final journal entry, Joe reiterated the fact that he believes that working on the method of currere has not at all helped him to achieve a deeper understanding of himself as a professional, but that it a good way for teachers to keep their professional goals in focus. He reiterated his earlier thought that it is easy for teachers to lose sight of their goals and become burnt out. He said that “by keeping [my goals] in sight it ensures that I continue on the course that I mapped out for myself when I decided to become a high school English teacher.” He also said that he is probably different from other preservice teachers in that he had a career prior to engaging in the preparatory program. He wrote that because of this difference, as well as his age, he “already possessed an understanding about what it takes to be a quality teacher who cares not only about the good students, but also about the ‘throw-away kids’.”

Joe continues to be dedicated to seeking an English/language arts position in an urban public school. He believes that his life experiences have afforded him a deeper understanding of the urban public school student that may not function well with the “cookie cutter rules that schools are forced to conform to.” Joe explained further by writing:

It is virtually impossible to operate a predominantly minority school with the "ideal" white cultural and social expectations. Cultures are too different to expect an urban school to function properly under white culture rules that have been imposed by a white male, who makes one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, sitting behind a desk that is hundreds of miles away.

Finally, Joe said that he will definitely continue to incorporate the precepts of Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. He said that “it will be great part of my professional life because it helps make up who I am as a person,” and because of that he is able to teach for 3S understanding without thinking about it. He wrote, “Teaching for democratic living is something that all teachers should be doing anyway. Unfortunately there is a vast
majority of teachers who don't agree.” He concluded by writing that he believes that teaching for 3S understanding may make other teachers uncomfortable.

*Joe’s understanding of 3S understanding*

Like his thoughts on *currere*, Joe believed that he had learned about teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding prior to when it was introduced in Principles of Teaching. He also said that teaching for 3S understanding was already deeply embedded in his belief system. In an interview, he explained:

> For me, it’s all common sense. The subject matter, the self and societal learning – it’s all what I’m made of. So whether you call it Henderson’s 3S or whatever you call it, it’s still gonna be me. I don’t think I had to adjust what I was thinking or what I was doing...it was no revelation to me.

Once again, Joe reiterated that other preservice teachers that he talked to had a very different experience from his own. He said that while 3S made perfect sense to him from the beginning, the people sitting beside him were “feverishly taking notes” when it was introduced in class.

When I asked him if he was taught for 3S understanding while he was in high school he said absolutely he was not. It was interesting, though, that he conveyed to me that he was taught for *societal* learning. When I asked him to elaborate on what he meant, he responded that he was taught to learn only what was acceptable in “the dominating society,” and to break away from that body of knowledge was “not accepted” or wrong. I pressed for further clarification, and he said “the suburban white people” were the dominant society and he was taught the “canon.” It was clear that Joe had very little, if any, understanding of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. He has interpreted societal learning as learning about society, and even further narrows his scope to only one aspect of the dominating society in white suburbia. Joe’s interpretation of 3S understanding would appear to be more strongly rooted in his own experience and arguably heightened sensitivities to race issues and the memories of his past.
Perhaps because of his interracial marriage, Joe is very focused on issues pertaining to prejudice and seems to frame much of his understanding through that lens. It may stand to reason that he viewed societal learning as a prejudicial act – as more of an initiation process of one group’s ideals. In Joe’s case, that was the group he perceived as “the dominating society suburban white people.”

In fact, Henderson (2001) conceived of educators fostering societal learning as examining “equity, diversity and civility issues” in the classroom. Learning only the works of white men does not in any way examine those issues. Henderson writes that “students must be challenged to confront basic cultural stereotypes” (2001, p. 13, emphasis added), not comply with or perpetuate them. Actually, it seems that Joe took away from his own experience a compliance with the cultural stereotype of the literary canon only consisting of the work of white men. While this is often the prevailing assumption, many in the field of English/language arts contend that there is no longer one “canon” of literature that is to be used in the classroom.

Nevertheless, I chose at that time to not correct his misunderstanding or clarify the meaning of teaching for 3S understanding, a decision I will discuss further in the next chapter. The particular problem of participants not understanding the basic precepts of teaching for 3S understanding was one I had not considered facing in this study. I fully expected that some preservice teachers would not like or agree with teaching for 3S understanding, but I imagined that our extensive work with the framework in the course would facilitate their understanding of the basic ideas of teaching for 3S understanding. To not correct Joe, or clarify for him the actual meaning of societal learning, was an immediate decision I made while conducting the interview.
Thoughtful and calm, Ann often would sit quietly during our interviews for long periods of time. I never understood exactly why she did this, but my experience with her leads me to believe that at those times she simply did not have an answer to share and was simply waiting for the next question. Because I did not ever want to make Ann feel as if she was under pressure in the interviews, at those times I tried to reword the question. Often, I would just move on if Ann did not say anything for a while. When I was transcribing the interviews, I forwarded through literally minutes of silence on the tape. Unlike other participants, Ann never asked me to explain a question. Even her field journal, though complete and well written, was considerably shorter than other participants’ journals. Regardless of my attempts to rephrase or clarify questions, and my probing for further elaboration on her answers, Ann was at times painfully reticent. She never gave me the impression that she did not wish to participate in the interviews, but she would also give very concise answers and then sit quietly, waiting for the next question. Consequently, I gathered considerably less textual data about Ann’s experiences than from any other participant in the study.

When Ann was a little girl, she would line up all of her stuffed animals on her bed and pretend that she was a teacher and they were her students. Her aunt, who taught in a local suburban school district, gave Ann old books and other materials to enhance Ann’s play. Ann said she wanted a career in which she would help others, and told me in an interview that she decided to become a teacher because she had “too much of a fear of like, needles, so that left out
nursing or being a doctor and all of that stuff.” Her parents were very encouraging and supportive, and always told her that she would be a good teacher because she knew how to study.

Ann spent all of elementary and most of her high school years in private Catholic schools. She describes herself as a student who worked hard and needed to study a great deal, while her brothers never studied. In our first interview she shared that “they could just go in and wing it and get straight As, and I’ll be there studying for a test for like four hours and I’m lucky if I come out with a B or a C.” She also added that her collegiate grades are much better than those she earned in secondary school.

Regardless of some of the academic challenges she faced, Ann genuinely enjoyed school. She particularly remembered Ms. Bird, the English teacher that she had for both tenth and eleventh grade. Ann said she was a very good teacher and she loved Ms. Bird’s class. Ann told me about a project she still remembers completing in her junior year for Ms. Bird during a poetry unit.

We had to pick out 15 poems and find something from what was popular growing up, whether it was a different book, a song, a movie, or experience, and we had to show how it relates to the poem and what the poem spoke of and what’s the affect that they have on you, or which was more powerful. I got really into that, and everybody in my class hated me because I was done like ahead of time and they were so mad [laughs].

Ann also talked about a “modernized Canterbury Tales” project she completed in the same class and that she still has to this day. Although she never explained why, Ann said that for the twelfth grade she attended her only year of public schooling. She did, however, talk about a senior experience project she completed there. For this project, she shadowed a fourth grade teacher and remembers that it was a great experience. “They threw a party for me on my last day; they didn’t want me to leave,” she told me in an interview.

Before entering her urban field placement, Ann had vivid ideas about urban public schools. Those notions came from friends, other preservice secondary English/language arts in her
preparatory program who had already completed their early urban field placements, and her family. In her first interview, Ann said “everyone kept telling me how it’s so bad. How…there’s going to be a lot of gangs, and a lot more violence than you’re used to.” She said her parents and grandparents, who also attended only Catholic schools, were the greatest influence on her perceptions of urban public schools. Consequently, Ann said, no one she knew had any experience with urban public schools, but she learned a little about urban schools from movies (the titles of which she could not recall). She also remembers hearing a lot about urban public schools in the news, and that she always seemed to emphasize the negative, such as “there was another killing at this urban school, or there was another um, fight here, or there was a gang rape there.” She believes that the media never says anything positive about urban schools.

In her first journal entry, Ann wrote:

I think there will be a lot more diversity in students and teachers. I picture it being a rough school, one in which some students are there who don’t want to be and gaining their attention will be more difficult. I also think that some of the students may be outspoken and just say what’s on their mind without thinking about it first…Since I have never been in an urban setting before I can’t say whether or not I would like to teach there, I feel that after this experience I will have a better understanding of it and a better idea.

Her parents were worried about Ann going to her field placement. She shared in an interview that they gave her this advice before she went to the field: “As long as you protect yourself, you know, keep your purse in your car, you know, you should be fine, and if you don’t feel comfortable you call your professor.” However, she said, they supported her excitement about her new experience and only wanted her to be safe. The final sentence in Ann’s first journal entry was indicative of her overall positive feelings just before going to her placement. She wrote, “As I gain new experience and I share these experiences with my family and friends they start to change their viewpoints and the stereotypes they have about others.”
Ann was excited before she went in to the field, but also nervous. In an interview she described her thoughts on the first day she visited Middleton. She said, “I wasn’t really sure what to expect. I was just like, well, here it is. I was nervous going in there, like I was shaking and stuff. After I talked to my cooperating teacher I was fine.” Unfortunately, because the university’s field placement office experiences considerable challenges when placing preservice teachers in field placements, Ann did not get a field placement in her English/language arts content area; she was with a twelfth grade physics and anatomy teacher. Regardless, Ann said she loved being in the classroom. The only concern that she wrote about in her field journal was, “I don’t feel as confident being in a physics and anatomy class as I would in an English class. The reason for this is because science is not my forte and I am not as helpful as I could be.” It seems that her cooperating teacher was warm and supportive, and happy to have Ann in her classroom regardless of her content area. Ann wrote that her cooperating teacher asked her to teach a lesson on creative writing in her anatomy class. Because she observed senior level classes, I asked in an interview if she thought that the students accurately represented the student body at large. She answered that she did not believe they did, but more so “because they were electives, [the students] weren’t forced to take the courses. It was more if you’re interested in it, this is gonna help your future.”

After she completed her urban field placement, Ann said her perceptions about urban public schools had changed to an extent. She was surprised to have found many similarities between Middleton and her own high school. In her last journal entry she reflected on her expectations and realized that there was not as much racial diversity as she had expected. She also wrote in her field journal that the most prevalent difference between Middleton and her own high school was that “one was private and the other was public.” In an interview she said she did not see
problems of any kind in her field placement classroom that did not occur in her own school. She imagines that this could be attributed to the strong relationships between the students and teachers, as well as the student body’s desire to be seen as equal to other, non-urban schools.

**Progressive**

Ann’s ideas about her future are very specific and clear. In her final journal entry, Ann wrote:

> I would love to work in an urban school setting. I feel like there is a lot more out there that I did not see when I was in high school. Through my teaching I can affect more students’ lives and have a bigger impact.

She told me in an interview that she would like to work in North Carolina or somewhere down south because she would prefer to leave Ohio. Ann believes that, regardless of where she will live and work, she will always remain an English/language arts teacher. “There is nothing else that I really am motivated to do, or that I wanna do,” she said. She hopes to get a position in which she can teach British or American literature. She added that her other goals are to connect her students’ learning in English/language arts with other subjects they are learning in school, or with their personal lives and experiences. She also aspires to stay connected to her students, even after they graduate.

I asked her what differences she would experience teaching in an urban school as opposed to a non-urban school. She told me that while she was in the field, Ann heard students conversing about some community and school members attempting to ban the book *The Catcher in the Rye* from English classrooms. Therefore, Ann reasoned, the only way teaching in an urban setting would be different from a non-urban setting is “if certain schools ban a book you won’t be able to teach it.” She did not expect to encounter any other differences. Seeing this as unrealistic, and in the hope of prompting her to think about it further, I asked if she could imagine there being any difference in discipline. Ann simply replied: “I would just try and treat them all the same no
matter what school I was in. Um, just have, this is my policy on discipline, this is it, you know. We’re gonna follow that for either school type of setting.”

Regrettably, to this time Ann has never been afforded the opportunity to observe English/language arts teachers in an urban public school. However, based on her experience she imagines that teaching English/language arts in an urban public school would be different from teaching in a non-urban setting in the selection of books that are taught. In an interview, she shared what she imagined teaching English/language arts in an urban school would be like. She said,

I think you would have to pick books that somehow link to all of the students, and it probably wouldn’t be just one book because they’re so different. Um, and I think you have to rethink ways to teach. You don’t want to use any offensive language. You don’t want to speak down to them; you wanna be at their level.

(My requests for her to explain this reasoning were only met with silence.) She did not observe any language differences that would be difficult to manage, and reported that they did not use “many swear words.”

Analysis

After reading her currere timeline, Ann said that it was both accurate and complete. When I asked her if there was anything she would like to add, Ann said that there was one thing she wished to add to her progressive step after looking over her currere timeline. She said, “Ms. Bird passed away a couple years ago, and this just made me think how she still lives on in my memory, and like how things that she taught me I can use one day in my class.” She added that she did not realize how significant Ms. Bird was in her decision to pursue her licensure in secondary English/language arts. In my own reflection upon what Ann shared about her

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10 The full text of Ann’s currere timeline can be found in Appendix C.
experiences, I also found it interesting that she specifically aspires to teach either British or American literature, the two courses that she had with Ms. Bird.

Ann said that she thought looking at her currere was good because it helped her to remember the past, and that the method should be used more frequently in teacher preparatory programs. In her second interview, Ann explained why she imagines that incorporating the development of currere narratives in preparatory programs might be beneficial:

If [preservice teachers] look back and think back on the things that they’ve done, and what has shaped them, and um given them like a greater understanding or greater knowledge of their content area, maybe something that helped them along the way can help a struggling student or push another student who’s not struggling but maybe is ahead of the group. Like maybe what you’re doing is kinda keeping them behind because they’re bored and unmotivated.

Ann places great value in the reflective aspects of currere and was very excited and positive about the process. Ann was also enthusiastic about the field journal she completed in Principles of Teaching. When I asked her what she thought about that reflective assignment, she said that she liked it a great deal. She added that she enjoys looking back on the reflective journal she completed for her senior project when she shadowed the fourth grade teacher.

Reading back over [the journal I wrote during my senior project] I can still picture the kids that said this or picture their mannerisms, um, just a reminder that there are people out that who you have made contact with. Even if you don’t keep in touch with them to this day but they’re still out there. You still had some type of an impact, you know, like a two-minute “hi” could’ve made a difference in their day.

She also liked the structure of the Principles field journal. She found that the journal prompts helped her to “touch base” with different ideas in the field, but it was also important that she could write whatever she wanted to in her journal. Ann said sometimes preservice teachers may need to get something “off of their chest” while they are in the field and should be allowed to do that in their field journals. I asked her if she felt she could do that in the Principles field journal,
and she said that she did. She imagines that she may re-read her field journal some day, especially if she were to enter an urban setting again.

**Synthesis**

Ann believes that, through the experience of participating in this study and reflecting upon her *currere*, she has achieved a deeper understanding of herself as a professional. She wrote that she wants to experience teaching in an urban school and will “disregard all the rumors and stereotypes I hear about my students.” She said that her participation in the early urban field placement “destroyed the stereotypes that [she had] seen on television and in movies.” She hopes to be personally available to her students and make them aware that they may go to her with problems, and she will either help them herself or point them in the direction of someone who can. She also plans to push students to reach their potential as much as possible.

Ann is very committed to becoming a reflective practitioner and teaching her students for 3S understanding. In her final journal, she even included an example of how she imagines using Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in her future classroom. She wrote:

> *To Kill a Mockingbird* deals with inequality and race. We still see the inequality among groups of people living in this society and it has become even more noticeable since hurricane Katrina. If students don’t understand how the topic they are learning about them affects their lives then it will be irrelevant.

She plans to ask for student feedback after completing instructional units, and ask if her students have any suggestions for improving it. Ann stressed the importance of maintaining a realistic perspective, and acknowledged that every lesson will not be perfect and every day will not be easy.

As the teacher there are some things we don’t know and we need to let our students know that we don’t know the answer but will try and find the answer for them. If I
pretend that I know the answer when I don’t then I will be losing their trust. Trust is an important thing to have in the classroom along with respect.

She believes that regularly reflecting upon her practice will help her through the rough times she may face as in English/language arts teacher.

*Ann’s understanding of 3S understanding*

Ann grew to enjoy connecting subject, societal and self-learning while she was writing lesson plans for Principles of Teaching. At first, though, she remembers thinking it was impractical. In an interview, she said:

> I had a lot of teachers growing up who only taught about their subject not connected to anything. They were more concerned about knowing the subject, passing the test, getting in to college, um, some focused a little part on how it affects society like in history and science classes, the self was just kind of out there, floating around.

That made a great deal of sense to Ann, and it took her a little while to envision value in teaching for democratic living for 3S understanding. After listening to class discussions, she began to make connections between teaching for 3S understanding and the way she remembers Ms. Bird teaching English/language arts. She realized that Ms. Bird made her want to connect her students’ learning to their personal experiences. She also began to recognize that the reason the poetry assignment described earlier was so important to her today was that it made 3S connections. In retrospect, Ann realized that Ms. Bird was teaching for 3S understanding. At the time, though, she did not realize that to be the case.

> I just thought she was taking a different spin on teaching and she wanted the students to get excited about what they were learning because she was excited about what she was teaching.

Ann said she recognized some teaching for 3S understanding in her field placement. In an interview, she described a project the students were doing in a class she observed.

> [The anatomy students] had an ongoing project for their science fair. They each picked a topic that interested them or one that they wanted to learn more about. And
they have to go through and find people who um, how they could do some type of an experiment or presentation on their chosen topic. Like one girl did hers on people being afraid of going to the dentist and if it comes from parents or if it’s just something from when they were little.

Ann said that she incorporated teaching for societal self-learning in the creative writing lesson plan she wrote and taught in the field, but regardless of my probing never elaborated on how she developed those connections. She also believes that teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding was a “very valuable aspect” of Principles of Teaching, and that it should be more widely incorporated in to teacher preparatory programs. She said,

I think it gives you a different way of looking at things, a different mind frame for setting up lesson plans and doing activities in the class. Um, something different from what they might have experienced in school, um, making it more exciting and more engaging.

Ann seems to have experienced some personal growth over the course of this study. This is evident not only in her field journal, but also in her interviews. In her first field journal, she wrote that she had never been in an urban setting, was apprehensive about going to the field, and did not know if she would ever consider applying for a position in an urban public school. She imagined urban school students to be difficult, violent and very different from those with whom she attended high school. By her last journal, Ann wrote that she would love to teach in an urban public school. At the end of her interview, she shared these reflections:

I just think you have to keep an open mind about everything and ignore the labels that past faculty has given students…I think all [urban public school students] are capable of learning, it’s just a matter of is the teacher capable of taking the time to help them learn. To help them get through it.
“Currere is a reflexive cycle in which thought bends back upon itself and thus recovers its volition” (Grumet in Pinar, 2004, p. 35)

Regression: “slow down, to remember even re-enter the past” (Pinar, 2004, p. 4)

My first high school teaching position was in an urban public school. I did not apply to or accept that particular position because it was located in an urban school, nor did I only apply to positions in urban districts. It was entirely by chance that I entered this profession through an urban public school. Although it is some years ago, I do not remember being afraid of what I would encounter there. I was simply excited, proud to have a job, and ready to do my best. I felt grateful to have landed a job in a fabulous southern city by the ocean.

My first teaching position certainly had its ups and downs, but compared to other positions I have since held in suburban and rural districts, it was unquestionably my most satisfying high school position. Perhaps this was because of the helpful colleagues I was fortunate enough to have, or because of the incredible support my district provided for classroom materials to enhance my students’ learning and funding for my own professional development. The more time goes on, though, I realize it was my students that I loved the very most. They were indeed at-risk youth; frequently troubled and in trouble, my students had been both failed in and failed by the public educational system.

Perhaps that is why they were so receptive to my diligent and sincere, albeit not always successful, attempts to meet their individual educational needs. I have never been inclined to shy away from challenge, especially when I am in a position of responsibility for others. In this case, my responsibility was to teach my students, and I sincerely loved the challenge of seeking ways to make English/language arts come alive for them. I remember that I enjoyed working with
other students too, in the suburban and rural schools in which I subsequently taught, but it was an unmistakably different kind of work. As the literature shows, urban students often face challenging circumstances unique to their environment. They faced an inequality that I never knew. The school felt as if it had been forgotten. Perhaps because of this, I felt a heightened sense of responsibility. I cared about the students in my first school not because they were urban students, but because they were my students.

Another significant milestone that lead to this study occurred during my master’s coursework. In a course taught by James Henderson, I was first exposed to teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. By this time in my career I had taught in two different states and urban, suburban and rural districts, and had an even greater awareness of the vast inequalities that exist in U.S. public schools. By the time I got to that class I was angry, frustrated and teetering on the edge of an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. Then, in the course text, I read these words:

> Educators are not always well positioned to remedy deeply embedded, and often covert, policies and practices that work against select groups of people. The socio-cultural behaviors and structures of racism, sexism, and other forms of social bias extend far beyond the boundaries of any particular educational setting. But educators are not completely helpless when confronting patterns of prejudice. They can make sure that their own settings are relatively bias free…They can promote multicultural education and foster social learning that stresses informed, participatory democratic citizenship (Henderson and Hawthorne, 2000, p. 51).

In those words I found not only hope, but an entirely new way of looking at my professional life. In that text I was also introduced to the 3S scaffolding that has framed my practice ever since. I am not saying this was an epiphany. It took several more courses and a good deal of time for me to grasp the complexities and nuances of teaching for 3S understanding and employ them in my curricular decision making. Frankly, it still turns around in my mind and surprises me sometimes. Unbeknownst to be, though, learning about that approach to curriculum decision
making ultimately changed the trajectory of my professional life. I found possibilities in the classroom that I never before imagined.

I carried Henderson’s framework with me into the next phase of my career when I became an instructor for Principles of Teaching, the course around which this study was built. However, 3S understanding took a back seat for awhile as I tried to wrap my mind around the complexities of the early urban field placement. Because I never felt afraid to go into urban schools or omitted them from my job search, it was genuinely puzzling to me that so many preservice teachers expressed apprehension about entering their early urban field placement. I will never forget when, before they went to the field, the professor who was overseeing my teaching asked me if my phone number was unlisted. (It was not.) She went on to warn me that in her experience the preservice teachers “freak out” right before they go into the field and, panicking, call at all hours of the night.

Much to my relief, this did not occur. However, it was unquestionable that many of my preservice teachers were reluctant or afraid to participate in the early urban field placement. I could fully understand that some of them would be apprehensive. I remember being nervous about going into field placements as a preservice teacher. It was the significant percentage of preservice teachers who expressed such deep concern about engaging with an urban public school that shocked me. I wondered why they did not want to go into urban settings, and where they had collected so many negative ideas about urban public schools. My curiosity led me to conduct the mixed methods study described earlier. That experience would become the foundation for this work, although I did not know it at that time.

It was a small study, but as I summarized in chapter one I discovered that many of the preservice teachers shared several characteristics. What resonated with me was the fact that the
majority of the participants were raised in non-urban schools and wanted to return to those (often exact) non-urban schools both for field work in their preparatory program and in their eventual teaching positions. In addition, the results suggested that after their early urban field placement some of them *did* think about working in urban settings, and many said that the urban milieu was not at all what they has previously assumed it to be. However, that early study did not begin to touch upon how I might better prepare my preservice teachers for their field placements and scaffold their understanding of urban public schools.

Looking back, I think that was when my research first began to take shape. I began reading teacher education literature only to find out that, by and large, my preservice teachers were not unique. The demographic across the United States had historically been and presently continues to be young white women who have been raised in suburban environments. Furthermore, I learned that urban public schools are desperate for qualified applicants to fill their understaffed classrooms. What I did not see in the literature and desperately wanted to know was *why*? Why did so many preservice teachers experience these feelings before entering the field? Why do so many of them perceive urban public schools to be bad places? Why do they not even consider working in urban public schools, even though there are so many positions waiting to be filled? This dissertation was born from those quiet questions in my mind and coupled with my aspiration to discover methods to most effectively prepare my preservice teachers to navigate their early urban field placement. For me, the most logical place to start was with the framework that made such a difference in my own practice: Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. With the help and support of my colleagues, I built 3S understanding in to the curriculum of the course in the hopes that it would guide my preservice teachers as they negotiated their field placements. To concentrate and focus my efforts, I opted to work
specifically with preservice teachers seeking licensure in English/language arts, my own content area.

To work with English/language arts preservice teachers was an easy decision compared to that of deciding upon my methodology. It took me a long time and many changes before I chose hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990). The reflective components of this method fit cleanly with my curricular commitment to teaching for 3S understanding, which also focuses upon learning about oneself. The method of *currere* is also a scaffolding for reflective practice. In the literature, I read findings about preservice teachers’ beliefs taken from coded or conflated surveys, interviews, or journal data. While those studies were valuable, I wanted to listen to one participant at a time and illuminate their unique thoughts and feelings as they negotiate new horizons on their journey of becoming a teacher. Hermeneutic phenomenology afforded me that opportunity.

This was an incredibly challenging endeavor, and looking back I wonder if I was fully prepared to attempt such a study at such an early stage in my professional journey. I believe that it would have been far more manageable for me to incorporate fewer participants and allow for more time. With fewer participants, I would have been able to do more extensive interviewing and observation. It would have proved valuable, I am sure, to watch the preservice teachers in their field placements while they observed teaching and learning, taught a class, and interacted with students. Looking back, it now seems entirely unrealistic to have attempted to fully elucidate the *currere* narratives of five preservice teachers having only known them for a short while. While the participants did share some ideas that they felt changed over the course of their engagement with Principles of Teaching and the study, it is unrealistic to presume that their core belief systems were in any way altered. To truly engage in democratic learning requires extended
experiences in environments that foster democratic living, and to reflect upon the multifaceted aspects of that extended experience.

To further complicate matters, hermeneutic phenomenology is, as van Manen elusively defines it, “the method without a method” (1990). Through the guidance of my committee, I realized I needed a stronger framework than hermeneutic phenomenology could offer. Because of my long-standing interest in the method of currere and my experience with Pinar’s work, I used an adapted form of the method to provide scaffolding for my participants’ experiences in my course and the field placement. The use of currere in this study afforded not only a structure through which to organize the findings, but unexpectedly provided a great deal of insight into how the participants considered reflection. Also unanticipated was the fact that several participants enthusiastically suggested that I facilitate the development of other preservice teachers’ curreres in my future teaching. Many times I have said that my students have taught me well. In this case, my student-participants gave me a great deal of insight into reflective practice in teacher preparatory programs, both the importance of reflective practice as well as how reflection might be challenging or frustrating.

I wanted to not only examine preservice teachers’ thoughts and feeling about urban public schools but also the instructional methods that might serve to better scaffold their understanding of those schools. Therefore, I focused part of my attention on my own curricular decision to incorporate Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. Through my conversations with the participants, I found a prevailing sense of value for teaching for 3S understanding. Not one participant had negative comments about scaffolding for subject, social and self-learning. Perhaps, because I was their course instructor, they were excessively
positive. However, because these discussions took place after the course had concluded and I was no longer their instructor, I hope that was less likely the case.

As the study progressed, I was encouraged by the fact that several participants felt comfortable enough to voice their opinions about other elements of the preparatory program at large\textsuperscript{11}. Their candid remarks gave me hope that they were comfortable sharing honestly with me, and not simply telling me what they imagined I would like to hear. It was exciting and validating that they had such positive reflections on teaching for 3S understanding and see the value of it in their future practice. However, as I mentioned in chapter four, I was caught off guard by the fact that one participant, Joe, absolutely did not actually understand teaching for 3S understanding. The interpretation I heard in his interview stood in contrast to the understanding he presented in his coursework. Joe earned high marks on his course of study and unit plan. These marks would not have been achieved without demonstrating what I believed to be an understanding of 3S understanding. As I explained earlier, I decided in the midst of his second interview to not correct his misunderstanding. Looking back, I have come to realize that my preservice teachers’ capacity to produce curricular and instructional materials that attend to students’ subject, social and self-learning does not necessarily mean that they understanding the 3S framework.

Each participant came away from the course with their own interpretation of Henderson’s framework, albeit not disciplined understanding. Their understandings of teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding were tenuous and immature. This is not to say that they were not working to achieve that understanding, but instead to propose that the concept is probably too

\textsuperscript{11} In my findings, I chose to include some of their thoughts about reflective practices in which they have participated, predominantly in other courses in the program, but ultimately omitted much of this feedback. The purpose of this study was not to assess any instructor’s teaching but my own, nor was it to appraise the participants’ thoughts and feelings about the preparatory program at large.
complex for preservice teachers, not yet having been in their own classrooms, to grasp in just one semester. Also, the fact that the framework was isolated to one course in their program was disadvantageous. Teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is a philosophical framework that would better serve preservice teachers if it were embedded throughout a preparatory program. The participants’ positive reflections indicate to me that there might well be a place for Henderson’s work in preparatory classrooms, a notion which I will further elaborate in chapter five. Every time that I have reread the textual data, I have been truly exhilarated by their excitement about teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding.

Before I began, it did not occur to me that my participants might choose to leave the profession during the course of this study. When Mary said that she was going to drop out of the teacher preparatory program and the university at large, I had to make an immediate decision on whether to retain her as a participant in the study. The fact that she had been home-schooled was very intriguing to me, and possibly influenced my choice to have her continue to participate. More importantly, though, I remember thinking at that moment that it was important to listen to why she opted to leave the program altogether. Over the course of the study, her experiences caused Mary to alter her career path. While her early urban field placement was not a stellar experience, it was but one in a series of events that caused her to change her mind about her career path. In fact, Mary still considers working in an urban setting in a different capacity, such as social worker, to be a viable option in her future.

Amazingly contrary to the literature, not one of the preservice teacher participants in my study entered the field declaring they would not consider teaching in an urban school. Instead, they entered either enthusiastic about teaching in an urban public school, like Jill and Joe, or hesitant and hopeful about the experience, like Ann, Mary and Kate. Not one of them emerged
from the placement with a dramatically changed understanding of urban public schools. Jill, Joe, Kate and Ann would all consider teaching in an urban public school; Joe adamantly contends that it is the only place that he would accept a position. There is a significant portion of the preservice English/language arts teacher population that chooses not to consider teaching in urban schools. The literature clearly points to a deficit of preservice teachers seeking employment in that milieu. I am fascinated, then, that all of my participants proved to be unique in this way.

A disappointing aspect of this study that I also did not anticipate was the complications concerning the final steps of their curreres. Only three of the participants returned the final journal entry, and those that did gave reflections that were strikingly similar to those from the personal interviews. I believe this occurred because only three months passed between the second personal interview and the final journal entry. Pinar writes, “Outer events provoke inner transformations one cannot easily perceive, certainly not initially. Only in retrospect does the movement, texture, and structure of experience become evident” (2004, p. 131). My hope was that I could perceive a glimpse of the changes that may occur on their journeys of becoming educators. However, the participants’ final journal entries proved otherwise, and made me all the more appreciative of the transformations I was fortunate enough to see in earlier phases of the study.

Another significant lesson that I have learned is that interviewing is a skill that must be honed over time. Prior to engaging in this work, I had formally interviewed only one subject (a middle school boy) twice while conducting a short study during my doctoral coursework. In that work I learned the importance of preparedness and how to keep the interview from being completely derailed. I also discovered that having a greater quantity of data does not necessarily mean that
your data is of greater quality. While that early experience was invaluable, it did not adequately prepare me to embark upon this study. However, I suppose this study served to prepare me for future research. In retrospect, I think I was hesitant to interject questions or ask for clarification during interviews because I imagined that doing so might threaten the authenticity of the participant’s voice. Also, some significant details, such as the age of some of the participants or the whereabouts of Joe’s mother, were inadvertently omitted. There were many times that I wished I could go back and clarify my data with the participants, but I did not afford myself that option in my IRB.

In retrospect I see that through my work with these preservice teachers I have learned a great deal more than I ever imagined, not only about my subjects but also about conducting qualitative research. I have achieved a deeper understanding of both currere and teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. As I have so often experienced, my students in essence became my teachers. Through their questions of my explanations, I reached new depths of understanding. I saw my line of inquiry through their eyes, and the fruits of my own classroom efforts, for better or for worse, in their work and their words.

Progression: “Meditatively imagine the future” (Pinar, 2004, p. 4)

First and foremost, when I begin studies in the future I will allow myself lots more time and contact with the participants. I hope to follow preservice teachers as they navigate an entire preparatory program, not just one course. In interviews, I will work more diligently to probe my participants to elaborate on their answers, and be more apt to solicit clarifications that might better inform the study. I also will not limit myself to a specific number of interviews, but instead leave my contact with the participants more open-ended. I wonder if it would be of
benefit to incorporate observations of their work in the field; I intend to include that method of data collection in later studies.

Second, this study has left me with a question that will certainly influence my classroom practice for years to come: How did all of these preservice teachers receive high grades in Principles if, only a few months later, they do not appear to possess a solid understanding of the core precepts of the course? While I do not believe that I will be able to answer that question in the immediate future, it is necessary for me to reexamine my course assessments and strive to be more cognizant of my students’ understanding of the material. Currently, the most significant assessments in place are designed to evoke a demonstration of their level of understanding of Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding by incorporating its precepts into their own curricular and pedagogical planning. In the future I will create assignments in which the preservice teachers will more explicitly demonstrate their understanding of 3S understanding.

Finally, this experience addressed my once apprehensive professional goal of being a contributor to the field of curriculum studies. As I touched upon in chapter two, there exists an ongoing conversation about curriculum planning. Posner (1998) writes “How does one plan a curriculum? For many students of curriculum, the answer to this question constitutes a major goal of their studies” (p. 79). Over the years many scholars, such as Tyler and Walker, have created models for curriculum planning. A significant goal for me, and a facet of this study, is to find a curriculum decision-making strategy that best suits my preservice teachers. This study was will serve as a viable foundation to achieving that goal. I am sure that, through conducting this type of research in the future, I will be able to contribute to the conversation in the field of curriculum studies as both a teacher educator and a researcher. Pinar writes that this second step
of currere is about looking towards what is not yet the case (2004). I am not yet the professional I hope to be, but through this work I have come to believe that one day I will.

Analysis: Examine “both the past and the present” (Pinar, 2004, p. 36).

Writing the first two steps of my currere took place over several weeks, and this method is intended to be a life-long endeavor. However, I believe it was beneficial that, due to personal circumstances, I wrote portions of my regressive or progressive steps when I could find a few hours to spare and then did not have the opportunity to get back to them for days at a time. This at least stretched out the process a bit. Each time I returned, I read my work from the beginning and added and subtracted things along the way. Reading my reflections on the experience of this study and my hopes for the future, I can now see how tightly they are woven together. Perhaps, as was the case with my study participants, not enough time has passed for me to see a wide space between them. But, Pinar writes that currere is “an intensified engagement with daily life” (2004, p. 37), and I think I have achieved that because when I analyze the first two steps of my currere with that in mind, I do see a clearer meaning to my present.

Essentially, it seems that I have been working on different angles of the same task for my entire professional life: I want to bring light and learning to secondary urban public schools. As a high school teacher, I felt that so many of my students were waiting for something to happen. I tried to mold my curriculum to bring excitement and possibility to their learning. I also experienced frustrations and sadness from the harsh inequality that I found there but had never before known, and felt helpless against the bigger, societal forces that put it there. When I was introduced to teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding, I began to find a way to work not against the bigger problems, but toward what I believed was just and good for the students in my classroom.
Through the analysis of the regressive and progressive steps of my currere I can clearly see, for the very first time, how that aspect of my past ties in with my future goals. I want to find ways to encourage the promising young preservice teachers I work with to take their light to urban public schools. Realistically, not all of my preservice teachers will want to work in that setting, but I want them to at least consider the possibility. Furthermore, I want to find a way to pass on one of the most valuable lessons I have learned in my professional life: teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding.

My professional journey has taught me that injustices exist not only in urban schools, but in suburban and rural schools as well. Students everywhere struggle with their own issues of inequality and prejudice, not only from socioeconomic or racial differences, but also physical limitations, sexual orientation, religion, and countless other facets of humanness that make us different from one another. I believe that democratic ideals should have a space in every classroom, and teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is one way to open that space. Therefore, as much as I want my work to encourage some of my preservice teachers to seek employment in urban schools, I also hope that they all find value in fostering democratic classrooms.

Synthesis: “consciousness of one’s breathing, indeed, of one’s embodied otherness, one asks ‘who is that?’” (Pinar, 2004, p. 37).

This is the step of re-entering one’s professional journey, and I am re-entering very near to where I will embark on a whole new part of my professional life. I have emerged from the comforting chrysalis of my doctoral program, but I am still clinging to it, pumping my wings, preparing to fly. I have learned a great deal from engaging in the creation of this currere narrative, and in retrospect gained a far greater understanding of my dissertation than I had
before I began this section. It was so much more complex than a study. I can see now how it was
a culmination of the twists and turns of my own professional journey thus far.

There are those researchers who may not invest a great deal of value in Pinar’s
autobiographical method. Before I began this study I was aware of this complication, but never
had a response to it until now. Through the method of *currere*, I have searched deep into the
recesses of my educative experiences and the memories of scholarly readings and pulled out the
most significant pieces. I have reexamined and reconstructed those pieces with new connections
and created a new body of knowledge. Through finding new questions, I have learned which
direction I should go from this re-entry point of my journey. Socrates said that the “unexamined
life is not worth living”. To not engage in this type of reflection is to blindly stumble through
professional life. Through deliberation and careful judgment, we light the way to where we hope
to be.

*Post script*

As I look over my *currere* one more time before declaring it complete (for the time being, of
course) I find myself thinking “Edit it! It is not scholarly writing!” It is not supposed to be scholarly
writing, though. It is supposed to be a “complicated conversation” with myself (Pinar, 2004, p. 37).
And so, it is. What is unfortunate, though, is that my participants’ *currere* narratives are not this
complicated. They do not have the depth that comes with the ability to reflect back over the years of
a journey to gather the memories that fill in empty spaces. My final “progressive” thought, then, is
that the next time I embark upon a study like this one, I will invest considerably more time in
explaining the method to my participants and clarifying what each step of *currere* is designed to do.
Then, I will step back and give them the time and space to get complicated.
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

One distinct purpose of this study was to inform teacher educators of preservice English/language arts teachers’ reflections about urban public schools, and how an early urban field placement may or may not affect their understandings of those schools. My findings were, in some ways, consistent with the literature. Perhaps this was in part due to the fact that my participants conformed to the prevailing demographics of teacher preparatory programs across the country, as described in chapter two. On the other hand, my participants were unique in that they were not as apprehensive to enter the urban field as the literature suggests (e.g. Brown, 2002; Foster, 2004; Ingersol and Smith, 2003; Proctor, Rentz and Jackson, 2001). This study is unique in its methodological approach, and has implications both in the field of teacher preparation and educational research.

Through the examination of the participants’ reflections upon urban schools, as well as their experience as they negotiated an early urban field placement, this study has brought to light several implications for those involved in various facets of teacher education. This chapter first elucidates the implications offered to teacher educators as they construct and implement secondary early field experiences in both urban and non-urban settings and how public school stakeholders might participate in that work. Such collaborative efforts could be advantageous for both the preparatory program and the field placement schools. In addition, because the participants were exclusively preservice secondary English/language arts teachers, these findings present some specific suggestions for teacher educators working in that content area.
Second, this study presents implications for secondary teacher preparatory programs at large. In the ongoing conversation about curriculum planning, this study suggests that Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding may serve as a viable and effective model for curriculum planning in teacher education. And although it did not directly engage classroom teachers, this study has also generated findings that may contribute to the decision-making that guides the programming of ongoing professional development for secondary practitioners. There are further and unexpected implications that will be elucidated here that suggest Pinar’s (1976) method of *currere* may serve as a valuable instrument in many areas of teacher education.

Third, this study presents several implications for future research. The methodology utilized here is unique in that it employs Pinar’s (1976) method of *currere* in a study with multiple participants. As explained in chapter three, Pinar’s *currere* has been slightly modified for the purposes of this work, and those modifications will be described and explained. Some of the conclusions drawn in this study shed light on how the method might be useful in teacher preparatory programming. I will conclude this chapter with the implications this study presents for my own future research, as well as the work of others in the field.

**Implications for Teacher Educators**

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have conveyed some of my own experiences preparing preservice teachers in all four core content areas to enter an early urban field placement. Even though there are many teacher educators who have also had this experience, the literature addressing the construction and implementation of early field placements in any venue is scarce. Perhaps this is because, as cited in chapter two, the early field experience is a relatively new aspect of teacher education. Engaging in conversations with the participants in this study about
their pre-understanding of urban schools as well as their experience in the early urban field placement has brought to light several implications for effective ways to create and scaffold early field placements in both urban and non-urban settings.

The participants’ thoughts elucidated in this study may give teacher educators some insight into how preservice teachers, often unfamiliar with urban settings, consider urban public schools. One significant aspect of these findings is that, as I addressed in the regressive step of my currere narrative, not one participant was opposed to entering the urban school even though their general understanding of those schools was that they were predominantly unpleasant places. For example, the participants often said they imagined urban schools to have more incidents of violence or student drug usage than other settings. Neither of these are conditions one hopes to find in a school setting, yet this did not dissuade the participants from having a positive attitude when the opportunity to experience an urban school was presented.

By scaffolding the preservice teachers’ reflections on their own understanding through journaling or class discussion, they are not only engaged in self-learning, but also are made conscious of the lens through which they will be first experiencing the field. Addressing notions that are factually inaccurate, such as Kate’s idea that teachers are always paid less in urban than in non-urban settings, prior to entering the field may serve to reduce their anxiety or facilitate a more realistic experience, as well as provide a focus for reflection during and after the field experience. For example, to help mitigate Kate’s inaccurate pre-understanding, I would have suggested that she talk to her cooperating teacher, or other teachers in the building, about how salaries compare from district to district.

To further prepare preservice teachers to enter an urban field placement, particularly those who are unfamiliar with urban settings, it may be beneficial to not only address their own ideas,
but also to acknowledge and deconstruct the media’s portrayal of urban schools. Every participant in this study cited news reports, television shows, and/or movies as one source of their pre-understanding of urban schools. By inviting these significant societal influences into the classroom and examining them more closely, preservice teachers may be more apt to separate the realities of urban public schools from the often negative or romanticized representations of that milieu. To further compare fact and fiction, they might gather information about urban public schools from professional journals or trade books and draw their own conclusions about what is or is not accurate in various representations.

Regardless of whether the field placement is in an urban or non-urban setting, there are several implications of this study that speak to teacher educators facilitating any early field experience. Most importantly, communication with the cooperating teacher before, during and after the field placement is of utmost importance. In this study, one of the greatest influences on each participant’s field experience was the cooperating teacher with whom they were placed. The findings here suggest several reasons that teacher educators need to establish communication with cooperating teachers before the preservice teachers enter the field. First, it is important to confirm that preservice teachers are placed in classrooms of their own content area. In this study, both Ann and Mary were in science classes, not English/language arts. Consequently, both had significantly limited exposure to teaching their content area subject matter, and neither gained insight into teaching English/language arts in an urban classroom.

Prior to the preservice teachers entering the field it is also important to ensure that the cooperating teachers are both comfortable with their responsibility and interested in scaffolding a positive field experience for the preservice teacher. Often an administrator or secretary makes placement arrangements, and the teacher has no knowledge of their role until the preservice
teacher arrives. Joe was not the first of my preservice teachers to say that the person with whom he was initially placed did not wish to be a cooperating teacher. Walking into a classroom only to discover they are not wanted or expected is an unfortunate first impression of the field experience for some preservice teachers. It is also less than advantageous to have preservice teachers finding their own placements, and might give the school the impression that the preparatory program is either disorganized or disrespectful of the confusion such a circumstance may cause.

In addition, the participants’ experiences in this study would indicate that it is not as beneficial to place preservice teachers with practicing teachers who possess either very little classroom experience or have prevailing negative opinions of their profession or students. Cooperating teachers with little classroom experience, such as Kate’s, may be less inclined to encourage and support preservice teachers to take an active role in the classroom. Instead, they may view the preservice teacher as a sounding board, as Mary’s seemed to do. Her teacher was profoundly negative about her students and frequently shared those feelings with Mary during her field placement. This only served to reinforce Mary’s prior understanding that urban public school teachers are “drained, frustrated, and overworked.”

Establishing communication prior to the commencement of the field experience is important and may make it easier to build and sustain a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between the teacher educators and the school personnel. It is particularly advantageous for cooperating teachers to have a conduit for questions about programmatic expectations or to garner support if a preservice teacher is proving to be problematic in the classroom. This would also eliminate the pressure of carrying the full responsibility of the preservice teacher by offering readily available support. An added benefit to this type of communication is that cooperating
teachers may be more inclined to invite preservice teachers in to their classrooms again in future semesters, therefore increasing the available field placements.

This is significant because, through my own experience and discussion with colleagues from other programs, I know that positive and supportive cooperating teachers are very difficult to find. It may be necessary to solicit the assistance of school personnel, such as administrators or department heads, to seek ways to encourage their faculty to serve as cooperating teachers. In our program, as I imagine it is in many others, the cooperating teacher does not receive compensatory benefits or formal acknowledgement for their efforts. Offering cooperating teachers classroom support or discounted or free professional development programming to districts might be greatly appreciated by the schools.

This increased collaboration might also result in discovering new ways that the preservice teacher might also serve the school’s needs while they are engaged in field placements. For example, if the school has a tutoring center, the teacher educator might require a few hours of the field experience requirement to be spent volunteering in the center. Mutually beneficial arrangements such as this can only be established through open lines of communication. Fostering a sense of partnership with the teacher preparatory program might not only serve to encourage more investment on behalf of the school, but also help the cooperating teachers feel acknowledged in their valuable efforts. In turn, more field placements may be available, addressing the need of preservice teachers being placed out of their content area.

Finally, this study brings to light some implications specific to secondary English/language arts preservice teachers in urban field experiences. Contrary to what I expected, language did not prove to be a hindrance for any of the preservice teachers, nor did they cite this as a significant problem that they imagined facing in the urban English/language arts classroom. Through
interviewing I learned that most of the participants were exposed to African American Vernacular English prior to entering the field, and others were enrolled in the class in the semester in which this study took place. This exposure seemed to have been of assistance and appears to have been an important aspect of their experience. If it is not already incorporated in the curriculum of a course adjoining the field placement, this study would indicate that some discussion addressing AAVE would be of benefit prior to entering the field. Similarly, if the field placement would take place in a school where non-English speaking students are prevalent, the findings here would suggest that instruction concerning English Language Learners would be valuable.

Preservice teachers should also be familiarized with the body of adolescent literature that would be particularly relevant in an urban classroom. In this study, several of the participants referred to their own experience in English/language arts as a foundation for selecting their course material in the future. Scaffolding activities that foster the examination of adolescent literature centered upon the issues that define urban public schools like those cited in chapter two would serve to diversify what the preservice teachers incorporate into their own curriculum in the future. Literature that addresses issues of race, equality, prejudice and tolerance as well as stories of hope, strength and perseverance regarding such issues will not only speak to the environment of the urban public school but also the lives of many students there. The incorporation of the precepts of Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in English/language arts methods courses could only serve to enhance the examination of pedagogical approaches to adolescent literature, particularly if it can be carried through in other areas of the program.
Implications for Teacher Preparatory Programs

The primary focus of this study was the examination of the preservice teachers’ reflections and opinions about the Principles of Teaching course curriculum based on Henderson’s (2001) teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. As is evident in chapter four, their response to that aspect of the course was remarkably positive. Also interesting was the fact that, when I asked Jill, Kate and Ann if they had been taught for 3S understanding, each answered that the only teacher who did so was their English/language arts teachers. Four participants said they would employ teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in their future instructional planning (Mary does not intend to teach), and all strongly suggested I continue to incorporate Henderson’s teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding in my future work as a teacher educator.

Unfortunately, as I stated in chapter four, the level of understanding of Henderson’s work achieved by the participants was marginal at best. When discussing how they might employ teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding, the participants most frequently cited instructional practices such as connecting novels and poetry to students’ lives and the world around them, facilitating creative writing, and offering self-selected reading assignments. While all of these practices would certainly have a place in an English/language arts curriculum designed to facilitate 3S understanding, they are pedagogical, not curricular, decisions. As I stated in my currere, in the future I will ensure that my preservice teachers achieve a deeper and more comprehensive conceptualization of Henderson’s work by incorporating more individualized assessments of their understanding.

The course utilized in this study was a general methods course. In addition to the embedded field experience, the curriculum was to cover both curricular and pedagogical design applicable
to four different content areas. Unfortunately this does not leave a great deal of time available for the close examination of any one aspect of the course. This is not to say that they do not have future courses, specific to the content area, in which they revisit these topics. But regardless of their appreciation of the framework, it is unlikely that these preservice teachers will have the opportunity to revisit Henderson’s teaching for 3S understanding in an undergraduate classroom setting. In this time of increased focus on accountability, there is an augmented emphasis in public schools on curricular design, curricular alignment and standardized measures. For the first time, teachers are receiving courses of study and are responsible for incorporating standards into their instruction (Henderson and Gornik, 2007). This change in the profession at large might suggest a need for programmatic changes in teacher education as well. The implication here is that, because of these nationwide changes, teacher preparatory programs might need to revisit their course work to ensure that a sufficient amount of time is dedicated to the study of curriculum decision-making.

As I explained in chapter two, I believe it is imperative for preparatory programs to ensure that their graduates have the tools necessary to take those standards and expand them to best meet the needs of their students. The standards are certainly valuable, but their sole focus on subject matter learning is not enough. We should prepare preservice teachers to take their standards and “s-t-r-e-t-c-h to transformative teaching for 3S understanding” (Henderson and Gornik, 2007, p. 39). Curricular decision-making models such as Henderson’s framework are far more complex than can be taught in a portion of one semester-long undergraduate course. To truly achieve this, new coursework in which preservice teachers can focus on curricular decision making, or “transformative teaching,” may need to be designed. Preservice teachers need processing time to acclimate themselves to the subject learning-based standards for their content
area, as well as be comfortable enough with them to find the space to scaffold social and self-
learning in their implementation. Several participants in this study suggested that, in the future, I
teach an entire course about teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding. I find this
to be a wise suggestion, because Henderson’s framework offers preservice teachers a curricular
planning model with which they can adapt their state standards to promote more inquiry-based
learning in democratic classrooms.  

It is also important to bear in mind that many veteran teachers across the country are
experiencing high stakes accountability for the first time, and some may be unsure of how to best
manage this new responsibility. As Henderson and Gornik observe:

> Teachers who believe that their singular professional goal is student achievement as
> measured on episodic, standardized tests will find the “received” standards coming
> out of the dominant standardized management paradigm to be all they need to reach
> that goal. On the other hand, teachers who embrace a professional goal of fostering a
dereeper and more enduring student understanding of subject matter will most likely
> find the received standards to be limited. They will need to think differently about
> what a student is to know and/or be able to do…As such these teachers will need to
> rework the received standards (2007, p. 42-43).

Reworking the standards may appear to be a daunting task, and teachers of all areas and abilities
would surely benefit from support in that endeavor. The findings of this study suggest that
undergraduate teacher preparatory programs would benefit from examining their core
coursework to make certain there is ample time allotted to curriculum studies. They may also be
wise, then, to do the same with their graduate courses and professional development
programming. Practitioners might heartily welcome an invitation to learn about moving beyond
the subject matter learning of the standards and engaging in transformative curriculum design.

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12 There certainly are other excellent curricular decision-making frameworks offered in the field of
curriculum studies. I have chosen to utilize Henderson’s work because of the great value that it has had for
me in my own practice. However, the implications set forth here would equally apply to other curricular
frameworks.
The findings of this study have also pointed to value in scaffolding Pinar’s (1976) method of currere in teacher preparatory programs. The participants all indicated that engaging in the method of currere helped them to more clearly reflect upon the people and events that have influenced their journey of becoming educators. Currere may serve as a valuable tool for preservice teachers to critically examine their career paths. As I shared in my narrative, there is much to be learned about oneself by participating in this type of reflection. However, as I also indicated in my own currere narrative, there was insufficient time available in this study for the participants to truly reap the benefits of the method as Pinar intended.

Insightfully, several participants suggested that the creation of a currere narrative should begin early and be sustained throughout a teacher preparatory program. At the onset of their professional journey, it may serve to help preservice teachers confirm or clarify their career goals and even, like Mary, help them to determine if teaching is indeed how they desire to spend their professional lives. This would best be accomplished by employing Pinar’s actual steps rather than the adaptation of the method utilized here. As will be explained in the next section, currere is intended to be a more individualized and reflective experience than it was in this study. Reflection, as explained in chapter two, is a valuable instrument for effective practice. Another added benefit of creating an ongoing currere narrative as Pinar intended and scaffolding that creation throughout one’s journey through a program is that it would immerse preservice teachers in an ongoing reflective experience.
Implications for Future Research

The purpose of this section is to make clear the implications this study has for my own future research, which may also serve as recommendations for others in the field. To date, I have found no other studies that have examined the implementation of either Pinar’s or Henderson’s work in a secondary teacher general methodology course. I hope to examine how other instructors might incorporate currere and teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding into their own preparatory programs. In the future I also intend to conduct longitudinal research that will follow the participants’ experiences of engaging in new horizons as they navigate their journey of becoming a teacher. I hope to sustain contact with preservice teachers after they have graduated from their preparatory programs and become practicing teachers. In doing so, I believe it is far more likely that I will gather enough textual data to truly elucidate how their professional journeys evolve. Among other things, I would like to know how their pre-understandings continue to change over time and if so what affects those changes, if they continue in the field, if they teach in urban or non-urban districts, and if teaching for democratic living through 3S understanding is still evident in their curricular planning.

As I described in chapter four, hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) was the most appropriate method with which to approach this study. The narratives, textual representations of phenomena, necessitated recursive examination in order to truly begin to understand their meaning. However, hermeneutic phenomenology did not offer the kind of organization needed in this study, so I turned to Pinar’s work to meet that need. It is important to reiterate here that the method of currere was slightly adapted to serve this purpose. In fact, Pinar designed currere to be completed by oneself and for oneself, not by someone else.
This served two distinct purposes. First, it functioned as an organizing structure for the two personal interviews. Utilizing Pinar’s four distinct and clear steps, especially the first three, helped to both clarify my questions for the participants and scaffold their responses. Second, it gave me a framework on which to arrange my data from the pre-understandings in their regressive steps through the examination of how the course and field experience may have influenced their professional trajectory. A second divergence from Pinar’s method was the creation of the “currere timelines”. These allowed me to begin the second interview with a clear and organized reiteration of the first interview to present to the participant. The timelines also gave the participants the opportunity to review their regressive and progressive steps, modify them in any way they chose, and make certain that my work was accurate. While these two modifications served me well in this study, the method of currere proved to be far more of a point of interest to the participants than I previously expected. With this in mind, I would discard the changes that I made and instead focus more energy into facilitating the participants’ creation of their own currere narratives as Pinar intended.

A mounting body of both policy and research has begun to point to the significance of early urban field placements. To further examine that significance, it would be of great value to reexamine the questions posed in this study with other preservice English/language arts teachers, or those from other content areas. As I included in the progressive step of my currere, in future studies I hope to enter the urban field placement school and observe the participants as they navigate that experience. By doing my own observations, I will not have to depend solely on the participants’ retrospection or memory to provide a second-hand glimpse of their engagement in the classroom. It would afford me the chance to observe their interaction with the cooperating teacher and the students in the classroom.
The stories of these preservice teachers point to the notion that preservice teachers’ understanding of urban public schools may come in part from their peers who have already completed their early urban field placements. It may be of value, then, to find ways to bring preservice teachers together in a scaffolded situation to observe their conversations about those experiences. Based on my personal experience, I presume that there are preservice teachers in most preparatory programs that have had positive field experiences in urban public schools. It would be useful to conduct a pilot program in which preservice teachers who have had a positive experience in a field placement in an urban public school might serve as guest speakers in classes that are preparing to enter the field. Through interviews or surveys, it would be of interest to discover if having a fellow preservice teacher address their questions about early urban field placements may put them more at ease prior to going to the field.

There is also evidence in this study to suggest that preservice teachers’ understanding of urban schools is strongly influenced by their families. Each participant expressed either their parents’ apprehensive reactions to urban schools, and even more specifically to the preservice teachers’ engagement in the early urban field placement. In future study, I believe it would be informative to seek and gather more detailed information about the participants’ families and childhood communities in the regressive step of their curreres. It would also be interesting to discover where their parents grew up and attended school, their level of education and professional fields, and their own previous engagement with urban settings.

In conclusion, I hope that this study has shed light upon the unique experiences of five secondary preservice English/language arts teachers as they navigated the horizons of early urban field placements. I also anticipate that, after listening to their thoughts and feelings, I will better serve other preservice teachers that I will encounter in my future work in preparatory
programs. Finally, I hope that this work may contribute to the very important conversation about how teacher educators might further reconsider their curriculum and practices to better scaffold preservice teachers’ experiences within them. Seeking a deeper understanding of how preservice teachers approach and navigate the horizons of urban public schools might lead us to discover ways to best serve as reflective guides along their professional journeys.
APPENDICES
Field experience syllabus: Principles of teaching

Overview
The field experience is designed to provide you with opportunities to work in and reflect upon an urban secondary school environment. During your time in the field, it is hoped that you will gain a deeper understanding of teaching and learning. The experience lasts 6 weeks, and you are expected to complete 30 hours in the field. In addition, you will attend 2 meetings during your regular class time and complete written assignments.

Expectations
- Treat this experience like a real job. You never know where it might lead!
- It is your responsibility to contact your cooperating teacher (coop) and make arrangements for your schedule.
- You should communicate to your coops the expectations set forth for you in this field experience. You and s/he can work together to discover how you might best serve the class. It is hoped that you will be not only an observer but also an active participant; tutoring, teaching, grading and working with small groups are all excellent experiences for you to have!
- You must maintain an accurate record of your hours and bring it with you to both field meetings. It will be collected at the end of the field experience.
- At all times, be prompt and professional. Remember, you are in the role of teacher, not student!
- Do not give a student medication of any kind.
- Do not touch a student.
- Your hours may not be completed in less than 4 weeks. On of the key benefits of this experience is to observe a class over time and experience the changes that occur in a school environment.
- Do not call in sick. In the event of an emergency, you must contact your coop as soon as possible. You must also contact your instructor. You will be expected to provide appropriate documentation for your absence, as well as make up missed hours. Failure to document absence will result in a failing grade for the field.
- In the event of cancellations due to inclement weather, you are not required to make up scheduled hours lost due to closure.
- In the event you are placed out of your content area, you are expected to complete all assignments. The focus of this field placement is teaching and learning, not content methodology. Should you be placed outside of your content area, you may choose to write a lesson plan and teach a class, which would be highly beneficial. However, you may also choose to write a lesson plan for your own content area to turn in at the end of the field placement.
- Always shake hands and smile

Assignments
Field journal
The purpose of the field journal is to scaffold your reflection and stimulate your thinking about your field experience. They should be typed and double-spaced, with complete thoughts and detailed reflection. Your entries should address the themes below. However, the purpose of the journal is most importantly to document your own thoughts and reflections. Feel free to include anything you wish. Each entry coincides with each week in the field except for entry one, which should be completed before you enter the field.
Lesson plan
Create a lesson plan using the format given in class prior to entering the field. The lesson plan should pertain to the course in which you are placed and align to the appropriate standards. It is hoped that you will have the opportunity to teach your lesson and include reflection with it.

Shadow study
During your field experience, shadow a student for at least one-half of a school day. Observe the student closely: how s/he interacts with peers and teachers, when s/he seems most engaged in activities. Also, make time to interview the student one on one. This may take place in lunch or a study hall. Ask the student about their learning experience, and share with them about the course of study you wrote, and suggestions they may have for your unit plan!
Your write up (5-6 pages) should include:
- Pseudo-name of the student, date, time, grade, subjects
- Description of locations and student behavior
- Summary of how the student seemed to be involved, how the student interacted with teachers and peers, what the student seemed to learn, how the student seemed to feel about the classes and the school
- Report of the interview with the student (ideas to consider: past school experiences, future plans, community activities, ideas about what makes successful teachers, ideas about pop culture, etc.)
- Report of student’s suggestions for your unit plan.
The shadow study is due on the day we return to regular class, but may be turned in at field meetings if you would prefer.

Field meetings
Field meetings will occur on during your regularly scheduled class meeting time in your regular classroom. Meetings will be held on October 18th and November 1st. Your field journals will be collected at each field meeting. Field meetings are integral and necessary aspects of the field experience. You must attend both field meetings!

When class resumes on November 15th all hours must be completed and paperwork and field assignments should be turned in. Failure to complete any component will result in a failing grade for the field.
APPENDIX B
Field Journal Prompts

Entry 1: Your expectations
- What do you think it is going to be like in an urban school?
- How do you think it is going to compare to the school from which you graduated?
- Where do those expectations come from?
- Would you like to work in an urban school setting? Why or why not? Would your family and friends support your choice? Why or why not?

Entry 2: All about you
- How do you feel in the classroom?
- How did the students react to you? How did the teacher react?
- How was the room arranged and decorated?
- Were the students actively engaged in the class activities? How did you know?
- Was the teacher actively engaged with the students? How did you know?

Entry 3: All about learning
- What instructional strategies have you observed?
- How do you know if/when learning is happening?
- When is the instruction teacher centered? When is it student centered?
- Were the goals and objectives for the day’s lesson clear? Were they met? How do you know?

Entry 4: All about communication
- How did the students and teacher interact?
- How did the students interact with each other?
- How are student questions handled?
- How are the rules and procedures conveyed?
- What are the implicit rules?
- How are grades communicated?
- How are conflicts resolved?
Entry 5: All about teaching

- How does your coop select the content taught each day?
- How did you select your content for your lesson plan?
- Do you notice adjustments being made as a class progresses? Was then same lesson is taught to a different class? To what do you attribute those adjustments?
- How do you think teaching in an urban school might compare to teaching in a rural school? A suburban school?

Entry 6: Reflection

- Have your perceptions of urban schools changed or stayed the same? Why?
- How did your field placement school compare to the school from which you graduated?
- What did you learn about the community in which the school is located?
- Was your field school a fair and democratic environment? Why or why not?
- Would you like to work in an urban school setting? Is this the same feeling you had going in to the field experience? Why or why not?
- What might an urban school district do to encourage you to apply to a job there?
- What might be done in the future to enhance an early urban field placement for other preservice teachers?
APPENDIX C
Participant one: Jill’s currere timeline

Regressive *returning to capture the past*

- High school in “suburbia-city” (p.1J); White; not very diverse
- Most teachers thought curriculum shouldn’t change
- Guidance counselor: basketball coach; Black woman; influenced and helped
- Junior year: English teacher “…influenced me to be a teacher…and helped me through problems with friends” (p. 5/I1)
- Senior year of high school: “started to get a broader range of friends” (p. 1/I1); played basketball; took a lot of electives I might like to teach;
- Worked at a camp for high-needs girls in middle and early high school;
- Education in a democratic society class: learned about multi-cultural education;
  learned a lot about diverse populations and the need to accommodate diversity in the classroom
- Before field experiences: heard there is a lot of Black people in district;
- Field experience: good experiences; first time in a high school; first urban school setting;

Progressive *looking ahead at what is not yet*

- Want to work in an urban school
- Want to move out of OH; maybe Las Vegas;
- Want to teach, then become a guidance counselor
Synthesis

- I thought my high school was diverse, but realize it wasn’t
- Now I know there is a lot more out there than I knew in high school
- My high school experience shaped the way I looked at urban schools
Participant two: Mary’s currere timeline

Regressive returning to capture the past

- Grew up in “white suburbia” (p. 11); middle-upper middle class; “Leave it to Beaver type families” (p. 21).
- Avid reader
- Uncle teaches in urban public school and tells storied about some problems he experiences; influenced my perception of urban schools;
- Saw negative movies and media coverage about urban school settings
- Foster child (?) 5 year old boy from a “very violent area” (p. 41); challenging behavioral issues; helped me to understand some of the students in the field placement
- Public school until 4th grade
- Home schooled from 5th grade to graduation
- In early adolescence (12 – 15) extremely shy; struggled with social issues
- Worked at McDonald’s; planned some social engagements for a group of students being home schooled
- Socialized with people who were: “Sheltered…unrealistic in expectations of the world…conservative Christian…lived in a bubble their whole lives” (p.11)
- Parents encouraged me to be aware of what was going on; different than other parents;
- Graduate from high school and saw two options: teaching or nursing; both because of “passion for people” (p. 31); and mother is nurse
After high school went to a Christian college; worked at summer camp there with teenagers “dealing with a whole bunch of different issues” (p. 21); found desire to work with kids

Transferred to community college; found desire to teach English due to a dynamic teacher who helped me to enjoy writing;

Transferred to 4-year program

Was unsure of what being a teacher really meant

A field experience in an urban elementary school

Prior to field experience: “a few misgivings…rumored to be one of the toughest neighborhoods” (p. 1J); expected disrespectful and hyper students

First day of field: nervous; “It’s worse than I thought” (p. 1J); chaos and stressed out teacher

During field: shocking incident between vice principal and girls in the hall; observed a lot of teacher-oriented instruction; teacher kicked out 5-6 students and said she can't teach the class; kids told me not to teach there because the kids are all bad; teacher stepped out of classroom and chaos broke out

Shadow study subject said she wanted to be a secretary which was surprising to me

After field: “A little sad I won’t be going back” (p. 3J); will miss kids

Traveled to Thailand over winter break to help with tsunami relief effort
Progressive *looking ahead at what is not yet*

- I imagine challenges in urban schools to be classroom management; different disciplinary strategies are needed
- I do not want to work in an urban school setting because I feel I am not prepared to
- I am not sure if I would want to teach in an urban school even if I felt prepared
- I do not want to be a teacher; I want to work “…where people need people to directly interact” (I2, p. 7).

**Synthesis**

- Shyness in early adolescents lead to a deeper understanding of students who are socially challenged
Participant three: Kate’s *currere* timeline

Regressive *returning to capture the past*

- Grew up in suburbia
- My high school was over protective of students, security was tight; had a lot of money; huge opportunities for students; predominantly white
- 10th grade English teacher was creative and exciting
- After high school, went to film school; wanted to be a movie director
- “My grandparents got sick, and I fell in love with my fiancé, and a lot of stuff went down at home, so I had to move back” (I2, p. 2). Dropped out of film school
- I was depressed about leaving film school and not sure what to do
- I decided to go into education after calling my drama teacher for her guidance; she was very supportive
- Hear bad things about field placement school on the news
- Fiancé was worried but supportive; parents didn’t want me to go at all
- First field experience in a rural middle school
- Scared before field experience; fear came from rumors from parents, students and others about gangs and fights; thought I would see fights; kind of wanted to teach in an urban school
- TV shows about violence or teen pregnancy in urban schools
- First day: not introduced to the students right away; thought it was going to be a “…horrible chaotic mess” (p. 11);
- In the field: teacher gives class assignment to work on independently; taught a class she wasn’t certified to teach; class comes unprepared; students are distracted, never
do homework, rowdy; “…learned a lot about the bureaucracy of teaching” (p. 6J); I was shocked that students listened to me; teacher has no control over curriculum because of OGT; teacher said kids are on “a bad track” (p. 4I), in gangs and get arrested;

- After the field: realized I was wrong before I went; I would love to teach in an urban school’ parents apologized for being so worried

**Progressive looking ahead at what is not yet**

- “I have always wanted to teach children who have a harder time learning” (p. 1J).

- I want to teach theatre in a school with a permanent theatre program

- I imagine if I worked in a urban school I would have to work harder to motivate the kids; I would visit the students’ parents; work hard to get the kids to pass the OGT;

- For my first year of teaching I want to work in a suburban school because it would be easier to adjust

- We need to put more money into urban schools

**Analysis**

- I didn’t realize at the time what an impact my drama teacher would have on me and my decision to become a teacher

- My 10th grade English teacher gave me a framework for understanding what a good teacher is
Participant four: Joe’s *currere* timeline

Regressive *returning to capture the past*

- Lived in small town until the age of 19; never felt accepted
- Teacher in 7th or 8th grade always reminded the students that he cared; he was a “normal person” (p. 51) but no other teachers like that
- Small town high school; all White; I was a poor student and education wasn’t important to my father
- Family is “extremely racist” (p. 21); never agreed with my family on issues regarding race
- Interacted with black people through basketball and music (p. 31)
- Went in to Army right after high school for 5 years; no intention of being a teacher; taught; they had a saying “you are no longer black or white, you are green” (p. 41); I was “relieved” when I heard this (p. 31).
- Selected for special forces recruitment, then had to wait to go due to shoulder injury
- Daughter was born, and decided to get out of the Army
- Worked for Federal Bureau of Prisons: very hard work; inmates were mostly black; most stressful job
- Worked in a warehouse: enjoyed the freedom but work was too physical to maintain; after 2nd surgery decided to get out of that business
- Was hired by a small business: private investigation; I loved it; burnt out quickly
- After conversation with my wife, I decided to go into education based on my enjoyable experiences teaching in the Army
- Decided INLA because I am passionate about reading and writing
Before field: not worried, but peers were;

During field: placed with two very different teachers; “a little uncomfortable at first” (p. 5J); teacher told me the difference between teaching in an urban and a suburban setting (p. 17J); advised me to teach in an urban school (p. 12I)

After field: perceptions didn’t change; I feel even stronger about wanting to work in an urban school

Progressive looking ahead at what is not yet

I definitely want to work in an urban school; this was a goal I had at the beginning of my career (p. 3J).

My family would support me if I worked in an urban school

Analysis

Did not realize how much teaching in the Army would influence my future; that is the main reason I ended up in teaching

My kids have been a major influence on my career decision; my parenting style changed when I realized I wanted to be a teacher

The progress I have made is “not even fathomable to most people” (I2, p. 3)
Participant five: Ann’s *currere* timeline

**Regressive returning to capture the past**

- Wanted to be a teacher since grade school
- Aunt is a teacher in a local suburban school; gave me materials to “play school” with
  (p. 21)
- Elementary and most of high school in Catholic schools
- Same English teacher for 10th and 11th grade; she was a very good teacher and I loved her class
- 12th grade attended public school
- Senior experience project: I shadowed a 4th grade teacher and it was a great experience
- Before field: negative expectations from friends, movies or TV; never been in an urban setting, so don’t know if I’d want to teach in an urban school; parents were worried about the field placement; excited to go but nervous;
- In field: placed out of content area, but loved it;
- After field: perceptions changed to an extent;

**Progressive looking ahead at what is not yet**

- “I would love to work in an urban setting” (p. 6J).
- I would like to work in NC or somewhere down south and get out of Ohio
- I think I’ll always stay a teacher
- I want to stay connected to my students after they graduate
- I hope to connect my students’ learning with other subjects or their lives
Analysis

- My high school English teacher that I had for 10th and 11th grade made me want to connect my students’ learning to their personal experiences.

- Poetry assignment in 11th grade was important in forming my ideas about powerful teaching.
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