RESPONDING TO THE CALL TO TEACH:
PRESERVICE TEACHERS’ CASE STORIES OF
TEACHING ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of utilizing preservice English/Language Arts teachers’ own case stories while student teaching and sharing those case stories with other preservice teachers on the perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching. The first objective of this study determines how preservice teachers conceive of teaching through their case stories of teaching. Studying the case stories of teaching provides a window to understand the connections between their individual field experiences, course work, and prior experiences. The second objective of the study is to understand how a collaborative framework for discussing case stories—the group-reflective interview—facilitates learning about teaching. Questions used to guide the study are: 1) What do preservice teachers reveal about their perceptions of teaching English/language arts through case stories of teaching? 2) How do sharing and discussing case stories of teaching with their colleagues in the English cohort affect their thinking about the teaching of English/Language Arts? Theories of narrative inquiry and activity theory are used to consider these questions.

Findings suggest that case stories of teaching and the group reflective interview can be effective to teacher education and teacher research in several ways. The data contend that teacher educators and teacher researchers may use case stories and group-reflective interviews to: 1) provide opportunities for preservice teachers
from diverse backgrounds and diverse teaching contexts to converse on issues related to teaching English/Language Arts; 2) break the isolation that preservice teachers feel by helping them to build community with other preservice teachers who are facing similar dilemmas; 3) provide preservice teachers with episodes of other preservice teachers in actual classroom experiences; 4) present preservice teachers with new models for thinking about their teaching practices; 5) increase preservice teachers’ ability to theorize and interpret particular instructional situations; and 6) affect how preservice teachers evaluate themselves as teachers.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind—then teaching is the finest work I know.

But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused—and I am so powerless to do anything about it—that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere: in those students from some alien planet, in that subject I thought I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way. What a fool I was to imagine that I had mastered this occult art—harder to divine than tea leaves and impossible for mortal to do even passably well! (Palmer, 1998, p. 1).

Introduction: Sharing the Courage to Teach

In the above passage, from The Courage to Teach, Parker Palmer highlights the emotional impact of teaching. Teachers’ love/hate relationship with the multiple facets of their profession exhibits itself through moments of joy followed by moments
of despair. When we succeed in our classrooms, when students grasp the meaning of a line in *Macbeth*, or understand a principle in physics, we may feel on top of the world. When students complain that an assignment is meaningless or that a reading is boring, we may feel that it is somehow our own fault.

The secret, to teaching, to helping students learn, as Palmer contends, is as “illusive as reading tea leaves or divining the meaning of life from the projections in the stars.” While there has been significant research that has improved teaching and learning, ultimately, because many different forces influence teaching and learning (students, parents, administrators, teachers, curriculum, the weather), teachers have a hard time knowing/feeling that they have been successful. They face further difficulty justifying their success to administrators and parents who may be overly focused on grades and standardized test scores. Having taught based on theories learned from university courses, professional journals and texts, and workshops; I have often pondered why lessons work well with some students or classes while failing miserably with others. The problem has always been that there is no secret teaching formula, no fail proof (teacher proof as many textbook companies contend) method or strategy. This, I have learned through pain and elation, is because each student is different. Many students, often moody and frequently unpredictable, will respond to circumstances in a variety of ways depending to a large degree on issues/events outside of the classroom. What has joined me with other teachers and students has been the sustaining influence of stories about classroom experiences, the inviting sounds of teacher lore.
Stories about classrooms, stories of successes and failures—stories of students, fellow teachers, writers like Parker Palmer, and the preservice teachers with whom I have worked—have sustained me as a teacher. Whether the stories depicted positive or negative experiences has not been as important as the fact that they have been about experiences of other real teachers struggling to teach real students. That is why, like Palmer, I continue to teach—because the experience of teaching, of learning about and from my students, has affected and altered my life in profound ways. From the time I began teaching, stories have been one of the most enjoyable experiences of teaching. Hearing stories about the lives of students and the struggles of teachers trying to make sense of their lives and help students learn about the content of a subject matter or about life in general has been incredibly encouraging and one of the most instructive components of my teaching career.

When I first began working with preservice teachers, teaching methods courses and supervising them during their field experiences and student-teaching quarters, I quickly learned they were eager to hear about actual stories of classroom experiences. Whenever I gathered with enthusiastic preservice teachers I noticed that they were anxious to share stories of their experiences in classrooms. I observed that many of the preservice teachers with whom I was working struggled to make sense of what they learned in their university courses, at least with respect to how they could apply that knowledge to their field work. Many of the stories they told addressed this particular issue in
different ways. During this time, I became interested in investigating whether the stories that they shared with one another could help them to make sense of teaching. This chapter will address the problem of finding the courage to teach, the purposes and objectives of this study, the research design of the study, and will also outline the next four chapters of the paper.

Based on personal experience two assumptions colored my study: both storytelling and collaboration among teaching peers are critical to developing as an effective, reflective teacher. As a novice and experienced teacher, these two interrelated areas were critical to my development as a teacher. By sharing stories of teaching experiences with other teachers—stories of what did and did not work, the reasons why things did or did not work, and approaches we could take to improve our methods—I learned the art of teaching. As I articulated stories to teaching peers, I was able to understand what I thought, clarify those thoughts for an audience of teachers, and rethink teaching practices that were in some cases neither theoretically sound nor practically effective. My preconception was that collaboration, critical to learning effective teaching, could be enhanced through storytelling with peers about teaching experiences.

Recent research focusing on preservice teacher education has illuminated the frequent struggles that beginning teachers encounter upon entering a new environment. According to Harrington and Garrison (1992) when entering the new teaching environment preservice teachers engage in "an initiation into the practices, beliefs, and values shared by a culture" (p. 730). How preservice teachers learn these "practices, beliefs, and values" is
complicated, in part because preservice teachers may feel that they receive mixed messages from their university course work, field experience, and prior experiences in schools as students (Fieman Nemser and Buchman, 1985; Grossman, 1990; Kagan, 1993; Zitlow, 1990). Whether or not they are learning "practices, beliefs, and values" which will make them effective teachers with a particular student body is even more complicated. Problems exist between conflicting ideas (or preservice teachers’ perceptions of conflicting ideas) found in university coursework, their prior experiences with schooling, and the views of the cooperating teachers and school districts within which they train. Stories provide a basis for contextualization of the preservice teachers’ viewpoints, drawn from multiple sources in specific teaching situations, allowing them enact theories which they had once considered abstract.

**Case Stories of Teaching**

Examining the case stories of teaching that preservice teachers have composed about the art of teaching potentially provides a fertile ground for considering this initiation. By case stories of teaching I refer to stories that preservice teachers told about specific episodes in their student-teaching or teaching field experiences. For prospective teachers, the cohort group, the community of preservice teachers in which they interact, serves as a significant body in the construction of reflective thinking about the teaching of English/Language Arts.
Through detailed study and analysis of preservice teachers' case stories of teaching an understanding of their conceptions of teaching English/Language Arts became apparent, revealing useful insights into how teacher education programs might include narrative within the preparation of preservice teachers.

The point of storytelling is not a simple retelling of events but rather a means for movement into critique and analysis. Do case stories of teaching challenge preservice teachers to reflect on and critique their teaching practices and pedagogies? Investigating autobiographical memory, Barclay (1996) writes: "I would argue that no narrative would be meaningful without some evaluation of events...The point here is that no narrative makes sense or is meaningful without knowing how one feels about events that occur over time and for certain reasons" (p.108). How prospective teachers reflect on and make sense of particular events in their teaching experiences becomes critical because they may use these experiences as filters for their beliefs about teaching (Feiman Nemser, 1983; Feiman Nemser & Buchman, 1985; Grossman, 1990; Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Kagan, 1993; Zitlow & Decoker, 1994).

A significant issue in the telling of stories is that they provide a level of specificity that makes abstract thought accessible to novices. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that "on the other hand, the world carries its own structures so that specificity always implies generality (and in this case generality is not to be assimilated to abstractness): that is why stories can be so powerful in conveying ideas, often more so than the articulation of the idea itself" (p. 34). Stories may allow novice practitioners, in this case preservice teachers, to locate themselves within the teaching community of practitioners. My hypothesis is that the English/Language Arts preservice teachers...
who participated in this study strengthened their own thinking about teaching English/Language Arts as a result of narrating their own and listening to others case stories of teaching. While this alone did not facilitate learning; in conjunction with course work, field experiences, and other venues for discussing teaching, case stories added to the participating preservice teachers’ repertoire of tools for reflecting on their practice.

**Research Questions**

- What do preservice teachers reveal about their conceptions of teaching English/Language Arts through their case stories of teaching?
- How do sharing and discussing their case stories of teaching with their colleagues in the English cohort shape preservice teachers’ thinking about the teaching of English/Language Arts and themselves as teachers?

**Objectives of the Study**

The first objective of this study is to determine how the preservice teachers conceptualized teaching through their case stories of teaching. Through the case stories of teaching I attempted to find a window to understand how the preservice teachers were thinking about teaching, the connections that they were making between their field experiences, their course work, and their prior experiences.

The second objective of the study is to understand how the collaborative framework for discussion, the group reflective interview, facilitates learning about teaching. Particularly, I investigated how listening to other viewpoints allowed preservice teachers to consider alternative ways of teaching, addressing academic and social concerns within their classrooms. The preservice teachers brought with them a
divergent breadth of personal experiences to preservice teaching, experiences that created very different perspectives on teaching and learning. The group interview provided them with a forum for discussing and sharing those different perspectives, an opportunity that may have had an influence on their thinking about teaching.

**Context of Study**

An important aspect tied to the preservice teachers’ case stories of teaching is the environment in which they were being certified to teach. The students had been selected for a one-year program in which they would receive a Master’s degree in Education as well as certification to teach English/Language Arts. Students had already completed a Bachelor’s degree in English (or a related field such as Journalism) upon being admitted to the English Education program. Several of the students had to take additional English courses in order to meet the requirements of the English Education program.

The English Education program stressed social constructivist views of learning. Emphasis was placed on young-adult literature, reader response, critical theory, and multiculturalism; and various philosophies of teaching writing such as process and structured process approaches. Students were encouraged from the outset of the program to think of themselves as professionals and began doing action research projects during their first quarter and continuing on into their final quarters.

Collaboration was emphasized within the program. Students spent a great amount of time reflecting on their teaching experiences by discussing issues and problems with their teaching peers. There was a strong social nature to the program; during interviews and debriefings, most preservice teachers referred to this social
element as having shaped their thinking about teaching. Discussing individual case
stories of teaching provided a further opportunity for this connection, allowing
preservice teachers to share actual experiences with the interviewer and other
preservice teachers.

The context in which the preservice teachers interacted with one another and
with university faculty was extremely significant to the study. The preservice teachers
had worked together on the university campus and in their various public school field
experiences for an entire academic year, building collegial relationships and strong
friendships with other preservice teachers. The context of the teacher preparation
program fostered these connections between preservice teachers, connections which
served as a powerful supportive-resource during the strenuous times of teaching. In
addition, preservice teachers engaged in weekly seminars with their supervising
teachers (in groups of six) and a seminar with the entire cohort (thirty-four preservice
teachers), supervising teachers, cooperating teachers, and the program director. The
weekly supervision seminars allowed students to discuss problems related specifically
to their teaching contexts. The cohort seminar allowed preservice teachers to share
concepts and ideas important to teaching as a whole, connecting to the philosophies of
principled instruction.

The teaching context within which the preservice teachers were entering their
careers at Midwestern University emphasized three concepts: the social nature of
learning—that community was essential to teaching; that principles of instruction
should guide the teaching of English/Language Arts; and that teachers were
professionals. The first concept stressed in the program seminars, the community of
teaching became extremely evident in the interviews with the preservice teachers. Each of the preservice teachers emphasized how their relationships with peers, fostered in the program, had helped them to improve their teaching and work through any struggles that they were encountering with teaching. These relationships also allowed for the teachers to share their triumphs with teaching, often creating a public forum for the narrating tales of success.

Reflective thinking and the importance of principled practices for teaching English/Language arts resonated throughout all of the experiences that the preservice teachers had in the program. Courses focused on teachers as professional decision makers. Within this context, the preservice teachers often viewed themselves as teacher-researchers, a position which their discussions of the case stories of teaching reveal. This teacher-researcher view was stressed in several courses, in particular a course in teacher research which they took the quarter before preservice teaching and in the cohort seminar which they took during their preservice teaching quarter. Both of these courses culminated in the preservice teachers writing and presenting to the cohort findings from extensive research projects that they conducted in their classrooms. The cohort seminar ended in the preservice teachers presenting a Capstone Project very similar to a master’s thesis, illustrating a very thorough and analytical conception of their teaching. All three of these emphasized areas (community, professionalism, and principles of instruction) influenced the preservice teachers thinking about teaching and interactions in their schools. These presentations of research illustrated the preservice teachers’ abilities as producers of knowledge in a community of professionals.
Significance of Study

This study illuminates the complexities of how preservice teachers conceptualize the art of teaching. Through examination and analysis of the preservice teachers’ experiences I intend to illustrate how preservice teachers’ own stories can help researchers and teacher educators understand how preservice teachers make connections and account for differences between their personal experiences, university teacher education course work, field experiences, models of teaching, and own first impressions with teaching.

Equally important to this study, resulting from the group response to the case stories of teaching, I argue for the inclusion of preservice teachers’ case stories as a medium through which preservice teachers can learn about teaching in a collaborative community, contextualizing theory and practice.

Conclusion: Outline of the Next Four Chapters

In this chapter I have outlined the rationale, objectives, research questions, and significance of this study. In Chapter Two, I review recent literature related to the preparation of English/Language Arts preservice teachers and the use of story in educational research. Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study including participation selection, data collection, and methods of analyzing the data. Chapter Four discusses themes that I selected from coding the preservice teachers’ interviews and observations. I present case stories of the individual preservice teachers and consider issues that served as common threads across the multiple preservice teachers’ case stories of teaching. Chapter Five concludes the discussion of the research study by examining feedback from the preservice teachers on their perceptions of the study.
The chapter then considers the implications of the study for inclusion in the work of future teacher educators and researchers interested in narrative inquiry and preservice teacher education.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This research study originated with a concern over how preservice teachers learned to conceptualize teaching and think of themselves as teachers through the stories that they told. The following review of literature is focused around the two research questions that I discussed in the first chapter. The first section, Learning to Teach, considers issues related to research on preservice teacher thinking about teaching English/Language Arts, the social nature of learning, and a concern among teacher education with developing preservice teachers who are able to reflect on their practices. The second section reviews literature that focuses on activity theory and its applications to research with preservice teachers. The third section examines the use of narrative inquiry, teacher autobiography, and story as tools for research on teacher development.

In the final section of this chapter I contend that this research practice adds to the literature and the thoughts on preservice teacher development in several pertinent ways. The research attempts to add to the understanding of how preservice teachers think about teaching. I contend that case stories of teaching may also impact the processes of preservice teacher reflection, allowing preservice teachers to change their positions on and thoughts about teaching. I also believe that the inclusion of what I
call the collaborative or group-reflective interviews, along with course and field work, can help preservice teachers develop a stronger community, a necessary component of their continuing growth as teachers, making this group reflection on case stories an important addition to the teacher education curriculum.

**Learning to Teach**

A current view of teacher education asserts that formal preservice education and the student-teaching experience have “little effect on the beliefs and practices of preservice teachers and beginning teachers” (Knowles, 1995, p. 100). Preservice teachers often struggle connecting with and implementing ideas from their teacher education courses to actual teaching practices, a situation known as the “two-worlds pitfall” (Feiman Nemser, 1983; Feiman Nemser & Buchman, 1985). Part of the problem may result from preservice teachers’ preconceptions and prior experiences having created biases and unquestioned beliefs (Bullough, 1991; Feiman Nemser, 1983; Feiman Nemser & Buchman, 1985; Grossman, 1990; Kagan, 1992; 1993; Laboskey, 1997; Richert, 1990; Robertson, 1997; Zeichner & Liston, 1996a; 1996b). In order to help preservice teachers bridge the “two world pitfall,” teacher education may need to connect preservice teachers’ prior schooling experiences, lives outside of school, and knowledge from their education courses with their practices as English/Language Arts teachers.

Educational research’s historical efforts to find cause-and-effect relationships between education and practice have failed to give adequate attention to how prospective teachers connect their present autobiographies and prior experiences as students in schools and individuals in the world to their current and future experiences.
in classrooms as actual practicing teachers; (Bullough, Knowles, and Crow, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1994; Dillard, 1996; Goodson, 1997; Hargreaves, 1996).

Without clear articulation of principles and theories that support their teaching of English/Language Arts, or the ability to apply those principles and theories in specific teaching situations (Grossman, 1990; Grossman and Shulman, 1994; Vinz, 1997; Zitlow, 1990), beginning and preservice teachers may be prone to accept uncritically someone else's (cooperating teacher, supervisor, professor, administrator, or peer) conceptualizations for the teaching of English. Beginning and preservice teachers may often end up imitating the styles of teaching they find modeled in their high-school and university English course work; models that often follow a traditional script of read a book, discuss it, and write a paper (Marshall and Smith, 1997). Recently researchers have provided calls for presenting preservice teachers with a wider array of images of teaching (Florio-Ruane, 1995; Grossman, 1990; Grossman, 1992; Vinz, 1997; Zitlow & Decoker, 1994). These images are particularly important in acquiring new teaching styles and conceptualizations based on reflective thinking and principled approaches to teaching (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; Delpit, 1995; Florio-Ruane, 1997; Grossman, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Reflective thinking in teacher education has a basis in the theories of Dewey (1904; 1916; 1933) and Schon (1983; 1987). Reflective theory is built on the belief that individuals' ability to reason should supplant following experience blindly and uncritically. Reflective thinking challenges conformity and tradition, allowing thought to provide for individual variation, breaking with custom (Dewey, 1916; Dewey, 1933). Reflection changes the traditional view of teaching, where novices relied on
the culturally strong elements of school tradition and custom (Lortie, 1975), doing what other teachers did (Dewey, 1904). Dewey's (1904) vision of a classroom is of a laboratory, guided by the principles of science, where individual and collaborative inquiries inform practice.

The opportunity for thinking and creative problem solving draws many teachers into the education profession. In his study of the professions, The Reflective Practitioner, Schon (1983) describes three functions of thought for professionals: technical rationality (the application of scientific theory), knowledge-in-action (in which know how is implicit but not necessarily articulated or heavily contemplated), and reflection-in-action (learning to adjust thinking about what professionals are doing). Schon (1983) argues that professions are defined by their “systematic knowledge bases;” professionals who reflect on their practice have “specialized, firmly bounded, scientific, and standardized knowledge” from which they make decisions (p. 23). In short, professionals tend to think reflectively and critically about their practice, generating new knowledge through their reflection.

Laboskey's (1997) research into the reflective thinking of preservice teachers indicates that reflection is not easily acquired. Laboskey's findings, as with the findings of other researchers (Harrington, 1995), suggest that no one assignment or method will increase sufficiently the reflective thinking of preservice teachers. Instead the integration of several methods focusing on teacher reflection (portfolios, peer collaboration, case methods) may most benefit preservice teachers (Clarke, 1995; Harrington, 1995; Hawkey, 1995; Jadallah, 1996; Laboskey, 1997; Richert, 1997). Laboskey (1994) found that preservice teachers' prior experiences and beliefs largely
determined their ability as reflective thinkers. She categorizes two groups of thinkers among the preservice teachers who she followed through their teacher education program. The first, common-sense thinkers, tended to focus on the experiential side of teaching and had "the propensity to favor the practical over the theoretical" (p. 20). The second, alert novices, appeared "to have been guided by a passionate creed. They had a certain mission to accomplish in their teaching" (p. 90). According to Laboskey (1997), teacher preparation programs need "to change novice knowledge and beliefs about teaching..." and also "restructure views about how knowledge and beliefs are acquired and evaluated in the first place" (p. 20). In order to do this, teacher education programs may need to understand the knowledge and beliefs that are embedded in preservice teachers' teaching autobiographies (Bullough, 1991; Clandinin, 1992) in order to find methods that can better engage their reflective thinking.

In researching the narratives of English-Education preservice teachers Ritchie and Wilson (2000) found that “most of their views about theory and pedagogy in English were so compartmentalized and depersonalized that they were unable to recognize how many of their beliefs were in tension with their own newly articulated histories as readers and writers” (p. 55). While English/Language Arts teacher educators and researchers hope to influence the schools through preservice teachers, the changes in preservice teachers often seem very limited. Kennedy’s (1998) large, longitudinal study of English/Language Arts teacher education programs at several universities found that English/Language Arts preservice teachers’ “learning was ‘piecemeal and uneven,’ there were no cases of a program changing the thinking of 100 percent of its teachers, of changing a teacher’s thinking 100 percent, and there
were instances of there being no change in teaching thinking even when the teacher’s orientation was directly opposed to the thinking of the program” (p. 188).

How preservice English teachers view their content area is an important concern for English educators. Grossman (1990) studied two groups of novice English teachers, those both with and without teacher education preparation. Those with teacher preparation had a clear focus on how to teach students while those without teacher preparation focused on the content, giving little consideration to how to teach or the needs and differences between individual students. Grossman (1990) found that the preservice teachers with teacher education learned pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge that is specific to teaching particular subject matters (Grossman, 1990; Grossman & Shulman, 1994; and Shulman, 1986), and instructional strategies for teaching English. Grossman argued that while a prerequisite, by itself content area expertise was not sufficient for successful teaching. Grossman discovered that learning “on the job” without guidance and training in pedagogy did not provide teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Gundsmundsdottir (1995) argues that pedagogical content knowledge requires a transformation of teachers’ content knowledge “different from what it was before, a form that has practical application in teaching” (p. 28).

Preservice English/Language Arts teachers may further benefit from examples of teaching that serve as exemplars of what it means to be a teacher who reflects on the teaching of English for specific purposes and students. Specifically discussing reflection on the teaching of writing, Hillocks (1995) writes, “A reflective practitioner
will analyze a new idea in light of its appropriateness to the students and their present knowledge; its fit with available theory, experience, and the goals of teaching; and its probability for success judged from the teacher’s experience and knowledge” (p. 37). Gauging the connections between theory, experience, and the specific educational environment in which English/Language Arts teaching occurs, the reflective English teacher attempts to “create an environment” in which students acquire the “artist’s tools,” tools that can best help the student learn to write effectively (Hillocks, 1995, pp. 124-125). In order to become the reflective practitioner Hillocks (1995) advocates, an English teacher must be a student of the content matter, pedagogical tools, and students themselves.

According to Carter and Doyle’s (1989) research into teacher expertise, “Experts appear, rather, to have detailed and highly specialized knowledge in their domain of expertise. This knowledge is ‘episodic’ it is embedded in previously encountered and remembered ‘cases’ or ‘events’ in the domain of interest. As a result, experts’ knowledge is conditional and situational.” (p. 60). An expert in a private single-sex school may not be an expert at teaching in a public co-education school and vice versa. Teacher education programs need to be able to prepare preservice teachers for particular contexts and be organized for interpretive capacity and efficiency (Carter & Doyle, 1989; Finders and Rose, 1999; Putnam and Borko, 2000). Teacher education programs may need to give preservice teachers the skills to interpret their contexts and work within those specific contexts, leading toward the preservice teachers becoming experts with time.
Experts, because of experience and reflection in their practice of teaching, have acquired the ability to interpret classroom situations, making decisions based on principles that guide their instructional practices (Applebee, 1986a; Grossman, 1990). The knowledge base out of which expert teachers interpret their specific domains is what Carter and Doyle (1989) define as principle-oriented knowledge, structures that “enable experts to process information from their environment efficiently, direct their attention to significant aspects of a case, sense gaps in their existing knowledge and understanding, and revise their knowledge as necessary by incorporating new cases. This interpretive capacity is especially useful for solving novel problems” (Carter & Doyle, 1989, p. 60). Experts are able to use their prior experiences and principles to reflect and solve current problems.

Preservice and inservice teachers reflect differently on stories or episodes of teaching. Finders and Rose (1999) found that when discussing a teacher vignette “a prospective teacher often draws on her experiential knowledge as a student (‘when I was in high school’) which ignores the situatedness of that experience in complex sociopolitical networks” (p. 205). Finders and Rose (1999), in their work with preservice English teachers, developed a pedagogical principle based on what they called “situated performance” (p. 209). This process required preservice teachers to engage with principles of teaching in specific contexts. They role-played particular situations, bringing theory and principles of teaching into their decision-making and reflection.
Preservice teachers learn best in a collaborative environment that viewed their social interactions with peers, cooperating teachers, university supervisors and professors, and students as integral to their development as teachers. Particularly relevant to individual teachers learning in a social context, situative perspective provides a lens for understanding the social nature of the contexts in which individuals learn to act. In his work on the culture of education, Jerome Bruner (1996) argues “it is practically impossible to understand a thought, an act, a move of any sort from the situation in which it occurs” (p. 167). Putnam and Borko (2000), discussing studies that expand on the notion that thought and action are inextricably tied to certain contexts, write about the insight that a “situative perspective on cognition--that knowing and learning are situated in physical and social contexts, social in nature, and distributed across persons and tools--might offer those of us seeking to understand and improve teaching learning” (p. 12). The situative perspective is part of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) idea about apprenticeship and legitimate participation and the building of expertise, because experts generally have expertise limited to particular situations and contexts.

The theory of legitimate peripheral participation argues “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). According to this theory, participants move from a period of novices in a field toward a period of full participation through an apprenticeship with more experienced professionals and artisans. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe peripheral participation as “being located in the social world.
Changing locations and perspectives are part of actors’ learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership” (p. 36). Through the process of learning, of engaging in peripheral participation, learners of a trade or profession involve themselves in “situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 51). According to this theory, learning means “becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

Developing a teaching identity, a role that connects with students, is difficult. The question is one of developing an identity with which the teacher feels comfortable while allowing the teacher to best facilitate the class. Cain’s research with alcoholics provides a useful definition for identity: “By ‘identity’ I mean the way a person understands and views himself, and is viewed by others, a perception of self which is fairly constant” (Cain cited in Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 81). While identity may be fairly constant, there are shifts that occur, particularly when considering the personal and the professional.

In a professional role, the identity that an individual possesses is a critical factor in determining how successful the individual will be in relating to others and performing professional responsibilities. A tension exists between the identity that newcomers to a profession bring with them and the identity that they develop in the community of practice.

In their research on identity Marcus and Nurius (1986) suggest that each person has a variety of possible selves from which they choose to perform in particular
contexts and situations. Marcus and Nurius (1986) found that “possible selves are linked to the dynamic properties of the self-concept—to motivation, to distortion, and to change, both momentary and enduring” (p. 954). While all individuals are “free to create any variety of possible selves…” limitations exist because “the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual’s particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols, provided by the media and by the individual’s immediate social experiences” (Marcus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

In their research on narratives with English-Education preservice teachers, Ritchie and Wilson (2000) argue that stories allow teachers to “compose” their own authentic identities. Revealing the power that stories of teaching have in encouraging original thinking and reflection, Ritchie and Wilson (2000) write that “when teachers are given the opportunity to compose and reflect on their own stories of learning and of selfhood within a supportive and challenging community, then teachers can begin to resist and revise the scripting narratives of the culture and begin to compose new narratives of identity and practice” (p. 1). In order for preservice teachers to compose and reflect on their own subjectivities of teaching, they have to consider the models and images that had been guiding their practice, models and images whose impact they may not have thoroughly considered prior to preservice teaching.

Recent research on models and images of teaching provides a fairly negative picture, in that the models and images which teachers are provided of their profession often depict a very narrow view of what it means to be a teacher. Particularly problematic is the fact that early experiences and images of teachers may predominate
preservice teachers’ conceptions of teaching (Knowles, 1995). In discussing his research on teaching models and images, Knowles (1995) writes that the findings “suggest that early childhood experiences, early teacher role models, and previous teaching experiences are most important in the formation of an ‘image of self as teacher’” (p. 100). While Knowles provides a wide range of areas that influence preservice teacher thinking, models of “inspirational” teachers appear to be the dominant image of what being a “good” teacher is to most preservice teachers.

Another image of teaching that influences teachers, one most perpetuated by the media, is that of teaching as a romantic calling. This romantic calling draws many of us to teaching, shaping our views of what we should be as teachers. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) contend: “Teacher identities take not only the form of romantic tales of a ‘calling,’ of a most noble profession, of helping the needy. They may also take the form of tales of service, and servant, of doing one’s public duty and of obeying, or not, orders from above” (p. 172). This image has a very problematic nature, especially for new teachers finding themselves in a dilemma of not being able to fulfill that “romantic ideal” leading them to feel that they are failures. Preservice teachers need to choose from a wide range of stories in order to compose their own stories. A critical source of these stories is their own peer groups, their own community of participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Schon, 1987).
Becoming "informed decision makers" about the images and stories of teaching practices that influence their perspectives on teaching English/Language Arts may help them to develop as reflective practitioners (Zitlow, 1990; Zitlow and Decoker, 1994).

**Activity Theory**

A productive theory in the explanation and interpretation of the behavior of individuals and groups in particular contexts is activity theory. Activity theory, based on the work of Soviet psychologist Vygotsky and the conceptualization of Vygotsky’s student Leont’ev, and later refined and extended by the works of cultural psychologists such as Cole (1996), Engestrom and Mittinen (1999), and Wertsch (1991; 1998; Wertsch, del Rio, and Alvarez, 1995), suggests that the appropriate unit of analysis for discussing human behavior and actions is the activity system. Activity theory contends that actions are comprised of these activity systems made up of participants (subjects), purposes (goals, motives, or objects), mediating artifacts (tools used to achieve goals), and rules for participation. Three terms are essential for comprehending activity theory and its applications toward this study: mediated action, tools, and appropriation.

According to Wertsch (1995), the emphasis for understanding learning is a focus on the individual performing actions in a sociocultural setting. Wertsch (1998) argues that the key to research incorporating a sociocultural approach is to “explicate the relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, historical, and institutional contexts in which this action occurs, on the other” (p. 24). In
examining the notion of mediated action, action that is mediated or learned, Wertsch (1998) focuses “on agents and their cultural tools—the mediators of action” (p. 24).

Specifically bringing the utilization of activity theory to investigations of English/Language Arts preservice teachers’ thinking about teaching and learning, Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) contend that researchers must ask themselves “How do activity settings mediate teachers’ thinking? What kinds of social structures are prevalent in different settings, and in what manner do they mediate the appropriation of particular pedagogical tools for teaching? To what extent are different tools for teaching appropriated for use in different settings?” (p. 15).

Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia, (1999) define two types of tools, practical and conceptual. Practical tools refer to “classroom practices, strategies, and resources that do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions but instead, have more local and immediate utility” (p. 14). Grossman, et al. (2000) define “conceptual tools as principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and English/Language Arts that teachers use as heuristics to guide their instructional decisions” (p. 7). Contending that there is a close connection between conceptual and practical tools in the minds and actions of preservice teachers Grossman, et al. (2000) write: “Conceptual tools, however, need to be exemplified by practical tools and strategies in order for teachers to more fully appropriate them. A vision can seem terribly insubstantial without the concrete strategies to attain it” (p. 33). Tool kits refer to the repertoire of tools available for individuals and groups within a particular activity system.
With respect to research on teaching and learning, “appropriation refers to the process through which a person adopts the pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments and through this process internalizes ways of thinking endemic to specific cultural practices” (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999, p. 15). A problem with appropriation suggests that actors acquire knowledge, internalize, and apply it to other contexts and situations in what has been termed the “possession metaphor” Wertsch (1991). However alternative views of appropriation offer possibilities for contemplating the innovation of individuals within an activity system.

Rogoff’s work suggests that another more useful way of considering how individuals learn from prior activities and experiences with tools is the notion of what she terms participatory appropriation. Rogoff (1995) writes that “rather than viewing the process as one of internalization in which something static is taken across a boundary from the external to the internal, I see children’s active participation itself as being the process by which they gain facility in an activity” (p. 151). Participants blend their knowledge and experience of past actions into their present and future participation in actions. Rogoff argues that when involved in an action a person is acting “on the basis of previous experiences, his or her past is present. It is not merely a stored memory called up in the present; the person’s previous participation contributes to the event at hand by having prepared it” (Rogoff, 1995, p. 155).

**Stories, Case Stories, and Narrative Inquiry**

In order to be articulate in a "reflective conversation," preservice teachers have to be conversing with someone with whom they have a "shared reality" (Richert,
1990). Being able to compare experiences, to tell stories about specific situations, is crucial, in Richert's findings, to preservice teachers' ability to reflect. In this event, she finds that teacher education programs that wanted to develop preservice teachers' reflective thinking must "provide resources and support for new teachers to learn to be reflective about their practice" (Richert, 1997, p. 527).

Analyzing seven university teacher preparation programs that focus on developing reflective practitioners, Sparks-Langer (1992) notes three different types of reflection. The first type, which seems to dominate most programs, is cognitive reflection. This type of reflection centers on "information processing" and "decision making." Cognitive reflection attempts to understand how preservice teachers reflected. Programs that emphasize the second type, critical reflection, largely based on the ideas of critical theory (Freire, 1971; Giroux, 1989; Macedo, 1994; McClaren, 1989), attempt to develop ethical and moral reasoning in preservice teachers. The third type of reflection, narrative reflection, seems to receive limited attention in the programs according to Sparks-Langer (1992). Narrative reflection involves components of both cognitive and critical reflection "refers to teachers telling their own stories through problem framing, naturalistic inquiry, and case studies" (p.147). This type of reflection, which Sparks-Langer considers crucial to the development of preservice teachers, centers on the specific circumstances and contexts within which teachers teach.
In this view, telling stories about teaching is an "expression of the essence of who we are" (p. 160). Sparks-Langer considers the fact that teacher education programs that emphasize cognitive and critical reflection often do not attempt to understand the complexity of the lives of the preservice teachers to be a severe limitation of those programs.

Autobiographies of personal experiences in classroom settings along with case stories of teaching may help preservice teachers connect the various aspects of their lives into their teaching. “From this perspective, autobiographical narratives have power not because they foreground one coherent set of characteristics, but because they help narrators express and manage multiple, partly contradictory selves and experiences” (Wortham, 2001, p. 7). Case stories of teaching unite autobiographical, contextualized experiences with theories and principles of teaching, both important aspects of learning to teach (Bulloughs, 1991; Grossman, 1990; Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Kagan, 1993; Knowles, 1995).

Through the telling of stories, narrators create a unique identity for themselves. In his work on narrative research, Wortham (2001) argues that

Autobiographical narratives might construct or transform the self in part because, in telling the story, the narrator adopts a certain *interactional position*—and in acting like that kind of person becomes more like that kind of person. In other words, autobiographical narratives may give meaning and direction to narrators’ lives and place them in characteristic relations with other people, not only as narrators who represent themselves in characteristic ways but also as they enact characteristic positions while they tell their stories. (p. 9)
Narrative inquiry involves efforts to understand the experiences of individuals in social situations. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue “the heart of narrative analysis is ‘the ways humans experience the world’” (p. 2). In their recent work on narrative analysis Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contend that “narrative inquirers tend to begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories” (p. 40) and that through narrative inquiry “people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 43).

Wortham asserts (2001) that there are two aspects of telling stories. The first, the storytelling event, pertains to “the interactional context within which the speaker utters something (p. 19). The second, the narrated event, involves the speaker/writer’s conveying their perceptions of “the event described by the utterance” (Wortham, 2001, p. 19).

Teaching involves an effort to synthesize a wide range of theories and experiences into specific events, generally called classroom lessons. Stories possess the ability to explain “complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of phenomenon” (Carter, 1992, p. 6). Gundmundsdottir’s research (1995) shows that experienced teachers “intuitively use narratives to bring order to what they consider to be a disjointed curriculum” (Gundmundsdottir, 1995, p. 26).

Schools of education, taking a cue from other professional schools such as business, medicine, and law (Christensen, 1991), recently have begun to incorporate case methods as a pedagogical tool in the preparation of teachers. Generating from the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Schon (1983; 1987), the case method, according to Harrington (1995), “is based on the conception that knowledge is constructed, built on
prior knowledge, coupled with experience, transformable, evolving and consequential, and, thereby, provides students with insight into alternative solutions rather than correct answers" (p. 203). The case method attempts to build reflective practice by realizing that a significant element in "being critical about professional action is reflecting on the consequences of that action" (Harrington, 1995, p. 210).

Traditionally case methods in teacher education courses have involved preservice teachers reflecting on cases generated by someone other than himself or herself. These cases usually revolve around a problematic incident for which participants attempt to find alternative solutions (Kleinfeld, 1998). Harrington et al. (1996) argue that dilemma-based cases gauge critical reflection, making participants aware of taken-for-granted assumptions. Anderson & Bird (1995) found that cases provided "alternative images of teachers," potentially allowing participants to view situations from a variety of perspectives. However, Anderson & Bird (1995) argue that preservice teachers' beliefs remained sturdy in analyzing cases, that their prior beliefs and experience shaped their interpretations. Harrington (1995) perceived that preservice teachers have difficulty in supplying support for their interpretations, tending to generalize and having limited theoretical grounds for their solutions to problems.

Preservice teachers perceive and approach problem cases differently than experienced teachers. Lundenberg & Fawver (1994), whose involvement with case methods began because they believed little was known about how to increase reflectivity in preservice teachers, notice significant differences between experienced teachers and preservice teachers with respect to case methods. Experienced teachers
approach a case by framing the problem first, while preservice teachers attempt to solve the problem quickly, without adequately understanding what the problem is (Lundenberg & Fawver, 1994). Also, preservice teachers tend not to consider many alternatives to solving the problem (Lundenberg & Fawver, 1994). In further work with preservice teachers, Lundenberg and Scheurmann (1997) find that cases have to be connected to instructional units within teacher education courses. They contend that anchoring and analyzing cases is important. Most importantly, Lundenberg and Scheurmann (1997) discover that through analyzing the same case more than once preservice teachers are able to "refine concepts and perspectives." These findings suggest that use of case methods in teacher education programs must involve considerable time and effort on the part of both preservice teachers and teacher educators. A limitation with case methods has been that they often only provide enough contextualization to analyze a problem. These cases may not offer enough specificity to create the "shared reality" that Richert (1990) deems a necessary factor in preservice teacher reflection. Preservice teachers with limited experiences upon which to draw, may need fuller description and contextualization than traditional "book cases" provide.
Cases that offer deepened depiction of context, setting, and character may be of more use to preservice teachers:

We believe that the ‘knowledge base’ of teaching must be composed, in large measure, of carefully collected and analyzed cases of teaching and learning. These cases provide contextualized instances of English teaching that can be compared with one another, analyzed for their distinctive features, and reviewed to understand the strategic and moral lessons of their stories. Principles can be derived from the analysis of these accounts. (Grossman & Shulman, 1994, p. 17)

In extending this call for the importance of cases, Grossman and Shulman (1994) argue “for a balance between the intensity of a few vivid experiences in the field and the vicarious exploration of a wide range of circumstances through cases” (Grossman and Shulman, 1994, p. 15). The results of this project illustrate how preservice teachers used their own “vivid” field experiences to illuminate their thinking and feeling about teaching and connect those thoughts and feelings with those of other preservice teachers.

Case stories of teaching are cases which participants, teachers, and preservice teachers in this case, compose themselves. Case stories of teaching, heavily situated and contextualized (Carter, 1992), may allow teachers to "see self in new light" (Gomez, 1997). Kleinfield (1998) learned that preservice teachers gained more from writing their own cases, a process that for many was a "cathartic experience" (Kleinfield, 1998). In considering case stories of teaching, "the text must allow the reader to interpret, as the story is told, what sense the teacher seemed to make of
similar events" (Carter, 1992, p. 115). While less work has been done with case stories of teaching than traditional case methods, promising results exist for this line of pedagogy and inquiry. Working with public school administrators, Ackerman, Maslin-Ostrowski, and Christensen (1996) and Benham (1996) found that case stories of teaching were a strong pedagogical tool that enabled teachers, in collaborative groups, to articulate and reflect on the complexity of their educational experiences.

Case stories of teaching may allow teachers to reflect on their classroom practices and share with one another what they consider to have been successful and unsuccessful experiences. By looking into their own experiences and appropriating principled approaches (Applebee, 1986a; 1988; Grossman, 1990) based on the tenets of that practice to their teaching, teachers foster reflection rather than implementing techniques from outside the experiences of individual teachers and learners.

Cortazzi (1993) suggests that teachers' stories, often centering on classroom events and teachers' evaluations of those events, can be "thought of as reflection about reflection" (p.13). Learning to tell and write stories about teaching involves situatedness and fluidity. Cortazzi (1993) contends that teacher narratives possess power and persuasion because of their deep entrenchment within situated contexts: "the act of narrating one's experience as a teacher focuses reflection on key classroom events and helps the teller of the story to make sense of what has happened" (p. 8). Classroom contexts are so powerful, and the culture of teacher stories is so strong that it is difficult to discover "if the teacher is telling the story or the story is telling the teacher" (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 23). Rather than as a point of ambiguity, I perceive this as suggesting that teacher stories are so powerful that they have a life of their own.
Diversity in contexts of teaching and the lives of teachers and students creates a situation in narrative research where "dynamic social conditions mean that people's interpretations are continuously in flux" (Casey, 1996, p. 240). This suggests “the repertoire of stories still waiting to be told (and studied) is practically limitless. What better way to grapple with making sense of our rapidly changing world than through the study of stories" (Casey, 1996, p. 240).

**Conclusion: Why this Study is Needed**

There are four areas in which this research project informs the current knowledge base of teacher education research and practice. Those four areas, explained below, are developed further in the concluding chapter of this study. The areas are: understanding preservice teacher thinking; facilitating preservice teachers’ development of a collaborative community; creating an environment where preservice teachers may be able to change their thinking about teaching; and analyzing how case stories of teaching can be used alongside other methods as a part of a teacher education curriculum.

*Understanding Preservice Teacher Thinking*

In pursuing a narrative inquiry, I attempted to understand how the preservice teachers were experiencing the beginning of their teaching careers during preservice teaching. Since I was interested in their whole experience connected to specific classroom events and interactions, stories provided a critical avenue for investigation. “The study of experience is through stories people tell and on how these stories are communicated—on the language used to tell stories” (Merriam, 1998, p. 157).
For the preservice teachers balancing their personal and professional identities became a concern as they considered the possible identities that they wanted to display as teachers. A reason for developing preservice teacher stories is that they often have had limited stories of teaching to choose from, limited images of what it means to be a strong teacher (Grossman, 1990; Marshall & Smith, 1997; Vinz, 1997; Zitlow, 1990; Zitlow & Decoker, 1994). Preservice teachers often encounter ideals of what good teaching is in their university courses, but have difficulty connecting those views with what they find being practiced in the schools (Feiman Nemser, 1983; Feiman Nemser & Buchman, 1985; Grossman, 1990; Marshall and Smith, 1997). The preservice teachers in this project connected their personal experiences and identities with images they had encountered of teachers (from personal experience in classrooms, the media, stories of peers, educational textbooks) as they developed a repertoire of possible selves from which to build a teaching identity. Several case stories of teaching in this project narrate preservice teachers’ struggles to find a middle, attainable ground where they strive for their ideals without punishing themselves for not reaching those ideals at all times.

Frequently in English/Language Arts, preservice teachers struggle to use a curriculum which they do not understand, or that seems theoretically illogical compared to the ideas in their university teaching methods courses. Recent research points to the outdated and illogical construction of many current curricula in English/Language Arts (Applebee, 1993; Applebee, 1996; Elbow, 1990; Hillocks, 1995; Hillocks, 1999; Marshall & Smith, 1997; Scholes, 1998). Throughout this research project, I attempt to understand how preservice teachers make sense of the
disjointed curricula of the schools and the differences between their prior experiences as students, their university course work in education, and the schools in which they were teaching.

Creating a Collaborative Community

Preservice teachers--because of the limited images available to them--fall into a conundrum of either being charismatic Jaime Escalantes of Stand and Deliver or the traditional, mundane Dittos of Teachers who just pass out worksheets without any interaction or concern with students. The preservice teachers with this view are led to believe that they are complete failures if they do not change all students’ lives, and they often felt that they must accomplish this by themselves. Calls have been made to create other, alternative images of what it means to be a teacher, of what it means for teachers and students to succeed in the classroom that resists these limited and confining conceptions (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Vinz, 1997). Becoming part of a community of image-makers allows English/Language Arts preservice teachers to participate in the transformation of acceptable images of English/Language Arts teachers. The images of teaching which the preservice teachers narrate in their case stories of teaching present examples of alternative images.

Impacting and Changing Preservice Teacher Thinking

One of the major concerns limiting teacher education is that teacher education has had little impact on preservice teachers, particularly in changing their thinking about instructional methods (Kennedy, 1998; Knowles, 1995; Marshall and Smith, 1997). In short, research seems to indicate that prior experiences play such a heavy
role in developing teacher beliefs that teacher education is largely unable to change preservice teachers’ ideas about instruction (Knowles, 1995). In this study, the case stories of teaching illustrate what tools preservice teachers appropriated for use in their particular settings and explain why the preservice teachers selected these specific tools. The case stories of teaching data from the six participating preservice teachers (discussed in Chapter Four) illustrate effectively how these individuals pulled from the tools acquired in a variety of settings, including their university teacher education courses to make decisions and implement strategies in their classrooms. In fact, this study shows that these preservice teachers relied on the theories from their methods courses, arguing that they would have taught very differently if it were not for their teacher education courses.

The classroom actions in which preservice teachers engaged were often determined by the tools available to them at the time of their teaching. Case stories of teaching chronicled change and the ability of preservice teachers and students to adapt to their evolving roles as students and educators. Likewise, the role of the supervisor became different as a result of the storytelling. Through interaction between the preservice teachers and myself a realization of the “transformative power of the story, then, involves an interrelation between the narrator as represented character and the narrator and audience as interactional participants” (Wortham, 2001, p. 13). The stories had both a transformative and a unifying power.

*Case Stories of Teaching as Part of Teacher Education Curriculum*

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) in their work on preservice teacher reflection argue that “Teacher development requires that narrative be used strategically alongside
sustained ongoing reflection” (p. 181). During the course of their research Ritchie and Wilson “discovered that their (the preservice teacher) storytelling, when accompanied by opportunities to examine critically those stories in dialogue with others, helped them resist other stories that would narrow and constrain their identities and their notions of language and learning” (p. 75).

The preservice teachers who participated in this study were attempting to integrate several different aspects of their personalities and lives into their teaching: their lives as mothers, wives, fiancées, sisters, writers, social advocates, students with their current experiences as teachers. Through the case stories of teaching and the group-reflective interview the preservice teachers were able to connect the many different facets of their lives with their teaching in ways that can be very beneficial as part of the teacher education curriculum.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA ANALYSIS, AND ETHICS

Introduction

This chapter considers the issues related to a narrative inquiry in teacher education. The first section focuses on the purposes of narrative inquiry and qualitative-research interviewing. The next section focuses on the methods of participant selection and data collection. The third section discusses methods of analysis; specifically types of narrative analysis and the reasons for selecting those methods in the analysis of the data. The final section of this chapter centers on the issues of validity, trustworthiness, and ethics in this qualitative-research project.

Purposes of Narrative Inquiry and Research Interviewing

Narrative inquiry has as its topic the life experiences of the participants. Highly interactive in nature, narrative inquiry involves a need for a strong reciprocal relationship between researcher and participants (Oakley, 1981). During the interviews I did not share my own stories but rather focused on the stories of the preservice teachers. However, I did share stories in the student-teaching seminars and debriefings. The sharing of stories of teaching has been an integral part of my relationship with preservice teachers in the past and is an important part of my relationship with these preservice teachers, both as a supervisor and as a researcher. This project includes opportunities for preservice teachers to share, interpret, and
reflect on their stories of teaching English/Language Arts with a community of supportive peers. "Narrative inquiry as research method builds on this process of growth, that is, on these constructions and reconstructions of personal practical knowledge as we story and restory our lives. Narrative inquiry is the storying and restorying of our narratives of educational experience" (Clandinin, 1992, p. 126). The case stories of teaching were developed through research interviews with the aim being "nuanced description" (Kvale, 1996). Within the context of this study, "nuanced description" means gathering enough details to understand the setting, the relationship of participants, and the problems or successes of the event, in order to create a "shared reality" between the narrator and the audience.

Kvale (1996) writes "the topic of the qualitative research interview is the lived world of the subjects and their relation to it. The purpose is to describe and understand the central themes the subjects experience and live toward" (p. 29). I am deeply concerned with the themes that the preservice teachers who participated in this study find relevant, both in their own stories and the stories that peers share with them. Using the metaphor of research as traveling to supplant previous metaphors of research as mining or digging out information, Kvale (1996) argues "the traveler metaphor understands the interviewer as a traveler on a journey that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home" (p. 4). The purpose of narrative method is to develop a "joint living out of two person's narratives, researcher and practitioner, so that both participants are continuing to tell their own stories but the stories are now being lived out in a collaborative experience" (Clandinin, 1992, p. 127). Clearly, the preservice teachers and I were interacting to develop both case stories of teaching and
interpretations of those stories, so in essence the stories became ours, a combination of
the narrator and the interpreter interacting in a collaborative storytelling experience.

Several problems exist in the choice of narrative as a mode of study. The first
being that preservice teacher narratives, according to some research, have a tendency
to lack a sense of the larger issues involved in teaching and focus more on the issues
and problems of the preservice. Many preservice teachers see their issues and
concerns as isolated, developing a highly internal, egocentric view of issues of
that the preservice teachers construct is usually cast as an individual story that may
deny the sociohistorical construction of the events. That is to say, writing institutional
biographies focuses attention on the learners as individuals and denies the social
situatedness of their life histories” (p. 219). Finders and Rose are referring here to
narratives that preservice teachers constructed both as life histories of their
experiences as students and of their initial experiences learning to teach.

A second issue is one of genre. Research has contended that narrative is a
genre of research that teachers find most effective and accessible. A recent study by
Kennedy (1999) refutes this claim arguing that teachers respond to the issues
embedded within research more than the genre. Specifically, Kennedy’s findings
contend that teachers are most concerned with issues connecting teaching and
learning, and that the “importance of substantive questions we choose to study may
seem so self-evident as to not even bear mentioning, but what little literature exists
regarding important substantive questions is overwhelmed by an avalanche of
literature advocating genres” (pp. 536-537). Therefore, in the discussion and usage of
stories, while I am arguing that narrative is an effective genre for the study of preservice teachers’ conceptualizations of teaching and learning, it is their conceptualizations of teaching and learning that are most prevalent in my research.

A third issue of concern, with respect to the investigation of preservice teachers’ case stories of teaching embedded in this study, involves the concept of voice. For the purposes of this study, voice functions from a multivocal perspective, an intermingling of multiple preservice teacher voices and my voice as a researcher, teacher, and supervisor. Within the framework of this study, I found critical importance in remembering “the term voice serves as a constant reminder that mental functioning in the individual originates in social, communicative processes” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 13).

**Research Design Used in Collecting Data**

Over the past several years I have been researching the thought and teaching practices of preservice English teachers in two separate studies. The first study (Newell, Gingrich, and Beumer Johnson, 2001) investigated preservice teachers’ appropriation of principled models for effective practice in the English/Language Arts at the secondary level from university course work and field experiences. The second set of studies inquired into two different areas: preservice English teachers' conceptions of and abilities to incorporate issues of diversity into their teaching of literature and also what and how preservice teachers learn about teaching secondary English from their mentoring teachers. Based on these projects, I developed my interest in how preservice teachers come to think of themselves as teachers and develop those conceptualizations through stories. Analysis of the stories of two of
those preservice teachers in retrospective interviews following their student-teaching experience provided clues for possible avenues for interpretation based on narrative analysis (Alasuutari, 1995; Chase, 1993; Cortazzi, 1993; Kvale, 1996; Riessman, 1993; Rosaldo, 1989).

The two preservice teachers, Walter and John, both European-American males in their mid-twenties, had completed their preservice teaching in urban high schools. Both brought to their preservice teaching a wealth of experiences including previous employment and vocational interests prior to choosing teaching as a career. In response to a question on teaching in a retrospective interview about the influence of his teacher preparation program, Walter replied that it changed him greatly. In his view, if it were not for the English Education program, he would have "gotten away with teaching as he had been taught." For Walter this would have meant following a model of having the students read a book, discuss it, and write a paper on it--a common model in the teaching of English (Marshall & Smith, 1997). As a result of the program’s influence, Walter incorporated process strategies of teaching writing and literature, and became very concerned with teaching multicultural literature in his classes. Many of John's ideas about English teaching were progressive in nature and similar to the philosophies of the English Education program. For instance, he incorporated media into his teaching with a high level of expertise and success and placed an importance on student's responses to and enjoyment of literature. Despite evidence of the English Education program’s effect on his teaching, John emphasized his own independence, relating his cultural perception of himself to that of a character in Goodfellas, tough and independent minded, not easily persuaded. As a result of
prompting during their interviews, these two individual English preservice teachers presented case stories of teaching about their reflections on teaching English to students in particular contexts, the influence of their preservice teacher education program on their development as beginning teachers, and how they saw themselves teaching English in the future. They positioned themselves as characters in their stories in very different ways. Walter had a more social view that allowed him to be influenced by peers and professors. John kept a distance, positioning himself as strong and independent. Narrative analysis of extended case stories of teaching composed by English preservice teachers has the potential to reveal significant understanding about their reflections on the teaching of English/Language Arts.

**Participant Samples, Setting, and Methods**

Participants in the study, holding Bachelors Degrees in English (five) or Journalism (one), were part of a Masters of Education Teacher Certification Program at a large land-grant university. The program was four quarters long, with the first three quarters including course work in general education; issues in language, literacy, and culture; and method courses for secondary English. During their second and third quarter, students also participated in field experiences in the public schools, one quarter in a suburban high school or middle school and one quarter in an urban high school or middle school. The program culminated in the fourth quarter with preservice teachers completing preservice teaching in either an urban or suburban school.

Writing about the criteria for choosing participants in a research study, Morse (1994) stresses that "a good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be
interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study" (p. 228). In Morse's case, she is discussing reflection in a different way, meaning someone who is generally thoughtful and able to hold forth in intelligent conversation. While this type of thoughtfulness may be a prerequisite to reflective practice (and an informative interview), it does not necessarily mean that the participants will be reflective about the practice of teaching. The goal of choosing participants was to find members who provided an "opportunity for learning" (Stake, 1994). In the case of this project, learning was an essential goal for both the researcher and the participants.

While there were many cohort members who fulfilled these requirements, I attempted to develop a group of participants who reflected the variety of the cohort with respect to perspectives on teaching, age, and cultural and ethnic background. I chose participants purposefully in the project in order to "assure variety though not necessarily representativeness" (Stake, 1994, p. 244). The purpose of qualitative research of this nature is depth and description rather than generalizations. I passed out permission slips to members of the entire cohort, which were to be returned to me if anyone was interested. Of the twenty-one students in the cohort, fifteen agreed to participate. Within the entire cohort there were eighteen females and three males. Only one male agreed to participate in the study. In order not to place a burden on the other supervising teachers, I took preservice teachers that did not interfere with my colleagues' schedules. The research project ended up being made up exclusively of females, which while homogeneous with respect to is representative of the English teaching profession which is approximately predominately female, the cohort being ninety percent female. Generally, supervising teachers want schools that are
geographically close to one another in order to cut down on travel time. I also selected preservice teachers in order to incorporate preservice teachers who both had and did not have experience teaching and who were teaching in both suburban areas and urban areas. The preservice teachers who participated in the study were in four different high schools in the area, two suburban and two urban.

The group of six, consists of six females: two European-American females with no prior teaching experience, Karla Anderson and Gail Pruitt who team-taught together; two European-American females who had taught respectively in Poland and Botswana, Erin Vincent and Hannah White who were team-teaching together; one African-American female, Sylvia Pierce who had extensive prior teaching experience as a substitute teacher as well as being a leader of a latch-key program who was teaching independently; and one African-American female, Jane Bond who had no prior teaching experience and had entered the program directly out of a bachelor’s program who was also teaching independently. All of the preservice teachers participated in the two interviews, worked with me as their supervising teacher during their preservice teaching at which time I made the standard five to seven observations and debriefings of their preservice teaching. They also allowed me to conduct a third interview mid-way through their preservice teaching in which they composed a teaching case story centered on English /Language Arts. Following their case stories of teaching, they met as a group to reflect on their case stories with other participants. Six participants provided a sufficient number for comparison among individual student cases and was small enough to write up a case story for each participant (Chase, 1993; Stake, 1995).
In the appendix, I include the questions from all of the interviews: the initial interview, case story interview, focus group interview, and retrospective interview. Observations and interviews were transcribed and sent to participants to be checked for accuracy, allowing them the opportunity to respond and alter their statements if they so desired.

| Ethnicity                  | One African-American Female  
|                           | One African-American/Asian-American Female  
|                           | Three European-American Females  
|                           | One British Female  
| Experience                | Three Experience Before Teacher Certification  
|                           | Three Direct to Teacher Certification  

**Table 3.1: Participant Background**

Direct to teacher certification refers to preservice teachers who entered the Masters of Education program as their first career/educational option after obtaining their Bachelors of Arts degree. Experience before teacher certification refers to preservice teachers for whom the Masters of Education program followed previous career/educational opportunities beyond the Bachelors of Arts degree. This may include graduate work in another academic field, non-teaching careers such as law or advertising, and non-certified teaching positions such as substitute teaching or day care programs.

**Data Collection**

**Interviews**

In the case of all of the interviews, the purpose is to provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to tell stories. Because of the need for depth in this circumstance,
Kvale (1996) urges the importance of providing "a context for the interview by a briefing and a debriefing afterward" (p. 127). In order to facilitate this, I discussed the questions with participants before the time of the interview, allowed time for feedback on the interview, and constantly allowed participants to question the questions and ask for clarifications. Likewise, participants were given the opportunity to revise their stories once they were presented with transcriptions of the interviews. Another important issue was the level of structure in the interviews. Kvale (1996) contends that more structured interviews allow for easier analysis, but structured interviews may also limit responses (Chase, 1993; Kvale, 1996). Chase (1993) found in her research with female school superintendents that in order to hear stories from participants that she had to have a strong level of open-endedness to her questions with limited sociological language. I used semi-structured interviews that attempted to focus the interviewee's attention on teaching English/Language Arts, while remaining open-ended enough to allow them to tell their own stories.

One of the critical dilemmas to consider in my development of this research project was how to develop questions that invited stories rather than reports. Receiving elaborate stories from participants in research projects can often be a difficult task (Chase, 1993; Kvale, 1996). An important element in receiving stories from participants is giving them the responsibility for their stories (Chase, 1993). With my particular participants, I believed that their backgrounds as literature and composition majors might have been of benefit in their storytelling. As with research in general, our relationship with and orientation toward our participants is critical (Oakley, 1981; Chase, 1993). Chase (1993) contends that our "orientation to others is
embedded in our questions" (p. 3). I followed Chase's advice by orienting my questions directly toward teaching experiences of which the preservice teachers were trying to make sense. I asked myself whether my questions directed preservice teachers toward their own teaching experiences or my research interests (Chase, 1993). Questions that tend to focus on the researcher’s interests, particularly if embedded in sociological language, will limit the participants’ ability or desire to tell stories (Chase, 1993). While allowing the questions to be open ended, inviting stories rather than reports, as a researcher, I also had the responsibility to set parameters for the interview and to focus the stories on the topics of teaching (Chase, 1993; Clandinin, 1992; Kvale, 1996). Given the preservice teachers’ immediate interest in this subject, this was fairly successful. The richness of the data was evidenced by the detail with which they engaged the storytelling process: I collected over four-hundred single-spaced pages of interview transcripts from the six participants and some participants talked for much longer than I had anticipated. I expected some of the initial and exit interviews to last approximately thirty minutes, but several of them lasted as long as seventy-five to ninety minutes.

The initial interviews occurred prior to the beginning of preservice teaching. I asked preservice teachers to tell and describe stories about effective teachers and students (see Appendix A). With respect to interviewing, Kvale (1996) contends that the interviewer should begin interpretation during the process of the interview while Seidman (1991) contends that in-depth analysis should begin only after all interviews are complete. Given the nature of these interviews—aiming toward participants narrating nuanced teaching case stories during the brief period (ten weeks) of
preservice teaching—it was important to begin preliminary coding following the initial interviews in order to develop the post-student-teaching interview. Also important was having the participants elaborate on descriptions, issues, and emerging themes based on my interpretations. In the post-student-teaching interview, I grounded questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) in the preservice teachers' responses to the initial interviews. I asked them to elaborate on their case stories of teaching experiences and their reflections about the teaching of English/Language Arts.

Case Story of Teaching Interview

The case story of teaching interview occurred near the midpoint (fifth and sixth weeks) of preservice teaching. I had hoped to conduct these a little earlier in the quarter to allow for multiple-group interviews, but several of the preservice teachers did not begin any actual teaching until the third and fourth week, thus it was necessary to do it later in the term. In this interview, the questions were very open-ended, asking the preservice teacher to tell two stories (see Appendix B). The first story was about an experience that they found to be invigorating or interesting with respect to teaching English/Language Arts (reading/literature, speaking, listening, writing, and thinking) during their student-teaching (or field experiences). The second story was about an experience that they had teaching English/Language Arts that they consider problematic or puzzling.

Following the case stories of teaching interview, I transcribed the stories and wrote them into narrative form preserving as much of the preservice teachers’ words as possible. Since there was little conversation, I deleted questions and left the student narration as it was, though I included punctuation where appropriate. The case stories
served as the centerpiece for a group interview in which the preservice teachers interpreted and reflected on the case stories. The transcripts of the case stories were delivered to participants for their review prior to the focus-group interview (See Appendix C). During the interviews, preservice teachers framed the issues in the teaching case stories, reflected on possible pedagogical responses to those issues, articulated principles that informed those responses, and projected how they might incorporate those principles into future teaching experiences. This should have involved more than one focus-group interview; however, due to time constraints and the difficulty of finding a time for all six preservice teachers to meet, I was only able to have one group interview. I consider this to be the primary limitation of my project.

Playing a dual role, that of supervising teacher and researcher, I had to be aware of possible conflicts. The presentation of the project to the preservice teachers centered on their preservice teaching, which I still believe is its primary import. If participants felt that the project was too much of a demand on their time they were free to withdraw at any time. I had a very mature group of preservice teachers and everyone completed the project as well as fulfilling their other responsibilities. My hope was that the collaborative reflection process was useful and beneficial to the preservice teachers, therefore being something in which they wanted to continue. During the same time-period as the final preservice teacher interview (see Appendix D), immediately following the completion of the student-teaching term, I interviewed cooperating teachers (see Appendix E). These interviews focus on three areas: impressions of preservice teachers' acculturation into the school community, the experiences of preservice teaching, and preservice teachers' ability to articulate their
reflections on teaching. This interview focuses on what had altered or been reaffirmed in the prospective teachers' stories as a result of their student-teaching experience.

Group Interview

The group-reflective interview gave preservice teachers the opportunity to share their case stories, their experiences, and to reflect with one another. This had a collaborative action orientation (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) through which the preservice teachers might begin to build a stronger community facilitating peer mentoring and reflection on teaching, an important aspect of learning to teach that has been largely neglected in both teacher education programs and educational research (Hawkey, 1995). This interview focused on framing and reflection on issues in case stories. The interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes during which time we discussed a story that the preservice teachers selected after reading over all of the stories, Jane Bond's using technology to teach Romeo and Juliet.

Classroom Observations

As part of my role as supervisor, I observed the preservice teachers five to seven times during their field experience and preservice teaching. I made the preservice teacher observations randomly, with preservice teachers being notified one week in advance when a particular observation would occur. Observations were particularly important because they revealed much about the preservice teachers' approach to teaching English/Language Arts. A possible concern is that preservice teachers' practices may represent their cooperating teachers' views more than the views of the preservice teacher, depending on the amount of autonomy the cooperating teacher allows the preservice teacher in teaching the courses.
Debriefings

Classroom observations were followed by taped debriefings that served as a forum for understanding the preservice teachers' deliberations and reflections on their teaching. The focus on these debriefings generally involved instructional and classroom management issues, as well as the sharing of teaching stories. I asked preservice teachers to focus on particular events within the observation that they felt were significant and to reflect on those particular events, problems that they may have incurred and strategies that they considered in implementing instruction. I made notes during the observations and transcribed the tapings of the debriefing sessions, giving both to the preservice teachers.

Documents from Course Work and Preservice teaching Journals

I studied writings that preservice teachers produced, including writing samples from methods courses, and Capstone Projects which served as their thesis. I also analyzed preservice teachers' reflective journals from field experiences and preservice teaching, lesson plans, and unit plans. These documents revealed information about how prospective teachers conceive of planning. Considerations might include focusing on preservice teachers' style with respect to planning, whether or not their planning was opened-ended or goal-oriented, and how prospective teachers consider problem solving with respect to planning. The documents presented a changing story of preservice teachers' views of teaching and themselves as teachers as they progress through the program, providing the opportunity for content analysis, the development of emerging themes that are relevant to one or more of the group participants. Most importantly preservice teachers revealed their overall perceptions about the cohort,
their schools, and the teacher education program through the documents. During the seminars, I took field notes of discussions with the exception of the group-reflective interviews that I taped and transcribed. Beginning the seminars by asking the preservice teachers what issues they wished to discuss led the way for the seminar discussion to focus on preservice teacher concerns. The preservice teachers chose to have informal seminars based on they raised at the beginning of each seminar as opposed to more direct, topic centered discussions.

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Table 3.2: Summary Data Collection

Triangulation

I used the various types of data for triangulation by investigating how the different narratives represented different/similar portrayals of the individual preservice teachers. To what extent did they complement each other? To what extent did the different data create tensions between themselves? What relationships existed between the views of the preservice teachers in their interviews and their course writings? Did observations of fieldwork correspond to representations in seminar conversations or in student-teaching journals? Did the depictions alter between
different instruments? How did participants respond to the data collected when it was presented to them? Did they feel that their interviews and documents effectively portrayed their experiences, beliefs, and perceptions?

Data Analysis

I have strong conceptualizations and biases with respect to teaching, creating a high risk for imposing my categories and views upon the preservice teachers and the research project. Considering what these biases are and how they influence my decisions was crucial in both conducting the research project and in analyzing the data. In an effort to limit the influence of my biases, I attempted to make participants feel free to express their honest viewpoints and to provide periodic member checks that allowed participants to respond to my interpretations. Since the concept of emerging data was important to this study, preservice teachers brought out issues they wanted to be part of the second and third interview question schedules. Also e-mail provided an opportunity for participants to comment on and respond to their responses to questions.

I suggested earlier that I wanted to study case stories of teaching in order to learn more about how English preservice teachers reflect on the teaching of their subject matter to specific students. While recently there have been numerous narratives about teaching, what is missing is the issue of analysis and interpretation. Frequently, narratives are offered as though they have no ideology, as though they exist as autonomous entities, but "nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do. Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations" (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). I believe that narratives are a way to connect people—or unfortunately as
can be the case, to disconnect people from teaching. Narrative analysis (Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993) and interpretation in education bring the whole teaching and learning person into context and "allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects" (Riessman, 1993, p. 70).

The social and cultural elements of stories are critical. In preservice teachers' stories I found that in part they were trying to fit themselves into a complex social environment, their school community that includes teachers, administrators, other preservice teachers, cooperating teachers, students, parents, and other community members. Narrative analysis contributed to "the study of general social phenomena through a focus on their embodiment in specific life stories" (Riessman, 1993, p.2). Within the narrative analysis of the data in this study, it is important for me to remember that I am studying a story constructed by a narrator, the preservice teacher. Through narrative analysis I attempted to understand how preservice teachers actively constructed the stories of their teaching as well as the structures that they used to convey those stories in a social setting (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis has a strong social aspect, as Chase (1993) contends, providing an opportunity in which life stories themselves embody what we need to study: the relation between this instance of social action (this particular life story) and the social world the narrator shapes with others; the ways in which culture marks, shapes, and or constrains this narrative; and the ways in which this narrator makes use of cultural resources and struggles with cultural contraints. (p. 20)
In analyzing these particular preservice teachers' case stories of teaching, I consider whether the context of the school environment (teachers, administrators, students, traditions, etc.) encourages or discourages the preservice teachers from telling their stories. Do cooperating teachers or other teachers in the school invite the preservice teachers to tell their stories? What do the case stories (and pre-and post-student-teaching interviews) say about the social context of the schools in which preservice teachers teach? Narrative analysis has the goal of understanding how general social processes are embedded in narratives (Chase, 1993, p. 22). In order to do this most successfully, I decided to use the ideas of activity theory, which provide a useful method of analysis for both the interviews and stories of teaching.

A possibility for understanding how preservice teachers conceive of themselves as teachers of English and their students as learners of English exists by analyzing how preservice teachers represent themselves and their students within their case stories of teaching. Other interesting avenues for investigations involve preservice teachers' descriptions of settings/contexts, choices of plot lines, decisions about narrative techniques, awareness of audience, and representations of characters and themselves within their case stories. Cross case analysis (Chase, 1993) suggests the opportunity for pursuing the development of different/similar plot lines across multiple participant stories.

**Specific Types of Coding and Analysis**

Within this study, there are several sets/types of data that I analyzed and interpreted: case stories of teaching, portions of interview transcripts which may not be presented in a story form, group-interview transcripts focusing on reflection, written
documents (journals, course papers, and Capstone Projects), observations, and
observation debriefings. Narrative analysis presents several possibilities for coding
and analyzing the data, including structural analysis, a focus on form/function, and
content analysis. Structural analysis has frequently been used to categorize how
narrators organize the stories that they tell or write (Alasuutari, 1995; Coffey &
Atkinson, 1996; Cortazzi, 1993; Kvale, 1996; Labov, 1972; 1982). In structural
analysis, close attention is paid to the patterns and organization of the stories that
participants compose. Labov (1972; 1982) developed a coding schema that has been
used by researchers (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: Cortazzi, 1993) to explain, analyze,
and interpret the meaning of the narrative structure of stories. In the case of Coffey
and Atkinson (1996) who were interviewing doctoral students in anthropology, stories
often followed "socially shared conventions" of storytelling (p. 61). I was very
interested in investigating what narrative conventions preservice teachers use and
resist in their case stories.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest that analysis centers on functions and
forms of narratives. While less systematic and structured than structural analysis, this
type of analysis provides an important avenue for understanding the "social worlds"
depicted in participant stories (Alasuutari, 1996; Kvale, 1996; Rosaldo, 1989).
Analysis of case stories of teaching that centers on their forms and functions
"emphasizes the idea that individual narratives are situated within particular
interactions and within specific social, cultural, and institutional discourses" (Coffey
and Atkinson, 1996, p. 62). In coding, analyzing, and interpreting stories through this
method, I found examinations of the group-reflective interview and the cooperating
teacher interviews critical. The cooperating teachers presented another lens through which to understand the specific school culture and discourse out of which individual preservice teachers generated case stories of teaching. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that the benefit of functional analysis is that it provides a "mechanism for exploring how social actors frame and make sense of particular sets of experience" (p. 67). Since a large part of the research study involved understanding how preservice teachers were framing their experiences and situating themselves within the culture of their classrooms, functional analysis proved very useful.

Activity theory proved a type of analysis that extended beyond structural and content analysis. This theoretical perspective focuses on actions and contexts tied to the content of an action—its purposes and motives. Through looking at how the preservice teachers establish motives and purposes and attempt to fulfill those motives and purposes in specific contexts through their actions, I learned about how they applied their knowledge in their student-teaching environments.

In order to investigate the activity of the preservice teachers and to interpret the purposes of their case stories of teaching, I generated several codes for the data using activity theory: background, beliefs, purposes, contexts, and tools. Background refers to the background experiences and training of the preservice teachers. Most specifically in coding and analyzing background I am interested in how preservice teachers’ backgrounds impacts their decision-making and influences the repertoire of tools that they have in their tool kits. Beliefs about the self as a teacher and learner are significant in that they influence preservice teachers’ motives for teaching. One of the significant aspects of beginning to teach is developing relationships with students that
were highly influenced by the role that preservice teachers believed they possessed as teachers. Purposes for teaching clearly connects to the choices preservice teachers make about the actions to take while teaching. The context of the teaching environment enhances or limits the choices that preservice teachers are able to make. The preservice teachers in this study frequently emphasize that the decisions they make about specific actions are often based on the particular context in which they teach (resources available, types of students, student abilities and needs, and expectations of schools and cooperating teachers). The tools in tool kits became the most critical unit of analysis. The first area was identifying the types and categories of tools. In doing this I asked what the tools were, how the preservice teachers selected particular tools for particular tasks, where the tools were acquired (past experiences, field experiences, university course work, from cooperating teachers, from other preservice teachers), the level to which the preservice teachers felt proficient in using particular tools and how preservice teachers altered them. My final consideration is in the area of appropriation, a code that I use in asking the level to which preservice teachers had adapted a tool for their own use, making it their own and possessing the ability to alter that tool. Do the preservice teachers see the tool as something that they could modify to apply to particular circumstances and contexts or do they attempt to use it in a rote fashion?
Position In Narrative Interpretation

In writing the product of a research project focused on narrative, the researcher has to ask several troubling questions. In their lengthy experience with narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) face many difficult questions which I had to integrate into my thinking as I wrote this paper:

In some general sense, the questions of meaning, significance, and purpose are questions of who, why, what, how, context, and form. For whom will we write? Who are the characters in the study? Why are we writing? What are we trying to convey? What personal, practical, and theoretical contexts give meaning to the inquiry and to its outcomes? What forms could our final research texts take? (p. 121)

Because of the complexity and richness of the case stories of teaching, this research project has “multiple potential meanings and even contradictions; and therefore, narrative creates spaces for rethinking and resisting old interpretations” (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, p. 172). In considering these interpretations, I focus on the social nature of the research project and the significance of my interaction with the preservice teachers in a variety of contexts.

In a research project focused on narratives and stories, oftentimes what is left out is as important as what is included: where the story is told is as significant as the plot of the story: the audience of the story may have as critical a role in the development of the telling of the story as the teller. Ritchie and Wilson (2000) generate the following questions as a significant map for contemplating stories: “What is the context in which the story is told? Where are the gaps, silences, tensions, and
omissions? What narratives from other lives might contradict or complicate our own? Who is privileged by these narratives? What positions and relationships do they reinforce?” (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, p. 21).

After the initial interviews, I coded the transcripts and developed categories based on recurring themes. Many of these themes and issues were used as questions in the final preservice teacher and cooperating teacher interviews. In considering the data collection as a whole the following categories became significant in the interviews with the preservice teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Background and Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Collaboration, Cooperating Teachers, and Contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Successful Case Story of Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Problematic Case Story of Teaching</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3: Initial Data Coding for Preservice Teacher Cases**

The above table illustrates the key areas around which each of the cases in chapter four were coded. Background and influences refers to the influences on the preservice teachers’ thinking about teaching English/Language Arts. In some cases, such as with Karla Anderson and Sylvia Pierce, this may have been a home influence or person experience. In other cases, as with Hannah White and Erin Vincent, this may have been a previous professional experience. The second key area that became a focus for the preservice teachers was one of the context and collaboration with which the preservice teachers were involved; this situation also related to the preservice teachers’ relationships with their cooperating teachers. Frequently, the preservice
teachers discussed how the context that they were in—the types of students that they were teaching and the relationships that they had with other teachers, preservice and cooperating—influenced the decisions about teaching that they made and the actions that they took in the classroom. The third category, tools, refers to the conceptual and practical tools which preservice teachers used in the classroom. In particular, this illustrates how they were thinking about specific areas of teaching English/Language Arts, such as the use of reader response theories or writing process theories. The final two categories of importance in the description of the preservice teacher cases are explanations of their case stories of teaching, successful and problematic.

After presenting the cases of the individual preservice teachers I considered issues and themes which extended across the multiple cases. The next set of codes involves issues which represent principles of thinking among the preservice teachers.

| 1. prior experiences, including experiences as students, and personal and professional background |
| 2. perceived contradictions between their course work in the Masters of Education Program and the actual experiences in schools, or what several of the preservice teachers in this project referred to as idealism vs. realism |
| 3. contexts in which they did their field experiences and completed their preservice teaching |
| 4. relationships with students, cooperating teachers, supervising teachers, colleagues, and professors |

**Table 3.4: Themes Across Cases**

In many ways these themes connect to the codes that I used in representing the preservice teachers’ cases. However, these themes represent more principles of teaching that they preservice teachers as a whole advocated: such as context influence the way preservice teachers taught. So the codes in Table 3.4 illustrate a thematic analysis of the preservice teachers, whereas the codes in Table 3.3 are more
The codes represented in Tables 3.5 and 3.6 illustrate common themes which ran across the preservice teachers’ successful and problematic stories. These were themes or issues which the preservice teachers repeated frequently and which all of the preservice teachers discussed. For instance, everyone of the preservice teachers discussed the issue of time in their successful and problematic case stories. In the successful case stories, time was described as being very fluent, flowing like water, the teachers experiencing a sense of buoyancy, while in the problematic stories time was represented as stagnant, or jarring.

1) the context in which the case story occurred  
2) the time frame over which the story occurred (individual class period versus the semester)  
3) the area of instruction (reading, discussion, classroom management)  
4) the goals of instruction for the time period of the case story (academic and social)  
5) the focus of the story—its main point or theme  
6) the changes that occurred in their students and themselves as a result of the experience

**Table 3.5: Themes Across Successful Case Stories of Teaching**

| 1) the difficulty of working in a particular context and time seeming to either stop | 2) completely or race on at an uncontrollable pace. |

**Table 3.6: Themes Across Problematic Stories of Speech**

**Issues of Ethics, Trustworthiness, and Validity**

Ethics, trustworthiness, and validity are crucial components of a qualitative research project. The benefits and success of this study rely heavily on my relationship with preservice teachers and representations of those preservice teachers in the final
product. Care was taken towards being fair in working with preservice teachers and considerate of individual needs and concerns throughout all aspects of the study.

Collaboration offers an alternative to a "monologic construction" of theory and narrative (Clark & Moss, 1996, p. 202). Even collaboration generates ethical dilemmas: "As we engage in work with teachers, and now students, we worry about issues of dissemination and 'storytelling—whose story is it? Who should tell it? How should it be told? And who will profit from its being shared?'" (Clark et al, 1996, p. 545). Challenging existing narratives of teaching and embracing alternative voices appears to be a start. In this type of research and analysis, I focus on the issue of why I am studying preservice teachers' case stories. In order to do this, I constantly asked if the telling of their case stories in a collaborative environment helped the English preservice teachers further their reflection on teaching English/Language Arts.

Ethics is "intrinsic" to qualitative research because of the inclusion of "participant values" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115). Kincheloe and McClaren (1994) contend that while “traditional verifiability rests on a rational proof built upon literal intended meaning, a critical qualitative perspective always involves a less certain approach characterized by participant reaction and emotional involvement" (p.151). In the case of this study, the preservice teachers, already at a frightening and stressful time in their lives, the beginning of a new career, shared stories of their teaching that made them vulnerable. I found that in my own experiences with preservice teachers it was important I share stories not only of successes but also of difficulties as a teacher, particularly ones encountered as a preservice teacher. Sensitivity to the concerns of teachers during the telling was very important.
Clandinin and Connelly (1994) argue for care with respect to representation. They suggest that researchers must be aware that "when we become characters in their stories, we change their stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 422). As researchers, who are writing and presenting people's stories, we must consider "how our research texts shape their lives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 422). Ethics in my study depends on member checks, frequently presenting representations and asking participants for their perspectives on my representations. Those perspectives, also, became part of the story. In order to ensure fair treatment of students Human Subjects Protocols and procedures were submitted and completed in the conduct of this research project.

A tricky aspect of this study is that while I was researching with particular preservice teachers, I was also teaching/supervising those same preservice teachers. I attempted to make sure that participation in the proposed project did not influence either positively or negatively their grade, my evaluation of them, or my reference letters for them. In this, the ethical question was no different than the typical questions of integrity faced by teachers. We certainly should not give grades based on personal preferences (i.e. who we like or dislike) for any reason.

Ethics requires that there be some benefit to the participants in the study. I have worked/done research with preservice teachers and cooperating teachers in the past, involving similar methods, interviews, and observations. The cooperating teachers and the preservice teachers reported that the opportunity to talk about practices was important to them. The preservice teachers have reported that research interviews prepared them for job interviews by helping them clarify their thinking
about the teaching of English/Language Arts. I think that the main benefit was that
the peer collaboration on case stories of teaching actually prepared them to become
more reflective and effective English/Language Arts teachers.

The issue of trustworthiness becomes central to a qualitative study because
qualitative research does not attempt to validate itself through the pretense of
objectivity. Qualitative research does not have the charts, the numbers, and the guises
of objectivity to rely upon for validation. In my particular project—since I was
interested in perspectives, the preservice teachers' reflections, as well as their
constructions of both pedagogical and content knowledge and the shifts in those
perspectives—trustworthiness became quite a slippery slope. Mishler (1990)
discusses the difficulty of trying to find trustworthiness in a world that is clearly fluid:
"Since social worlds are endlessly being remade as norms and practices change, it is
clear that judgements of trustworthiness may change with time, even when addressed
to the 'same' findings" (p. 420). Rather than making any statements of overall
objectivity or merit in the findings for all contexts, I focus on whether or not my
representations and findings make sense to preservice teachers who were involved in
the project. Mishler (1990) poses the issue that validity is also a measure of whether
or not the work is useful to other researchers: "My basic thesis for validation is the
social construction of a discourse through which the results of a study came to be
viewed as sufficiently trustworthy for other investigators to rely upon in their own
work" (p. 429). Therefore, a critical issue at the end of my research study was one of
what Lather (1986) calls catalytic validity, the extent to which a research project
empowers the participants in that project. A central goal of this project is that the
case stories of teaching and peer collaborative reflection be beneficial to future English/Language Arts preservice teachers, teacher educators, teacher-researchers, and educational researchers.

Denzin (1994) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four areas critical to trustworthiness in qualitative studies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the extent to which the research study is believable or credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) present four types of "activities" to support the credibility of a study: rigorous research methods (prolonged engagement with participants, persistent observation, and triangulation), external checks (peer debriefings), the reworking of hypothesis or testing of several tentative assumptions during the course of research (negative case analysis), and participant member checking. Transferability in naturalistic/qualitative research, rather than attempting to generalize and index data, has a "responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 318). My responsibility to other researchers is to develop “thick” or "nuanced" descriptions (Geertz, 1978; Kvale, 1996) that allow other researchers to make sense of my data and interpretations, finding applications to or discongruities with their own research. It is also possible in qualitative research for two researchers (or the same researcher taking different perspectives or approaching the data at different times) to make multiple interpretations of the same data (Denzin, 1994; Freeman, 1998; Mishler, 1986; 1990). Very clearly, my selection of activity theory as a form of interpretation influences the types of interpretations that I make. Another researcher may have coded the data differently and come to other conclusions. I,
likewise, may from my changing perspectives have made other decisions about my interpretations had I approached the data either from another theoretical perspective or had I engaged with the data in a different time in my life. Dependability, according to Denzin (1994), "can be enhanced through the use of overlapping methods, stepwise replications, and inquiry audits" (p. 513). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that dependability relies on inquiry audits that chronicle the process by which accounts were kept and the product of those accounts, "the records from the point of view of their accuracy" (p. 318). In the preceding sections of the methodology section, I have attempted to discuss as thoroughly as reasonable, the methods and strategies that I utilized in my effort to collect, code, and analyze the data so that future researchers could replicate my project if they so desired. Confirmability provides an audit trail through which another researcher can confirm the procedures taken and discover the extent to which the findings are grounded in the data.

Validity within a research study such as this one is a thorny issue. Rather than attempting to make generalizations or find an absolute philosophical truth, I present descriptions, understandings, and interpretations. Because my findings are not quantifiable, I am working within a paradigm in which "validation comes to depend on the quality of craftsmanship during investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings" (Kvale, 1996, p. 241). Freeman (1998) outlines two areas of importance to checking the validity of qualitative research, external and internal. In this study, external validity depended upon linking the research to the work of educating and preparing preservice teachers (Freeman, 1998, p. 168). The validity of my project and its significance rely on the extent to which they
were useful in helping the preservice teachers learn about teaching. According to Freeman (1998) internal validity includes the following four types:

- descriptive validity, the extent to which what I say or write about my project reflects what I have studied
- ecological validity, the validity of the entire ecosystem of my study, the relationship between my questions, methods, analysis, and interpretations
- interpretive validity, the extent to which the elements of my findings fit together analytically
- construct validity, the ability of theories that I use for interpretation to support my findings, grounded in the data I collect from participants (pp.171-172).

Trustworthiness and validity within this study rely on the rigor with which I investigate my questions, apply methods, alter findings based on participant member checks, develop negative case analysis, and re-evaluate conceptions—my working hypothesis, and multiple interpretations. I analyzed data from multiple perspectives, using multiple analytical tools (as described above in the data analysis section), throughout data collection. Interview transcripts, data analyses, and interpretations were given to participants and revised with respect to participant perspectives and feedback.

**Limitations of the Study**

While the preservice teachers professed that the case stories and group-reflective interview had impacted their thinking about specific circumstances, several problems with the study severely limited its effectiveness. First of all, because of the
fact that the time frame of the study connected to the period of time preservice
teachers were actually teaching, there were too few stories and group reflections. If
the preservice teachers had been in the classroom longer and I had an extended time to
work with them, I would have had them compose more than two stories. This would
have allowed for a wider variety of stories from which to choose, giving the preservice
teachers more opportunity to find stories that connected with them in a meaningful
manner. It would have also shown more about the development of thought over time.

Initially, I planned on having at least two group-reflective interviews.
However, it became possible to schedule only one interview due to the preservice
teachers’ other commitments. While the diversity of perspectives facilitated a
deepened examination of issues related to teaching, the preservice teachers felt some
restrictions because they had not built as much trust among themselves as they could
have with more group sessions. Also, because we only had time to discuss one story, I
was unable to gain the preservice teachers’ perspectives on the other stories.

While, the group-reflective interview generally had been positive, it was also severely
limited. One of the key elements that limited it according to Karla was the fact that
she had not spent enough time with the participants, other than Gail. While she had
built up a strong relationship with Gail and another preservice teacher at Washington
High School, she was concerned during the group-reflective interview with offending
other preservice teachers or having her words taken in the wrong way: “And so I think
and I don’t even know if this shows through in the transcription or not, but I think that
I apologized a couple of times ‘I am not sure’ or I was sounding unsure of myself, and
I was ‘oh, I am not sure but’ whereas with Angela {a preservice teacher not in the
study} and Gail I would be ‘well I think this because this is what happened’ instead of being not sure” (Karla Anderson, Interview 3, 6/06/99). Clearly, if the preservice teachers had spent more time in a group, building up more trust, there may have been a deepening of their examinations of problems and their willingness to take risks in their discussions of each other’s stories.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a discussion of narrative inquiry’s purposes, specifically considering the implications of genre, voice, and issues involved in teaching as they related to case stories of teaching. The chapter then explained the research design, including the methods of data collection, participants, and methods of analysis. Data collection included pre- and post-interviews, case story of teaching interviews, field notes from student-teaching observations and debriefings, group-reflective interviews, and document analysis of journals and Capstone Projects. Data analysis centered on forms of narrative analysis derived from the theories of Riessman (1993) and Cortazzi (1993). Activity theory was also used in analyzing the content of the preservice teachers’ interviews and case stories of teaching. The final section considered the tricky areas of validity, trustworthiness, and ethics involved in a research project of this type—particularly the need for catalytic validity and a close consideration of the ethics of a researcher who was also a supervisor of the participants.
Chapter Four will discuss the findings of this research project, including themes generated from the preservice teacher interviews, case studies of each participant in the project, analysis and consideration of themes in the case stories of teaching, and finally an analysis of the group-reflective interview and its possible impact on preservice teacher thinking.
CHAPTER 4

PRESERVICE TEACHERS’ CASE STORIES OF TEACHING

Introduction

Through observing, interviewing, and listening to the stories of six preservice teachers, I learned about the preservice teachers—their beliefs about teaching, concepts of themselves as teachers and people, and perhaps most importantly how we might better prepare them to teach. This chapter presents pictures of those preservice teachers’ stories by following a trail of their reflection on their views and experiences as teachers. Several conclusions have been drawn from the data at different points in time on reading and re-reading the preservice teachers’ stories and interpreting them through my own evolving experiences and knowledge both as a researcher and as an educator.

This chapter is divided into two different sections. The first section regards the question of what the preservice teachers revealed about their perceptions of teaching English/Language Arts through their case stories of teaching. In response, I present individual cases of the preservice teachers focusing on their experiences before entering teacher education, their relationships with peers and cooperating teachers, the tools that they appropriated in their preservice teaching, and their successful and problematic case stories of teaching. The six different cases look specifically at diverse student-teaching experiences: Hannah and Erin worked collaboratively on
planning, but taught separately in an alternative suburban high school; Gail and Karla collaboratively planned and taught together in what their cooperating teacher termed a critical friends approach at a traditional suburban high school; Sylvia and Jane each taught and planned independently at two different urban high schools.

The second section considers issues across cases and conversations with the preservice teachers, primarily responding to the question of whether sharing and discussing their case stories of teaching with their colleagues in the English cohort affect their thinking about the teaching of English/Language Arts and themselves as teachers. This section begins by addressing specific issues and concerns that the preservice teachers had with regard to teaching English/Language Arts and their development as English/Language Arts teachers. Then, I discuss patterns and issues that emerged throughout the various case stories of teaching. Finally, this section considers the crucial elements of the group-reflective interview, the interactions between the preservice teachers, and the impact that the group-reflective interview may have had on their thinking about teaching.

**Preservice Teacher Case Stories of Teaching**

Erin and Hannah did their preservice teaching at an alternative school of a suburban school district. The school, which I call Alternative High School, exists for students who do not want to attend the more traditional high schools in the district. The classes are structured in blocks with students meeting every other day for two-hour periods. The school is set up on a very informal basis with students and faculty gathering frequently for sessions to discuss issues and make decisions about the school.
Erin and Hannah planned to a large extent their classes together, though they taught them separately, with the exception of team-teaching a course called “The Novel,” which met every two weeks at a local coffee house to discuss a novel. Each preservice teacher individually taught a course called “Foundations” that was a traditional ninth-grade course. Erin team-taught a course with her cooperating teacher, Warren Houston, who was also the school director, entitled “Mythology.” Hannah taught a course called “Road Trips” which was a variation on Northrop Frye’s archetype of the quest. This course centered on modern road adventures featuring the works of the Beats such as Ken Kesey and Jack Kerouac as well as more current works by Barbara Kingsolver.

*Erin Vincent: Bringing Out Her Own Stories*

Born in England and educated at private boarding schools in the United States and Canada, Erin received a degree in English Literature from a private university. After college, Erin taught English as a second language in Poland for a year, influencing her to enter the English Education program. Her past knowledge of how trying and strenuous teaching could be led her to use the certification program as an opportunity to develop the teaching skills she had begun in Poland.

Warren Houston verified that Erin and Hannah’s experiences overseas had a major impact on their teaching, contending that “the experiences in the different cultures really was an attention-getter for them with the students. In the classes that they were teaching, I think that the fact that each of them has some teaching experience probably allowed them to manipulate them a little bit better” (Warren Houston, Cooperating Teacher Interview, 6/02/99).
Erin suggested that her own success in high school stemmed from the fact that “we were all very motivated, we came from very similar backgrounds and we all expected to go to college, so there was really no question of our motive, so in that sense we were all very ambitious” (Erin Vincent, Interview 1, 3/17/99). However, when engaged with students in an environment different from her own, Erin discovered that she could not depend as heavily on what had motivated her as a student. As a student, she really favored teacher-led discussions—which she found did not always work with students—and disliked group work—which she found worked very well with students. Views of writing in the teacher education program differed from what Erin received in her high-school instruction which she described as traditional—teachers assigned and graded all work without any peer response or revision opportunities. Erin acknowledged that she developed as a writer during her college years where several professors encouraged peer response and revision of drafts.

During her field experience and preservice teaching, the tension between skills-centered instruction and the teaching of critical thinking became paramount to Erin’s deliberations on instruction. Free from what she described as the highly prescriptive nature of the ESL instruction in Poland (where isolated grammar lessons were emphasized), Erin focused her instruction at Alternative High School on critical thinking; feeling that skill-oriented instruction was less meaningful for students.

Collaboration, Cooperating Teachers, and Contexts

Erin had the benefit of working very closely with a peer in a small-school setting and collaborated with her on projects and the planning for one course in
particular. Erin found the situation extremely beneficial because she had someone on whom to test her ideas. Warren Houston confirmed what he saw as a very positive, collaborative relationship: “But what I was impressed with is that once they had made their decision, how the two of them worked together, talked things back and forth, discussed the approaches that they could take in trying to manage to work this through the class. And ended up being able to pull that off because of that” (Warren Houston, Cooperating Teacher Interview, 6/02/99). Warren also said that the high school had an atmosphere of professional comraderie, which really added to the comfort level of Erin and Hannah.

Erin had the opportunity to work in a situation where her cooperating teacher provided her with a tremendous amount of freedom, which she felt was not a normal situation for many of her preservice teaching peers who had to follow a prescribed program. Warren had a very natural, Socratic style encouraging student discussion. He also was very easy with the fact that some students may not want to verbalize in the whole group, or that there may be lags of time without any student commenting during a discussion. Warren also had a very strong background in world mythologies making his abilities in the classroom very powerful. Working with Warren created a dilemma for Erin, who found team-teaching “far more challenging than I had anticipated even though he has been very supportive and encouraging. For some reason, I’m finding it very intimidating to come into the classroom of an established and respected teacher and try to add something meaningful to the lessons” (Erin Vincent, Journal, 4/23/99). Despite the intimidating nature of working with a highly skilled professional, Erin found the relationship also to be quite inspiring, as seen in an
example she gave of when Warren managed to connect the abstract topic of mythology to events then occurring in society such as the relationship between the Columbine shooting and American Myths and Legal History. While this had been an impressive display, fortunately for Erin, Warren was a teacher who allowed his preservice teachers to find their own way and grow as teachers rather than expecting them to follow his prescriptions for teaching.

Erin felt that the relationship between her teaching environment and the ideals of the university formed a strong match. Erin experienced a consistent philosophical underpinning focusing on learning as a social action in both her preparation program and her actual preservice teaching, making her preservice teaching especially rewarding.

Tools

Entering preservice teaching, Erin hoped to use writing portfolios (collections of student writing focusing on the development of their process as writers), which she had learned about in university courses both on Shakespeare, as an undergraduate, and Writing Methods, in the Teacher Certification Program. Fortunately, Erin had the opportunity to experience many of the concepts that she wanted to apply to preservice teaching first hand during her field experiences prior to full-time preservice teaching:

For my teaching writing class, we had actually had a chance to do the whole writing workshop. Dr.___________ sent us out to __________ to do a writing workshop. We really saw just how productive it was; how you could do different things with kids who were struggling with writing. I think that it {using a writing workshop} would be good for anybody whether they were
going to college or work after high school. I was required to do a lot of writing. But it wasn't until college that I really thought about it, and how it would be successful you know other than making corrections. (Erin Vincent, Interview 1, 3/17/99)

Erin stated that her most effective English teacher was a college professor of Shakespeare from whom Erin learned several important tools including one in which the professor “had students leading discussions which was helpful. When you were leading a discussion it was forcing you to think about things beyond what you were going to write about. She was the best, and in fact the only professor that I had that had us do portfolios” (Erin Vincent, Interview 1, 3/17/99).

From this same professor Erin also learned a tool she later used during her preservice teaching, group presentations of scenes from Shakespearean plays. Erin illustrated this in her own stories of having students stage scenes from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It was important that Erin not only knew how to use the tool, but that she was able to reflect on the purpose and theories behind the use of the pedagogical tool. “That was really interesting just trying to interpret Shakespeare and it gave you a sense of, I don't know, watching a Branaugh interpretation and wondering why he does it a certain way…I had never really thought about the why so much, why would he put it in the twentieth century, I had been more focused on the play itself. But I began to think of it that way” (Erin Vincent, Interview 1, 3/17/99). Because of the traditional instruction that Erin had received, she had had difficulty appreciating alternative forms until this Shakespearean course in college. Erin attributed much of the success of her ability to try different methods to the environment of the school in
which she was teaching. “I did not have to have five tests a quarter or they did not have to turn in five analytical essays and there was not a kind of a list of what they had to do so that let me try out some more creative activities that maybe I would not have been able to do at different schools” (Erin Vincent, Interview 3, 6/05/99).

Erin appreciated her Shakespeare professor’s vision of the teaching of English and how the professor managed to pull things together—a problem which Erin considered many English courses at both the college and secondary level to have. “I think so many classes, so many English classes, I think even in college, you write one paper and you read one book and then you push that all aside because you are focused on the next thing that you are doing. So you never have a chance to kind of collectively look at what you have done and accomplished to get a better sense of everything that you have studied…” (Erin Vincent, Interview 3, 6/05/99). The professor modeled how effectively to integrate the curriculum, by having students write and discuss connections between works that they had studied, generating a model for teaching English during her preservice teaching.

In her initial interview, Erin was struggling with how to work with students who were having difficulty thinking about texts critically. She used an illustration from a class lesson that she was working on involving characterizations in John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* where some students would give limited responses while others would “just naturally bring race into it and how that contributes to the personality, why he is the way that he is, and other kids kind of need help with that. He is also a black man, how does this affect his perspective, so just things like that. Some kids just need to pick up on that” (Erin Vincent, Interview 3, 6/05/99).
question as to why some students could pick up on the nuances and themes within literature while others struggled even to make basic meanings in a text plagued Erin and was one of her central areas of reflection throughout the program. She said that she was also concerned about team-teaching “Mythology” with Warren because the course seemed to be taught at a “higher level than most of them can do. I am kind of trying to relate it to stuff that they can understand” (Erin Vincent, Debriefing 1, 4/13/99). Erin attempted to scaffold the knowledge that students brought with them to the course to their developing understanding of world myths.

Erin used her own life stories as a tool to help foster student understanding in classroom discussions.

I have started to imitate some of the things that he does. Bringing up personal stories a lot which I never used to do, but I see how interested the kids are when he will bring up something from his life. And of course I will think ‘well, I have not had a very interesting life so it is not as easy for me to do that.’ But even, I think that just bringing up Poland last time, and kind of forcing myself to speak for half an hour was really helpful. (Erin Vincent, Debriefing 4, 5/06/99)

In using the stories, Erin was able to work on what she considered to be a critical tool for teaching language arts, classroom discussion.

Erin’s Successful Story: Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use”

Erin presented a writing assignment to students in a ninth-grade course, which she described as having been a rowdy class, during her preservice teaching. The writing prompt required students to interview members of their family about an
heirloom. Students’ abilities to connect the short story, “Everyday Use,” with their personal experiences, with heirlooms of their own, made the story one of true success for Erin. “Everyday Use” presents a family’s struggle with deciding the fate of a deceased aunt’s quilt, which one family member sees as having a practical purpose while another views the quilt’s purpose as primarily cultural.

Erin discussed her amazement in how students’ interest and engagement with the story and heirloom assignment altered the mood of the entire class. While Erin had an extremely moving class period with her students, this rapport and motivation on the part of the students did not transcend completely into future class sessions. “I think that it has been really up and down I have not been able to get it back to that level, maybe for a few minutes there are conversations. On that day for whatever reason I felt that for that entire period that they were really into the discussion they were very involved and so forth” (Erin Vincent, Case Story, 5/05/99).

An interesting aspect of this lesson was one of Erin’s planning. She had not originally planned on discussing the heirloom aspect of the story with the writing assignment that went along with that issue in “Everyday Use.” Erin decided to alter the lesson and allow students to take more control. “In fact that day, I had actually planned other things and we just got into such a good discussion that we did not get to that other stuff. That was one of the few times that I think I ever really just put the lesson aside and got involved in this discussion to the point that I felt like it was really productive and I felt like I did not need to keep controlling the pace of the lesson sticking to the schedule” (Erin Vincent, Case Story, 5/05/99). During the lesson, Erin discovered that disagreements could really lead to learning and discussion, exploring
the differences of perspective. According to Erin, success was defined by allowing the
students freedom to discuss and analyze the story without being led by the teacher.
After the discussion, Erin felt that the students had covered all of the topics and issues
that she would have eventually addressed. (See Appendix F.1)

Erin’s Problematic Story: Joseph Campbell and Myths

Erin’s case story of teaching involved a problematic experience occurring early
in the term during a block-period course on myths. The cooperating teacher, Warren
Houston, and Erin had been team-teaching the course. Warren, who was very
knowledgeable on the topic of myths, was taking more of the lead in class discussions
and in lecturing. On the particular day of the story, Warren Houston was absent and
Erin was teaching the course by herself. To a certain extent, the story illustrated a
pitfall of having a gifted cooperating teacher as a mentor and a model of teaching:
what works seamlessly for the cooperating teacher may not succeed at all for the
preservice teacher. In this particular case, Warren Houston’s Socratic style of teaching
was very difficult to emulate in the classroom, especially for a new teacher.

A significant problem in this class discussion was the abstract nature of the
lesson, the issue of “bliss” being one that many graduate students of literature would
struggle with. “Also, his (Joseph Campbell’s) theme of follow your bliss which was
kind of his philosophy for leading a happy and productive life, finding the things that
make you happy” (Erin Vincent, Case Story, 5/05/99). Students viewed part of the
film, discussed it for ten minutes (Erin having planned for a sixty-minute discussion)
and then with considerable time left, viewed fifty more minutes of the film.
In her case story, Erin lacked a feeling of “buoyancy” that many of the preservice teachers felt when the teaching was succeeding. For Erin, time seemed to stop in a very negative way. As she described, she had ninety minutes and not much of a lesson left.

In reflecting on the situation, Erin contemplated alterations she could make. One was always having some sort of plan B in case things did not go well. Another was breaking the discussion down into more manageable instructional units and questions. Warren’s style of throwing out abstract questions and letting the discussion falter or prosper was very unnerving for someone trying to become used to classroom interactions.

Erin’s view of time was critical and something many of the preservice teachers mentioned: a feeling during preservice teaching, whether in individual classes or for the experience as a whole, just hoping to get through the chunks of time, the period, the day, the week, the quarter. Surviving and prospering were skills that they all would manage to acquire. (See appendix G.1)

_Hannah White: No Teacher is a Miracle Worker_

Hannah had one of the most diverse background experiences of any student in the program. As a child, she moved multiple times, attending schools across the country in rural, urban, and suburban environments. On her schooling, Hannah said “I guess I never recognized my English classes in high school as being so meaningless and I can see now that they were looking back at them” (Hannah Warren, Interview 1, 4/02/99). One exception was her eleventh-grade English teacher at a suburban southwestern high school who showed a contagious passion for literature, varying
instruction so that students entered the classroom wondering “what she had in store for us today” (Hannah Warren, Interview 1, 4/02/99). This variation and enthusiasm for literature served as a model for Hannah in her own teaching.

Hannah, like many of the Masters of Education students, received a degree in English prior to seeking teacher certification. Previously she worked as an editor for a children’s book company, various service industry jobs in the Pacific Northwest, and as a junior-high school English teacher with the Peace Corps in Botswana for two years (an experience she credited as being a pivotal part of her decision to teach and the reason for obtaining a Masters of Education). Because the fragmented structure of the Peace Corps program focused on isolated preparation for comprehensive exams—grammar one day, reading the next—Hannah wavered on returning for a second year. Finally deciding that she would teach another year, she would not continue the “non-sensical, prescriptive program completely” (Hannah Warren, Interview 1, 4/02/99).

For Hannah, the decision to return, albeit making some alterations in her style of and placing a limited amount of burden on herself, was pivotal in her determination to enter teaching as a career: “I think the first year I was so devastated because I felt that any kid that did not pass that it was my fault, because I had the attitude that if the student fails it is not the student that fails it is the teacher that fails. In the second year I just realized that I did my very best and I did care, no teacher is a miracle worker” (Hannah Warren, Interview 1, 4/02/99).
A key reason for Hannah learning this lesson had to do with her interactions with the other Peace Corps and African teachers from whom she drew a lot of support. These experienced teachers emphasized doing her best while realizing that circumstances in the lives of her students limited what Hannah was able to teach.

Along with the Peace Corps teachers and her eleventh-grade English teacher, Hannah’s cooperating teacher, Warren Houston, served as a model for teaching. Hannah’s cooperating teacher exposed her to a very specific style of a Socratic open-ended discussion. Hannah attempted to appropriate this style, finding she was not able to generate responses the way that Warren had; eventually, she said she developed her own style taking “little bits and pieces” of what Warren did. “He will just say something like ‘so what do you have to tell me today.’ And that is it, and he is comfortable with the fact that that might be followed by a two minute pause where nobody says anything” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99). Like Erin, Hannah developed the use of her own stories as a springboard for conversation, as a tool for bridging the gaps in discussion.

Hannah, because of her interest in writing stories (she composed short fiction in her spare time) and her various life experiences, felt that she had “a lot of stories to tell and some of them might not mean much to some students and other students, just about everyone kind of engages with me about these stories and at one point or another so that has really been helpful” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99).

In Botswana, Hannah experienced a very structured environment, which stifled student interaction and her own creativity. Alternative High School presented a less structured environment that still hindered student discussion because three or four very
vocal students dominated the discussion. This, Hannah believed, was due to the open nature of the school, where students were able to talk, or not talk, without interference from the teacher. Hannah and Erin attempted to follow this open-ended format, but learned that, as new teachers, they had to incorporate other structured activities (group work, writing to learn, and graphic organizers) to evoke full participation from students.

**Tools**

**Variations of Strategies and Teaching Writing**

Hannah believed a teacher always needs to try new things, to generate new lesson plans. “Like trying to establish some rules without making it too regimented to repress creative expression” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99). She saw lack of creative expression as a key part of potential teacher burnout.

In making decisions and developing tools, Hannah drew upon the variety of her experiences in relation to the courses she was taking.

I guess a mix, it is kind of like looking back on what I was doing in Africa and reflecting on what worked and what did not work and the rest is probably fifty course work and field experience. I mean it did make me, the course work brought up a lot of stuff that I had never considered and I wouldn't have if I hadn't been taking courses, which I guess is its intention, right? (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99)

In particular, Hannah had discovered that the use of media, particularly sections from films, helped students to connect to literature, as with viewing and discussing scenes from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The area Hannah felt she most needed to work
on, though she had acquired some tools from the Masters of Education Program, was
the teaching of writing. Because of her experience as a children’s book editor,
Hannah emphasized grammar in her responses to student writing, perhaps at the
expense of student fluency and thought. As a result of her university courses in
teaching composition, Hannah had altered her view of responding to student writing:
“It seems like a revelation to me, that it really doesn't make any sense to correct a lot
of grammar on first drafts really when they are going to be changing a lot of that
anyway”  (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99). One of the key tools that Hannah
used, creating purposes for writing, involved using language as power and showing
that students can write for personal and political reasons. While in Africa, Hannah had
begun to develop her usage of those tools:

  Some of my students took it upon themselves to write a letter to the
government about this whole thing about Laboda, which is dowry, paying
cattle for a wife. Which was a big issue because some of my female students
were very progressive minded about this and they wrote a letter to the
government expressing their feelings and they just did that totally on their own.
(Hannah Warren, Interview 1, 4/02/99)

She used this tool at Alternative High School where she had students write persuasive
letters to characters in the literary works they were reading.

Discussion: You’re Sexist and You Don’t Even Know It

  Hannah struggled with the ways that she was utilizing discussions in her
classes at Alternative High School where students did not have to talk if they did not
want. The university had “pounded” into Hannah the idea of having only open-ended
classes, but she was troubled by there being few students who participated orally. She attempted to use some strategies that she had acquired through both the modeling of her cooperating teacher and discussions in her university courses.

Several issues—increasing student elaboration and support, keeping her opinions from dominating discussions while not allowing other students’ opinions to dominate discussions, and encouraging silent students to participate—concerned Hannah:

They don’t seem to be accustomed to backing up what they say with textual examples, and some were quite resistant to it. In fact, one student, who is extremely vocal and participatory in class, came close to refusing to do it, and almost seemed offended by the assignment. ‘I don’t have to prove my opinion, because you can’t prove opinions, only facts.’ ‘Yes, but you do have to support it.’ ‘Why? It’s just my opinion, I don’t care if you don’t believe it.’ Ad infinitum. (Hannah Warren, Journal, 4/27/99)

Hannah told a story about a discussion that she had in a course called “Road Trips” that focused on gender issues, specifically sexual harassment which left Hannah frustrated: “I just felt myself at some times just wanting to shut these punks up, ‘just shut up you are wrong!’” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99). She said that she wanted to tell one student in particular “you are sexist and you don’t even know it.” The central question for Hannah was how to bring herself into the discussion without overpowering the other views. Hannah used journal writing as a method that allowed students to express themselves without the fear of airing their ideas initially in front of peers.
Hannah contended “someone who just stands there and shoves their opinions down your throat all the time is not an effective teacher. Left to my own devices and if I had never had any other theory and if I had never talked to anyone else that is probably what I would be doing. Standing up there and telling everybody what to think” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99).

Discussion-based teaching helps students envision the possibilities of the world and develop new perspectives which, to Hannah, is essentially the whole purpose: “Possibly to kind of help kids frame how they see the world and to help them find a voice to express how they see the world” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/02/99). Hannah experienced a great change in her attitude toward the teacher certification program during the course of the year, particularly with respect to teaching writing. Initially, because she had teaching experience, she was reticent about what she could gain from the teacher preparation program, an attitude which she had revised by the final interview: “I just think that it was good to be able to read up on my current theories and I did find a lot of the readings more applicable, a lot of the multicultural discussions” (Interview 3, 6/02/99). According to Hannah, her views had most changed about the teaching of writing, her move from a focus on grammar to more of a concern with content.

Hannah’s Successful Story: Feeling Buoyancy While Teaching A Short Story Unit

In her spare time, Hannah wrote extensive fiction, describing her love of writing as one of the aspects that drew her to teaching secondary language arts. Stories, emboldened with her passion for language and connections with other people,
possessed a very significant place in her life according to interviews. The case story of teaching that Hannah told focused on time, a feeling of buoyancy, with the class seeming to stand still as she experienced a very meaningful classroom moment with her students. This experience drew directly from Hannah’s love of stories, not only reading them, but also writing and telling them.

Hannah’s description of how she felt during the experience closely resembled what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) terms the optimal experience or flow, a state where “the information that keeps coming into awareness is congruent with the goals, psychic energy flows effortlessly. There is no need to worry, no reason to question one’s adequacy” (p. 39). Csikszentmihalyi’s definition of flow comes from the imagery of individuals who, similar to Hannah, picture a state where they seem to be floating in harmony with their goals, surroundings, and achievement.

The story began with Hannah working with the students on autobiographical and literary information about Edgar Allan Poe. The classroom that Hannah depicted in her case story of teaching, a class discussion of Poe’s “Tell-Tale Heart,” certainly seemed to be one where she was at peace with what she was doing in the classroom. Hannah had started the lesson by having students present aspects of the author’s life narrative as a way to spark students’ interest and she found that many of the students were engrossed by the facets of his life they presented. “A lot of the students were into that, his whole life and his stories and the creepiness of his writing, the mundaneness of his life, but his life had some slightly bizarre aspects to it as well, his wife dying and how that might contribute to the morbidity of his writing” (Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99). Because in many ways, Edgar Allan Poe’s biography touched on his
writing, Hannah decided to engage the students in a storytelling session that she initiated by setting the mood and tone of the classroom with the story relayed.

As Hannah described the story and the reaction of the students in the class, I could feel the building fear and anticipation of the students. The reality of the story that Hannah told mirrored the imagery found in Poe’s story. She told a ghost story from when she had been working in a restaurant that had a similar mood and sense to Poe’s tale, illustrating very effectively the devices that Poe had used. An aspect of this story that illustrated storytelling’s power as a tool was Hannah’s ability to keep the students focused, they were on the edge of their seats anticipating what would happen to her, totally absorbed in a state of concentration with stories for which most Language Arts teachers aspire.

Hannah used her storytelling not only as a tool for maintaining student interest but also for connecting them to the structural devices and the thematic importance of the story. Immediately following her tale, the students discussed a central issue of the story, the reliability and sanity of the narrator. Discussing the sanity of the narrator of “Tell-Tale Heart” served as a springboard, generating and facilitating students’ telling of their own stories. Hannah revealed that many students had experiences similar to hers.

Hannah had used her storytelling as a model for her students. By sharing her personal experiences and taking a chance with her students, Hannah encouraged them to share their own stories. “I wrapped it back upon them and asked those who had told the stories ‘looking back on it now from however long ago this happened, do you really think that this happened? Or do you think that you really saw that?’” They said,
'well, I don't really know, now.' It lent them some insight into how the narrator viewed himself. For my stories I was acting as the narrator and for their stories they were” (Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99).

Through the stories, Hannah had helped the students to determine the structure of the classroom, sharing the outcomes for learning with them. Hannah viewed stories as an effective tool, one that she enjoyed doing in her own time, and one that she loved to share with students. (See Appendix F.2)

_Hannah’s Problematic Story: “The Same Class, Different Day. A Total Disaster.”_

“For some reason it seems like something happened, just because I said be your selves they took me literally. They took me to mean, really be yourselves like you would beat home apparently. It was just a disaster”(Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99).

Hannah’s story of a problematic experience raised an interesting dilemma that teachers face. Why does a particular period go extremely well with one class, establishing a period of timelessness and buoyancy, while another period with the same class established a sense of time dragging on painfully? The same group of students, on two different occasions, one immediately after the other, provided Hannah with the subject for both her problematic story and her story of success.

During this lesson, students were exiting the back doors of the classroom going outside into the courtyard, paying little attention to Hannah. Hannah was dumbfounded because she had spent a considerable amount of time on the lesson for that day, as much time as she had on the previous lesson that went so well. This class period illustrated for her that strong planning did not necessarily translate into
instructional success. Trying to salvage some instruction and a little of her sanity, Hannah decided to jettison the early lesson plans and have the students participate in a much more individually structured type of learning for the rest of the class period, an individual writing assignment.

For Hannah what she described as that Friday’s strangeness left her with a sense of shell shock. In her retelling, Hannah expressed that she felt like she had experienced a traumatic event, one she hoped would not scar her teaching. In her interviews, Hannah had expressed a concern (as a teacher) with being too outspoken in class herself. As a student, Hannah felt free to debate, argue, and even chastise fellow students if she disagreed with them or felt in particular that their positions were sexist or racist. As a teacher, Hannah felt compelled to stifle her own viewpoints in order to keep from limiting the discussions of students in her class. However, she frequently felt a tension when students made comments that were generally offensive, based on perspectives that she considered bias. The problematic case story about teaching Poe eventually deviated into a discussion that Hannah had many philosophical problems with.

Hannah questioned the appropriateness of allowing students to voice their opinions no matter how reprehensible they may be to her personally. Student made comments in the class discussion which Hannah considered sexist, racist, and homophobic—leaving Hannah with the decision of silencing the vocal student (which perhaps would have led to other students in the class being silenced). By the end of her preservice teaching, Hannah had not determined her stance on the amount of nurturing and freedom she would allow all ideas. In the end of her story, Hannah
considered her internal debate in terms of how much freedom of interpretation she was comfortable allowing students:

I just feel really uncomfortable with the idea of saying "it is o.k. that you think that but it is just not true. That is not what the story is about at all. You are wrong." I can't really say that, but what to do when the conversation gets off on the wrong path. I know that the student who brought homosexuality up originally did it to tick me off and to be a smart aleck, I know that he did that. This comes up in every class, and I know that I should have been stronger in the discussion because now in some of their papers some of them have chosen to explore that theme, and it is like now what do I do? Although, who knows some day one of them may wind up writing a doctoral thesis on it and may change everyone's view of Poe forever. Unless I discourage it now. (Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99)

Hannah wanted to encourage students to be open, but she was often uncomfortable with sexist, classist, and racists comments she heard from her students, a tension which remained unresolved by the end of her student-teaching quarter. (See Appendix G.2)

**Karla and Gail**

Karla and Gail team-taught while preservice teaching at Washington High School, one of two large high schools in a suburb of the city where Midwestern University is located. They worked with two different cooperating teachers, Alison Monroe and Steve Morris. Alison Monroe had been teaching for twenty-one years and Steve Morris had been teaching for six. They team-taught a twelfth-grade course,
described as a course for students who needed another English credit but were not college bound, and a ninth-grade course for students which integrated technology, science, and English. Steve Morris described the course as being for students who were not academically motivated. Karla then taught a tenth-grade honors course with Alison while Gail taught a ninth-grade honors course with Steve. The students in the courses that Karla and Gail taught at Washington were primarily white with the exception of the twelfth-grade course, which was about sixty-five percent Latino and African-American.

**Karla Anderson: Crossing Borders**

Like many of the preservice teachers, Karla’s family had moved around quite a bit and she had attended schools in different states, some rural and some suburban, finally graduating from a suburban school near a large Midwestern city. She felt that the teachers who seemed to be most interested in teaching tended to be coaches who sponsored after-school activities. She had been very active in sports throughout school and described herself as a B student who did not take honors or AP courses in high school.

The most significant aspect of her personal background that affected her as a teacher, according to Karla, was her relationship with her younger (by ten months) handicapped brother:

He has been trying to read for a long time. He just wasn't ready for it.

Recently, he just, he was just really interested in it, and I think that that has helped. I think that he has come a long way. He is working on comprehension as far as that goes, word recognition and actually reading a text. He can read a
text but he can't tell you what it is about. We are still working on that. (Karla
Anderson, Interview 1, 3/10/99)

The effort that Karla placed on helping her brother learn to read became a major part
of her own success as a preservice teacher. Karla stressed the importance of her
relationship with her students above all else. “I think that the relationship between
student and teacher is very important. I know that just recently we had a student that
went to the hospital and I can't tell you how that made me feel because I know her.
She has been struggling with, she has the disease anorexia” (Karla Anderson,
Interview 1, 3/10/99). This event, an example of her personal connections to students,
was very emotionally trying for Karla. Through her experience with this individual,
Karla learned the importance of establishing a relationship with students, both as an
end in and of itself and as a gateway to working on literacy development through the
writing of an autobiography.

Karla contended that effective teaching was passionate teaching; teaching
which displayed a concern for the subject matter and the students. As an example of
this type of teaching, Karla presented an example of her senior-year teacher’s
assignment in high school where groups of students were to give presentations based
on one of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. Karla and a group of her classmates made a
presentation based on the “Pardoner’s Tale.” The big impression it made on Karla
was “seeing her excited about what we did and also excited about what she was
teaching” (Karla Anderson, Interview 1, 3/10/99). This modeled the type of passion
that Karla wanted to display to her own students. Karla described this same amount of
engagement with a project for a school newspaper that her ninth-grade students
worked on during her field experience: “So, I thought that that was amazing, they really took ownership of that and it was for the long haul. And at first it was like pulling teeth” (Karla Anderson, Interview 1, 3/10/99). Karla and Gail’s cooperating teacher, Steve Morris contended that both Karla and Gail had been outstanding at engaging students and developing strong meaningful relationships with the students that motivated them to want to learn.

Karla and Gail’s willingness to establish relationships became most evident in the ninth-grade integrated Science and English course and the twelfth-grade Reading and Writing Workshop course. The students in both of these courses—who tended to have poor grades, high absenteeism, and low classroom participation—improved their academic performances considerably during Karla and Gail’s preservice teaching.

Collaboration, Context, and Cooperating Teachers

Karla and Gail, because they were working so closely together, considered the idea of collaboration with peers extremely critical to their development as teachers. Karla established the fact that the relationship with Gail tremendously influenced her thinking about teaching because she was able to observe Gail and share ideas with her about teaching: “I mean with team-teaching you really do, it is very much a team thing, you succeed together and you fail together, and even our failures and this is not to sound cocky at all, but even our failures we learned from them, so I wouldn't even count them as failures—they were more softer successes” (Karla Anderson, Interview 3, 6/06/99). Sharing both their difficulties and successes, Karla and Gail were able to build on their supportive and collaborative relationship.
Steve Morris worked with Gail and Karla using what he called a critical friends approach, where teachers observed, critiqued and helped each other in improving their performance in the classroom.

**Tools**

**Assessment**

I asked Karla what she saw as something that she wished that she had known about prior to preservice teaching. She described one of the areas where she had developed some tools but still felt that she needed work—the assessment of student writing:

I guess how to assess the papers. I really did not know how to assess papers, I know that in Dr. ______’s class we learned how to assess papers but I did not feel very strong in it. Now that is not to say that I feel like an expert now, I am still going through some issues as far as like what do you do when you expect a paper to be three pages long and it is an excellent paper but it is only a page and a half. I don't know how many points to take off for mechanical errors. I had some people who had a couple of verb tenses wrong and I had people who had pages of spelling errors. But which is more important so that is something that I wish that I had more knowledge on the assessment. (Karla Anderson, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

Karla began to see, to some extent, assessment of student papers would be an arbitrary action. She had to learn how she could make coherent sense of the process, both for herself and for her students, a rationale for why she was grading and responding to student writing in particular ways.
Karla had the opportunity to compare assessment of student writing with her teaching partner, an opportunity that allowed her to grow in her ability to assess and respond to student writing. Through her close work with Gail and Steve Morris, who told me that he shared rubrics he used for assessing writing with them, Karla had begun to conceptualize her views and ideas about writing. Steve had given her considerable guidance in the area of writing assessment:

So I kind of indoctrinated them into that and they were comfortable using that jargon with the students. And I think that they are also developing their own language and how important it is to convey your own language, what it means to be able to provide them with models, a good model of a level one or a level two, also to be able to edit in front of the students, maybe edit your own work.

(Cooperating Teacher Interview, Steve Morris, 6/04/99).

Reflective Teaching and Inquiry

Karla gained access to tools of reflective teaching by working with her cooperating teachers whose reflection mirrored much of what Karla and Gail had learned in their course work. Specifically, teachers needed to contemplate and research their own teaching, always attempting to find ways to improve upon their work. Karla contended that her course on teacher research or action research presented ideas that became a big part of her views about teaching:

As far as other things that make a teacher effective I think that Dr. ________'s class was very strong with its emphasis that you need to be a researcher. It just clicked with me this quarter after doing the whole project on gender issues that really to be an effective teacher that you have to be able to do research in
your classroom. I think that that happens every day actually. I mean that is something that I talked about in my reflective paper for the end of the quarter. You really need to think about your students, to think about their strengths and their weaknesses. That is part of research. And if you use that information to make more effective lessons for them, and see if there is there anything else.

(Karla Anderson, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

Karla had developed a very sophisticated view of her teaching, particularly in the fact that she was willing to view her students as informants--individuals who had important perspectives on their own learning. Through listening to these perspectives, as well as the perspectives of her cooperating teachers, Karla considered ways to improve her teaching.

*Karla’s Story of Success: Crossing Over in a Reading Workshop Class*

Karla and Gail both perceived relationships with students, building personal rapport, as keystones to teaching. They believed this to such an extent that their building relationships became a central goal of their teaching. For Karla and Gail, their desire to connect with the students, to have a relationship, did not seem to extend from a need to be liked or to have the students see them as “their friend.” Karla and Gail both contended that building community and developing relationships were necessary for them to learn as students, thus they felt that many students needed this same sense of belonging before meaningful instruction could take place. The course that this case story of teaching illustrates began with problems for Karla and Gail, particularly with respect to their goal of building community. In the Reading and Writing Workshop that they took over, a senior class for students who were not tracked into the college
preparatory courses that dominated the curriculum at Washington High School, students did not initially seem to feel much sense of community with their preservice teachers or with each other. During one of my early observations, I had noted to Karla and Gail that the four females in the class sat separate from the twelve males, which in my experience was a little unusual for high-school seniors.

One of the first obstacles that Karla felt she had faced in establishing a sense of community with the students was the teacher-centered classroom that she had inherited from her cooperating teacher. In this class, students had been given vocabulary worksheets and lists of words for tests on which they typically did not perform well. Karla and Gail in this story attempted to reconcile this problem.

One of the areas that they had to address within their teaching was the large social distinction within the class. The students in the class for instance were much less likely to wear the designer clothes that dominated the attire of most of the student body at this high school.

Karla felt that they had attempted to connect with the students by making the class more student-centered or at least trying to bring in manipulatives to make the students more interested. Karla found that the props and materials did seem to make a big difference as far as the amount of work that students were willing to do in the class.

Looking at student concerns, especially with respect to difference, breaking down barriers, and crossing boundaries became a central facet of instruction for Karla in this class. Karla began to see students’ need to open their shells, to work through their aggressive behavior in the class as one of her critical responsibilities as a teacher.
Karla and Gail effectively used literature as a tool to reach their goal of rapport with students, helping them to cross the boundary of accepting differences within the class. The novel, *House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros served a significant role in their efforts to build community because students identified with the truth of the characters.

Trust and loyalty, a belief in their teachers as caring individuals, and the class as a place that was safe for them became crucial aspects in the community that Karla and Gail helped to build with the students. Through crying and showing their happiness, Karla and Gail had made themselves human beings for the students to see. Karla and Gail were willing to cross their own borders, understanding the connection between their own lives and what they were trying to do with students. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) writes “to survive the borderlands/you must live sin fronteras/be a crossroads” (p.194). Karla and Gail’s work attested to their ability to create community in a short time. (See Appendix F.3)

*Karla’s Problematic Story: “Boy Did They Let Us Know”: Quizzes and Opinions in a Tenth-Grade Honors Class*

When adolescents are asked to voice their concerns or complaints, they can overwhelm their adult audience. Karla extended her belief in establishing rapport to all of her classes, and one of the tools that she used to establish rapport giving students ownership over the classroom. In her efforts to do this in a tenth-grade honors class she met with resistance to almost every instructional strategy that she attempted at first. According to her case story of teaching, much of the conflict between herself and the students stemmed from quizzing them, or just getting them to read the
materials for the course, which included *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare and *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. “I basically went in and I said that ‘this is a learning process and let us know if there is something that I can change.’ And boy did they let us know” (Karla Anderson, Case Story, 5/07/99). While Karla and Gail had been initially open to the students’ opinions, and remained so throughout the semester, they found that they could not conduct the classroom without some structure. Unfortunately, their efforts to control the class met with much resistance, perhaps because the students felt that since they were “student” teachers, they did not have as much authority as the inservice teacher: “Well, we changed their seats the second day that we were there which they did not like at all. They saw it as ‘well we just don’t want you talking’ which was not what we were doing. What we did not want is that they were braiding each others hair in the middle of class and people talking about other things in the middle of class” (Karla Anderson, Case Story, 5/07/99).

Karla and Gail attempted to resolve the conflict by letting the students know that this was done merely to help facilitate learning and making the environment more conducive to everyone’s education, but they made it clear that the decision had been theirs: “We told them ‘look this was an executive decision, that needed to be done between Gail, the cooperating teacher, and myself’” (Karla Anderson, Case Story, 5/07/99). A theme that has run through several of the preservice teachers’ problematic case stories of teaching was one of not being accepted as an authority figure, of a time of testing, forcing the preservice teachers, many of whom wanted to establish a cooperative learning community with the students, to develop clear, specific routines and rules and stay within those routines. When Karla attempted to present lessons that
would be accessible to students, such as the lesson in which students created dramatic masks depicting the emotion of a character in *Julius Caesar*, she met resistance as well. One of the reasons for this, as Karla found out, appeared to be that students were testing her just for the sake of testing her. (See Appendix G.3)

*Gail Pruitt: Why Isn’t Every Teacher the Best?*

Gail characterized her background as suburban, working class, and Hungarian-Italian. She entered the Masters of Education Program directly after completing her bachelor’s in English. Prior to preservice teaching, Gail discussed the fact that she had a problem with perfectionism in her work; learning to balance the teaching load in a way that made her life manageable was an incredible struggle for Gail. By the second interview, Gail had learned to establish realistic goals for herself as well as for her students. She revealed

> I guess I originally went in thinking ‘why isn't every teacher the best teacher … why doesn't every teacher just try to make things as awesome as they can?'

You know try and touch every student’s life. ‘Where are the Jaime Escalantes and why aren't they in every classroom?’ I have realized that since then you do the best you can. You go in every day and you try to make every day count and sometimes you are going to succeed and sometimes you can’t. (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99).

By the end of her preservice teaching, though Gail still attempted to do her best, she was no longer a perfectionist; her idealistic view of teaching had altered in order to make her life more manageable. Gail described ineffective teachers as being those who distanced themselves from their students, teachers who followed the same
routines, doing the same lesson year in and year out, paying little attention to the needs of their students. From many of her experiences as a secondary student in which teachers did not address student abilities, Gail developed the belief that she needed to structure learning experiences for students, in ways that scaffolded their learning.

Gail believed that her relationships with students began with establishing mutual respect between herself and the students. “Value what they bring into the classroom as a group. And as individuals, I would, I guess I would do that through different activities, just talking to them. Kind of establishing friendships with them, a lot of establishing a rapport with students would be finding out what their life is like outside of your classroom so that you can find out where they are coming from” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 1, 3/10/99).

Having had field experiences in two very different environments—Washington, a high school whose students were largely white and middle-class and Liberty, a high school whose students were largely African-American and working-class—Gail stressed that what she attempted to do as a teacher, the goals and purposes that she had for teaching, varied significantly with the contexts in which she was teaching. This included not only the differences between schools such as Washington and Liberty, but the differences between classes such as the twelfth-grade course (Writing and Reading Workshop) and the ninth-grade honors course both at Washington: “Well I think that it can vary from school to school, I think that some aspects of English can be more important or less important, depending on what class or what school you are teaching” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 1, 3/10/99). When she was teaching non-honors classes, Gail contended that “maybe I would try to get texts that I
know would be more practical that I know they might be more interested in than the
canon. I don't think that there is a text that is accessible to every student, so maybe I
would be more interested in having them read something and think critically about
something, I wouldn't be as worried about the canon” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 1,
3/10/99). In fact, as I will discuss later in this section, in describing one of her most
successful experiences during preservice teaching, Gail discussed teaching Sandra
Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street* to a non-college bound twelfth-grade English class.

Based on her strong values of connecting with students, Gail believed that in
teaching language arts one also needed to make a strong connection between the
literature and the lives of the students:

> To humanize the literature and their experiences with it. That is the way that I
> read literature. So that I can see how it pertains to my life and how it can help
> me grow as a person and learn as a person. I guess, I think that deep down,
> that is pretty much why people want to learn, I think that people want to
> learn—learning is a very egocentric experience—people want to do it to fulfill
> something within themselves. (Gail Pruitt, Interview 1, 3/10/99)

For Gail, students needed first to experience an enjoyment of literature, an aspect of
reading that many of the schools had begun to disregard in her opinion. She said that
reading literature involves “…how they make sense of the world. How they learn to
understand things and how that figures into their actions and interactions, I guess that
that is more of a social view, depending on how the students look into life” (Gail
Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99).
Gail described herself as “a person who likes working with other people. I am more of a social learner” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 1, 3/10/99). The aspect of the teacher certification program that had the biggest impact on her during preservice teaching was the opportunity that the teacher education program provided to discuss what she thought was important in teaching with her peers. In discussing that element of her course work, Gail said “I liked the fact that we got to talk about where we came from and our experiences with each other. I think that other people enjoyed it too, …just having a class that you could sit around and talk about those issues in a very informal class I think that that was something that most people would push toward” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 1, 3/10/99).

Gail believed that the close comradery that she experienced with her peers was extremely positive and supportive:

I talked about students feeling alone and there were times when I felt alone, especially if on a particular day I had a real crappy day and everyone else they had these great days and their classes were going well and their lessons were succeeding and I was thinking ‘why am I such a loser. Why did this happen?’ Or days when I wasn't really prepared and things failed, I thought well ‘why wasn't I prepared?’ (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

This is one of the key concepts around which the teacher education program was built: teaching like learning is a social, collaborative process.
Tools

Literature: Building Relationships and Encouraging Critical Thinking

Gail contended that the study of literature, and one novel in particular, Sandra Cisneros’ House on Mango Street, brought the Twelfth-grade Reading and Writing Workshop class together. Prior to reading this novel there had been a lot of hostility in the class, directed from students to each other, and from students toward Gail and Karla. Reading the novel created a community within the classroom. On one day in particular, students began to connect with one another, ending much of the hostility that they had displayed during the semester. When they “started to become friends with one another on that day…That was a good day, it helped me to see that you can use literature to help students think about their lives and get along with each other and see meaning in things” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99).

Following her student-teaching experience, Gail argued that literature serves a very significant role in individuals’ discovery about themselves. Demonstrating a concrete example of how students did this, Gail referenced the study of the play Romeo and Juliet: “They really keyed hard into the dilemma that they had, that the two characters had. To the point that I don't think that they designated between fiction and reality, and it made them look at their own lives and their own relationships and that they are different” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99).
Reflection

As with most, if not all of the preservice teachers with whom I worked, Gail found her student-teaching experience and her relationships with her cooperating teachers to be the most influential factors in shaping her perspective on teaching English/Language Arts. In part this was due to, as Gail stated in her interview, the shared visions they had for the teaching of students:

I guess that is probably because the teachers, both of the teachers, or all three of the teachers had similar views to me, similar views on teaching, on students, on education; and so I guess it wasn't a hard sell for me so I just guess that everything that I was thinking about I saw it put into practice. I saw it succeeding and I saw it working so that really influenced the way I thought about teaching. (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

Gail and Karla, due to the highly reflective nature of the cooperating teachers they were working with, found many of the ideals they discussed in their course work enacted during their student-teaching experience.

The most significant tool that Gail acquired as a result of her course work was the idea of the importance of reflective thinking: “Just, the idea of reflecting on everything that you do. I found that to be really important even though sometimes I felt like I was over-reflecting that I was writing the same things over and over again, but the idea of documenting what you have done and going back and looking at it again with a different eye” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99). The key areas that Gail felt that she had reflected on were student learning styles and how their socio-economic status influenced their ability to learn, a tool illustrated in her case story of
teaching and its emphasis on understanding the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of students in order to teach them.

*Gail’s Successful Story: Zodiac Signs and Shakespearean Characters*

Like many preservice teachers, Gail found herself engaged in the difficult task of making classical literature such as *Romeo and Juliet* accessible to her students. Of the six preservice teachers who participated in this study, all of them, with the exception of Sylvia who was teaching eleventh-grade American Literature, taught a Shakespearean play during their preservice teaching experiences: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In Gail’s case, as with Jane’s, both her successful and problematic stories illuminated her efforts to teach the tale of two star-crossed lovers to contemporary fourteen-and-fifteen-year-old American public school students.

For both the problematic and successful case stories, Gail chose describing the same lesson—a connection between Shakespearean characters and the signs of the zodiac—in two different environments, student-teaching at Washington and field experience at Liberty High School. Gail gave the students a writing project: “One to two pages where they had to take a character from the play *Romeo and Juliet* which they had been reading in class. I also gave them a sheet that detailed different signs of the Zodiac, astrological signs. What they had to do was they had to create a sign for a character of their choosing from the packet and take textual evidence from the play and textual evidence from the packet and use those for support for why they thought this character was this astrological sign” (Gail Pruitt, Case Story, 5/07/99).
According to Gail, the students in the class, an honors ninth-grade course, had a very high interest level in their work. Enthusiasm, pride in their work, and a desire to share that work with other members of the class as well as with Gail, characterized this class.

Gail contended that much of the student interaction was typical, that the students had one of the strongest rapports, with Gail and themselves, that she had ever witnessed in a class. Because of this rapport, the students maintained a strong sense of ownership over the progress of the class and displayed an unusually high level of self-motivation for a ninth-grade class. “A lot of the discussion in there is usually student initiated. It is rare; the only time that they are not heavily involved in the discussion is when they are heavily confused. They will always speak up and say that they are confused but it is never a situation where I get no feedback from them in class. So it is a very positive learning environment” (Gail Pruitt, Case Story, 5/07/99). The quality of the writing had a profound effect on Gail; the students had far exceeded her expectations. The students, in keeping with their competitive natures, did well in this project because the act of writing tapped into their creativity and allowed them to write unique essays.

Because Gail’s assignment was very open-ended and creative, students’ writing flourished, exhibiting an extremely high level of critical thought about Romeo and Juliet. During the writing, students obviously thought about the text and the characters in ways that they may not have previously considered. The students participated in a careful, critical analysis of the play in ways that Gail had hoped that they would. By any measure, the students displayed an extremely high level of
thinking and produced a tremendous amount of work for what Gail had considered to be a small weekend-homework assignment which students should have spent minimal time on. (See Appendix F.4)

Gail’s Problematic Story: Field Experience “Well, Don’t Know”

During her field experience at Liberty High School, Gail attempted a similar zodiac assignment with a group of ninth-grade students, this time meeting with very different results. According to Gail, this group was different than the group at Washington, having less motivation and focus on eventually attending college:

I had them do a similar exercise where they had to read about the astrological signs, they did not have as much information to read from because we gave the students in the class that I just referred to more information. More information on the signs because they were going to be reading it out of class and there was not enough time for the students to be reading it in class. (Gail Pruitt, Case Story, 5/07/99)

This particular class had pre-existing problems with staying focused on tasks, academic achievement, and attendance. All of these issues made it difficult for Gail to have success with a lesson that required students to take knowledge gleaned from previous lessons (the reading of Romeo and Juliet) and apply that knowledge to a new context (the writing of the zodiac sign analysis).

Gail said that the students became frustrated easily, not wanting to work on areas where they had experienced limited success in the past. One of the areas in which students had felt a lack of success was supporting ideas with textual evidence. Gail, during the course of her narration reflected on problems she might have needed
to address for the students as they attempted to do their literary analysis. Providing a stronger scaffold and gaining access to students’ prior knowledge may have improved students’ productivity level and the likelihood of success for Gail.

I think that this assignment was hard for them because it was hard for them to go back into the text and pull information out of the text and then compare it. I think that that was harder for them than it was to look at their own life and compare it to the signs. But even then part of it might have been that I was a lot newer to them and some of them maybe just did not want to disclose facts about themselves to me. (Gail Pruitt, Case Story, 5/07/99)

Gail pointed out that one of the central differences between the two classes was the issue of her rapport with students. With the course at Liberty, she was only with the students for a short time before the zodiac assignment. With the class at Washington, she had been with the students for more than a quarter, having worked with them on a project during the previous term involving the creation of a classroom newspaper. Gail credited this difference in rapport as affecting the amount of effort students invested in the assignment, to some degree. Other problems, such as classroom attendance, were largely beyond Gail’s control.

Gail had a strong inclination to improve her teaching, evidenced by the differences between the two classes. Perhaps the time that she took in refining the lesson between Liberty and Washington largely contributed to the success of the lesson. While Gail attributed much of the difficulty at Liberty to factors beyond her control, such as student absence and limited time with the students before presenting the lesson, Gail also reflected on what she could improve within the lesson.
Through her case story of teaching, Gail wished that she could have taught her lesson again, and she received her wish at Washington High School and met with very different results. (See Appendix G.4)

**Sylvia Pierce: Standing a Snowball’s Chance**

Sylvia, an African-American married mother of two, in her early thirties, attended a predominately African-American high school, very similar in background to Liberty, the high school where she student taught. After graduating from college, Sylvia pursued journalism, her college major, without giving any thought to teaching. Finding teaching as a second career gave her a different perspective once she entered the classroom during her preservice teaching experience. Before entering the Masters of Education Program, Sylvia spent eight years substitute teaching and working in an after-school program, which she called the latch-key program—all in the same district in which she did her preservice teaching.

Sylvia became a teacher by accident: “When I did that, applied and started substitute teaching, I never knew that I would fall in love with teaching because I never dreamt of becoming a teacher at all, never” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 1, 3/10/99). During her substitute teaching, Sylvia did not have a teaching certificate. After several years of substitute teaching without a certificate, Sylvia applied to the Masters of Education Program where she was told she “would never stand a snowball's chance in hell of getting in the program basically” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 1, 3/10/99). According to Sylvia, this incident “messed up my self-esteem and then I just continued to sub and sub, because I couldn't get into anybody's program and be the teacher like I wanted to be” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 1, 3/10/99). Six years passed
before Sylvia was finally accepted into the Masters of Education Program at Midwestern University. Sylvia’s hardships made her a stronger teacher and student, someone who was able to work with struggling students. Sylvia described her success as a result of her fortitude. She believed that her improvement, as a student and a writer, had come as a result of her willingness to accept feedback and constantly practice writing. In particular, she attributed her progress to a British-Literature professor who forced her to write and rewrite until her work was “polished and clear.”

Sylvia possessed a very dramatic, vibrant personality and felt that displaying this personality was critical to her teaching. “I look at teaching as almost like acting. I am a good actress. I feel that through this performance the kids are going to learn, they are going to learn through my performance anyway. I don't mean to sound big-headed but I know that God has selected me to be a good teacher and kids are going to learn from me” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99). According to Sylvia, teaching is a calling. She had a very powerful religious perspective and felt that God had led her into teaching. This belief fostered her strong sense of self and helped her to overcome her initial rejection by the admittance counselor. Her religious perspective helped her to focus on the needs of the students, both emotional and academic.

_Collaboration, Context, And Cooperating Teachers_

Sylvia taught on a block schedule with students meeting for one hour and forty-five minute periods on a trimester schedule (teachers in this school changed students every thirteen weeks). Sylvia taught two courses, one eleventh-grade American-Literature course, and a yearbook course. Unlike, Erin and Hannah or Gail and Karla, Sylvia did not team-teach with anyone, primarily planning and delivering
her lessons by herself. While many preservice teachers, and teachers in general, were apprehensive about teaching in an urban environment, Sylvia felt much more at home. She had experienced what she considered to be an unfriendly environment in her suburban teaching experience, where she felt teachers did not give much attention to Black History Month or to differences in cultures, a situation which she described in one of her case stories of teaching. She felt that the students at Liberty High School would be more receptive and more willing to participate in the type of teaching that she wanted to engage in.

Sylvia had tremendous respect for her cooperating teacher, especially because he was a teacher who seemed to have handled the pressures of teaching at Liberty very well. “The reason that he is so effective to me is that he really likes his kids and the kids can feel that. I observed there once a week for six weeks, every time that I went there, his hair was never ruffled, he never got upset” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 1, 3/10/99). Sylvia illustrated her cooperating teacher’s ease in dealing with students by discussing how he addressed problems with instruction in his class with a transition into group work during a block class that became, according to Sylvia, unstructured and a bit chaotic. “Instead of blaming the kids he blamed himself, he said ‘You know I could have done things differently, I could have waited to do the group work at the end of the class period instead of doing it at the beginning because you know once the kids get with their friends they are going to want to talk’” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 1, 3/10/99). Sylvia’s cooperating teacher had modeled reflective thinking for her through this exchange.
Tools

Writing Assessment: Not Getting Swamped

During the third interview I asked Sylvia to tell a story about an event that was significant to her, or that she would most remember about preservice teaching. In response to this, Sylvia referred to an issue that all of the preservice teachers highlighted as a major concern in their interviews, assessing student papers. Because of her many pulls and time constraints, Sylvia allowed students to turn in papers late, which created a backlog for herself at the end of the grading period. From this experience, Sylvia developed a plan for working with late work; by giving students only a certain amount of time for late or make-up work, and dealing with those students and their make-up needs only during the last five minutes of the period. While this was not a direct focus on how to assess papers, it was a management issue of establishing clear guidelines for accepting essays, a decision that would directly effect how Sylvia was able to assess papers in her class.

One of the tools that Sylvia learned derived from something that one of her cooperating teachers during her field experience had not done. Her cooperating teacher had not given the students very much homework, which Sylvia saw as being very ineffective. During her own preservice teaching, and her experience as a student, Sylvia had found homework to be a tool that could help students re-emphasize the knowledge and skills that they acquired during a course. Sylvia believed that students needed extra chances and that it was the teachers’ responsibility to work with them in order to help them get that assistance. “I have discovered that throughout being here at the program that some students don't get it on the first try and that is all that a lot of
teachers allow kids to do. If it meant doing rewrite after rewrite after rewrite, I would not just let them hand in their paper and hand it back and be ‘here is your C’” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99).

Sylvia emphasized the personal relationships between herself and her students, saying that she had never been one to “bite my tongue” when it came to giving people advice, and that this was a central part of teaching that also connected to what happened with students in the classroom. She said that with respect to working on a writing assignment, students often would work to improve because they respected Sylvia and her feedback, though they may not have understood specifically why they needed to revise. The students were building trust with Sylvia.

Sylvia’s responses to student writing changed as a result of taking writing methods courses. Initially, much like Hannah, Sylvia believed that responding to student writing involved circling or pointing out student grammatical errors. Her university course work influenced her by making her rethink how she was responding to student papers:

If, I just went and cut up a kid’s paper, I mean cut it up by saying ‘that's wrong, and that's wrong, and dut, dit dit, dah dut’ then I mean their self-esteem may be ruined so that they may not hear anything else that I have to say later on. So I think that that course has helped me because I try to start off with a positive when I am going over their papers one on one. But that course really has helped me to look at things in a different light, the grading of the papers for one. (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99)
Because of her response to the content of their ideas, many students shared issues of a personal nature with Sylvia, connecting to her vision of teaching being largely about interpersonal relationships: “I try to keep that in mind that I am not so far removed from where they are right now, so I try to supplement my lessons with different pieces to try, just to try to let them know that I understand” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99).

Sylvia was very concerned with how students’ perceptions of themselves and establishing tests and lessons that reached out to as many students as possible. She said a professor who had taught a summer course in classroom management had influenced her ideas on the subject of assessment and students’ self-perceptions: “She went and talked about how we design tests that basically set some kids up for failure and you know the harder the test why the better, you know why is it the better test” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99).

For Sylvia, making this connection centered on getting to know the students and developing lessons, like the Liberty Pond (based on Walden Pond) assignment where students had to create a scenario similar to Thoreau’s experiences, requiring students to invest themselves by imagining that they are one of the characters or in the position of one of the characters. She took these ideas from a course in young-adult literature in which the professor had utilized literature as a way to connect students to the world: “So that they can see that there is some one else out there with their same problem, so that they can see that they are not all alone” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99).
Directed Teaching: Where Are the Flash Cards?

Sylvia acquired some tools from her cooperating teacher that she used even though she initially had negative reactions toward them. For instance, her cooperating teacher used flash cards to teach vocabulary, which Sylvia viewed as an inappropriate methodology to use with high-school students. She initially used the flash cards, but quickly jettisoned them only to find that the students wanted them back.

Having learned about the learning-style differences, she described the students who needed the flash cards as visual learners. Sylvia also had connections to the fact that the students required particular structures, as her experiences assigning homework and placing limits on late work had shown her. This matched with many of the criticisms of using writing workshop approaches in urban schools, where students may need more directed and structured literacy activities in order to develop as readers and writers (Delpit, 1988).

Sylvia had an interesting reaction to the discussion of preservice teaching, because she said that nothing could have helped better prepare her for preservice teaching. She would not have understood or been willing to listen to the advice, which for her would have just been “words on a page” until she was in the midst of teaching. Ultimately, Sylvia, who had the most experience working with students and teaching of anyone I worked with in this project, did not feel that the teacher certification program had altered her views on teaching or learning significantly.
Sylvia’s Successful Case Story of Teaching: “Does Everybody Have The Same Choice?” Teaching Responsibility and Opportunity

According to Sylvia, the case story of teaching to a large extent focuses on the attempt to teach in an environment that she believed did not embrace issues of diversity. Sylvia felt that teaching must involve a connection to students, a personal view. Sylvia, in the interviews discussed earlier, stressed that she had a natural ability to relate to teenagers, an ability to have them look up to her as a mother or big sister figure. Sylvia attempted in her instruction to teach the whole child. During the course of her field experience in the same suburban high school where Gail and Karla did their preservice teaching, Sylvia confronted what she considered to be a conflict of her circumstances. Wanting to discuss issues of concern with regard to American society within her classroom, Sylvia found the students apathetic and many of the teachers lacking enthusiasm with respect to these issues. The lesson that Sylvia retold in her case story of teaching revealed an African-American teacher who struggled to teach diversity and reflection to a student body who at least in her opinion was insensitive to these issues. Sylvia’s decision to teach the lesson in this story, a lesson on responsibility and choices, stemmed from her dissatisfaction and rejection of an earlier lesson on Black History due to her perception of apathy of the school toward Black History Month.

By providing a scenario about choices and personal responsibility, giving students options, Sylvia generated discussion among a class that she described as being extremely lethargic, unmotivated, and non-communicative. While the students became very animated and engaged in the conversations, Sylvia felt taken aback by
some of their views and opinions. In many ways, Sylvia struggled with a theme that Hannah faced in her classes, how to work with students whose opinions seem very biased, even hostile to issues of difference.

Interestingly enough, while Sylvia said many students voiced a belief in a mantra that if you are poor you choose to be that way, when Sylvia forced them to reflect on their own experiences with standardized testing many of them revised their views, “it was not their fault” (Sylvia Pierce, Case Story, 5/06/99). By relating to the issues of social responsibility and opportunity to a concern that many of the students had, passing the state mandated graduation proficiency test, Sylvia captured the reluctant participants’ attention. Building on the general discussion regarding opportunity and responsibility, Sylvia extended the discussion into an analysis of social issues, particularly the economics of the illegal drug industry, by using a picture book *The House that Crack Built*.

By using this book, Sylvia changed the minds of the students, to an extent, with respect to the amount of choice that individuals have. Using her maturity, and focusing on a very important topic, drug usage, Sylvia maintained interest, even while using a picture book that many students initially felt was “babyish.” Sylvia found that through making these ideas accessible and creating an environment where students knew that their opinions would be respected, students began to voice their opinions, even if those opinions contrasted with the majority of students in the class. (See Appendix F.5).
Sylvia’s Problematic Story: Monday Morning Grades

Sylvia’s story of difficulty concerned a problem that many of the preservice teachers faced, classroom management. For her, classroom management did not center on student behaviors so much as on her ability to organize the routines of the classroom, especially as they related to grading assignments, taking attendance, and other paperwork responsibilities. Sylvia realized that the ability to perform duties not directly related to academic instruction in a timely manner did affect her instruction significantly.

Sylvia had to address a very difficult problem for teachers, how to help students succeed without making herself crazy by collecting make-up work constantly. Sylvia was caught in a dilemma between motivating and assisting students and maintaining her own sanity and sense of order. Beginning to question whether she should or could handle everyone’s problems, Sylvia realized that she had become the individual who was suffering the most. “I wanted to solve everyone's problem and I think I made a bad choice of trying to solve it right then and there. I could not do it. I tried to do it and I suffered and the kids suffered too because class did not start until 8:05 and it should have started at 7:30. We suffered all week because like today we had to almost read for an hour in order to catch up in order to finish” (Sylvia Pierce, Case Story, 5/06/99). Deciding how to address the issue of make-up work and handling the necessary paper load at the start of each period, Sylvia changed the rules of the classroom, developing a system for meeting both the needs of her students and herself. Midway through the trimester, Sylvia wrote and discussed what she called “a new classroom rule sheet.” This rule sheet provided a structure for assisting students
with late work and paperwork and creating an environment where she could accomplish the necessary routines of the classroom without interfering too substantially with the instruction of the class.

Sylvia had realized that her previous strategies had not worked, that students were to some extent taking advantage of her, and that the lack of a system for mediating student concerns and late work was diminishing significantly the amount of instructional time that she had in the classroom: “Because what was happening was that I was becoming overloaded because I was getting stacks of papers from students to grade who then just decided to turn their work in because it was the end of the grading period” (Sylvia Pierce, Case Story, 5/06/99). Sylvia used this as an opportunity to stress what she believed was one of the cornerstones of teaching students, personal responsibility.

*Jane Bond: Holding a Conversation with Students*

Jane, a twenty-two-year-old African-American and Thai woman, entered the Masters of Education Program directly after graduating from college with an English degree. She attended a magnet school in a large urban school district on the east coast. According to Jane, the school was largely for college bound students and she took very rigorous academic courses. She student taught at City High School, a large, racially and economically diverse, urban high school.

After graduating from high school, Jane attended a prestigious, historically black university. At the university, she had experiences that were different from many of the other students in the teacher preparation program with respect to the emphasis of her course work in African-American literature. Because of her background with
African-American literature, Jane wanted to incorporate a variety of literatures into the curriculum, a desire that would go unfulfilled during her student-teaching experience.

In deliberating on her views of teaching, Jane stressed that she would want to be someone who could strike a balance between the different aspects of teaching language arts. In discussing her experiences with what she considered to be effective and ineffective teachers, Jane delineated between teachers who she felt were open to students’ ideas and different modes of learning (effective) and teachers who had limited views and were controlling (ineffective). Jane resisted notions of the teacher as being “in charge,” as being the center of knowledge in the classroom. Jane displayed a belief that a very strong connection between herself and her students was necessary in order for students to be engaged and for authentic learning to take place. Jane had been fortunate enough to have teachers during her undergraduate course work who modeled this style of student engagement and curriculum integration for her:

I had a teacher as an undergrad for a U.S. fiction course who, she actually incorporated writing into everything that we were doing, like every day we would start the class off by, she would throw out two questions that we had and we would have to answer about that, so that was kind of like a pre-writing thing, and also a way to get the discussion going in class. (Jane Bond, Interview 1, 3/08/99)

Rigorous revision was also a part of the class that greatly influenced Jane.
Collaboration, Context, and Cooperating Teachers

Jane experienced a concern with the differences in context between where she had gone to school and where she was teaching. The students had a very different attitude toward learning than Jane and her peers (at what she described as an academic high school), and this caused Jane to evaluate her views on education. Jane found that given the courses she was teaching in this situation, she needed to broaden her reactions, her views of teaching English/Language Arts. Jane emphasized that the student-teaching experience had a critical impact on her thinking about teaching and learning.

Right, being at the high school has changed me because I had such a narrow view of teaching English. I kind of thought that it would be like sort of like it was in college where there is a concentration of literature that you teach. And it is really not like that once you come back down to high school because they have so many more things that they need to learn like they need to learn to speak and to write. I think that that was the main thing that there were so many aspects of it more than literature that they actually do in the ninth grade. (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99)

Karen Franklin, Jane’s collaborating teacher, stated that she and Jane got along very well as a result of their complimentary styles.

I think that we worked together well. One thing is that we are fairly laid back. We both want lessons, when we come in, I feel like I am more of a not organized, but I am more objective. This kind of thing needs to be done and then this, but sometimes that can be hindering on me because you need to be
more flexible in your teaching. And so a lot of times our two styles are not the same, but I think that we benefited from that because I was, she would do all of things for paperwork, and I would put it in a format that would be matching all of my stuff so that when I turn it in at the end of the year so that they can read it. (Karen Franklin, Cooperating Teacher Interview, 6/03/99)

Tools

Media and Structure

Jane discovered the importance of connecting students with the visual medium of film in order to help them understand the literature: “That made a difference with Romeo and Juliet, …before, the characters were just names on a page, but now they got to put a face with the name, they got to learn about their facial expressions and to learn about their personality in the movie. It kind of brought the characters to life” (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99). This became a central focus of her reflection on teaching and was the subject for both case stories.

They just connected: they could see Tybalt’s blood. And prior to watching the movie I had a character’s traits chart on the board and for Tybalt I asked them to describe him and write down a description of how he likes to fight…based on what we had read in the play. And they wrote it down but they did not really see. They just wrote it down, because I told them to write it down. But then when they could see the movie they were able to see that he was really hot-headed or they understood. (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99)

Showing the video became the center of the class because students had immense difficulty understanding the Shakespearean language: “the reading was really hard for
them too, and they would be, ‘where did you get that from?’ And I would point out the line and they would kind of understand it but they would be just, ‘oh, okay.’ I think that visuals really bring it home” (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99).

One of the tools that Jane used very effectively, in connection with the video, to help her to teach in this school environment, was a very structured approach to working with students. Karen verified the extent to which this approach helped facilitate learning in the classroom:

I don’t know if she was that structured for herself, but she made them be structured; and they really got a lot out of it, and I think that they could see that that was better than I do. I do a lot of lecturing and I am hoping that they are getting it, and I don’t usually see the assessment until the test where she would know that they either were getting it or they were not doing the work. (Karen Franklin, Cooperating Teacher Interview, 6/03/99)

By providing students with a structure, study guides and close discussion of the video of Romeo and Juliet, Jane facilitated their understanding of the difficult language in a Shakespearean play.

Influences and Final Concerns Following Preservice Teaching

When I asked Jane about what had most influenced her thinking about teaching and learning, she responded in a fashion typical of many preservice teachers by saying …preservice teaching by far. I think that you should do that first because you never really know what it is like until you get in the classroom…by the time you get to preservice teaching you forget all of the theory and stuff you learned from your course work. Whereas, you probably can’t do it first, but if there
was a way that you could do it first and then go into the methods courses
{preservice teaching} you could have been ‘oh, I could have done that and I
could have done that’ and this would have worked. Preservice teaching I think
should have been first. (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99)

While Jane understood many of the concepts from her teacher program on an abstract
level, fitting them into the curriculum that she was implementing was very difficult.
They make sense but it is just kind of abstract because you have not been in
your own classroom yet, so it is like ‘okay literacy is a,b,c and d and this is
how you help people develop literacy.’ But you never really work with a
person to help that person learn to read—to develop reading and writing skills.
The theories and strategies for developing literacy are not useless but abstract:
you cannot really grasp it. (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99)

She said she was still trying to connect theory to her classroom decisions: “I did not
get to, some little lessons here and there I got to pull in I suppose. But not really
anything concrete that I definitely did. Except for pre-writing with the web I did that a
little bit, I took that from my course work. No, it was kind of hard to go back and see
what you learned before and see how it relates. I kind of forgot a lot of the stuff” (Jane
Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99).

\textit{Jane’s Problematic Story: Reading Romeo and Juliet}

In her case story of teaching, Jane grappled with the difficulty of teaching
reading, especially reading such as Shakespeare’s \textit{Romeo and Juliet} where the
language, diction, and syntax are often difficult for even very strong readers to access.

The problematic case story and the case story of success both deal with this issue over
a period of time in several courses, all of them ninth-grade classes, at the urban high school where Jane completed her preservice teaching. The first problem that Jane faced was the issue of students not being able to make sense of their reading, even though they were able to say most of the words. How to deal with the problematic language, how to help the students make sense of the language became Jane’s first task in helping them learn *Romeo and Juliet*, a text that she was assigned by her cooperating teacher to teach.

The students initially had strong motivation to read the story but quickly became frustrated with the language and their inability to comprehend much of the content. Jane pointed out that many of the students did not follow along because the student readers, those playing the roles, stumbled over the language. Simply, the students could not pronounce the words. Jane found her method teaching the play, the method most teachers of Shakespeare follow, read the play, discuss it as you go along, show the movie and take a test, to be highly frustrating for herself and her students. She quickly realized that her expectations for herself and her students would not be met through this methodology.

As the students in her class became increasingly frustrated with their inability to make meaning out of the texts, Jane began to reconsider her thinking about this experience. As a student in high school, Jane’s teachers had required that the students read the test aloud and then discuss what they had read. Now the teacher, this process did not work for Jane, causing the need to alter her teaching plans.

Jane felt the key problem she faced involved the issue of language. If students could understand the language, the class would be much more productive. The
students, because of their frustration, gave up to a certain extent, exhibiting such a low level of motivation that they did not even ask questions, constantly seeking Jane’s help in clarifying the reading of the text for them. Jane’s solution to the problem involved connecting students with the media they were more familiar with than Shakespeare’s written words, video. Her case story of a teaching success illustrates the effectiveness of the incorporation of this medium into the classroom. (See Appendix G.6)

*Jane’s Successful Story: Viewing Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Daines*

During preservice teaching, Jane faced the problem of having to make texts from the canon, texts that she was required to teach, specifically *Romeo and Juliet*, current for her students. This was difficult for Jane because she felt distanced from the texts herself and called into question the legitimacy of these texts as the focus of the English/Language Arts curriculum.

I think that it is also, to, if I am teaching *Romeo and Juliet* or something, to relate it to now, to 1999. Which is because a lot of times if the students, if they can not relate to it, if they are not interested in it, ideally I would love to just have a classroom where all of my students would come to and they would just have so much to say about their reading that they had the night before, but I know that it is not going to be like that. And I also think, one thing that I like to do is to incorporate film into my classroom. I think that kids now can relate more to seeing as opposed to reading. (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99)

With her ninth-grade students, Jane believed that she needed to have them learn a basic structure that they could remember.
Jane and Hannah’s stories were interesting because they were the only two preservice teachers who narrated problematic and successful stories about the same class. Her struggles with helping the students to access the difficult language of Romeo and Juliet led her to incorporate more visual media into the class.

As a result of watching the movie, the students became much more involved in the story, asking questions, considering the conflicts and characterizations. Jane’s cooperating teacher had pointed out in our final interview that one of the things that Jane had to clarify for the students because of confusion was the racial issue. The version that they watched had a contemporary Miami setting and the problems involved the fact that one family was Hispanic and the other was not. Because of these differences, the students had to make a connection between time settings, intent, and meanings of the play.

The text during the course of the video viewing became alive for the students allowing Jane to help the students experience the dramatic impact of Romeo and Juliet. The movie led students to problem solve and ask questions about the film. Along with Jane’s instruction, students began to understand and consider the intricacies of plot and theme in the play. While reading the play aloud left students with little understanding of even the basic plot points, the actors and visuals facilitated students’ critical thinking about the outcomes of the characters’ actions.

Jane had two major concerns during the reading of the play: that students did not make meaning out of what they had read and even if they did make some momentary meaning, that understanding was fleeting, students did not remember what they had read the previous day, or even from earlier in the same class period.
Through the video, students followed the play to the extent of being able to predict and analyze character actions and outcomes using textual support to explain their responses. (See Appendix F.6)

**Cross Case Analysis**

Four issues are particularly relevant to the preservice teachers’ conceptions about the teaching of English/Language Arts.

1. Prior experiences, including experiences as students, and personal and professional background
2. Perceived contradictions between their course work in the Masters of Education Program and the actual experiences in schools, or what several of the preservice teachers in this project referred to as idealism vs. realism
3. Contexts in which they did their field experiences and completed their preservice teaching
4. Relationships with students, cooperating teachers, supervising teachers, colleagues, and professors

Each of these four different areas had a strong impact on the way that the preservice teachers thought about teaching, the interactions that they had in the field, and the stories that they told about teaching.

*Prior Beliefs about Teaching*

The preservice teachers’ wide range of prior experiences heavily influenced their thinking about teaching and themselves as teachers. Initially, these preconceptions offered resistance to the theories and knowledge taught their methods courses. Erin and Hannah said that their prior teaching experiences allowed them to
apply the perspectives English Education Program’s philosophies to preservice teaching. Erin and Hannah both discussed their early feelings of discomfort taking the teacher education courses, developing a view that “what did these classes have to teach me.” Ultimately they learned that they could use their prior experiences teaching in Poland and Africa as a lens to decide how they might have utilized the new concepts and strategies in those situations. Likewise, both Sylvia and Karla drew on their prior experiences during their preservice teaching. Sylvia’s experience substitute teaching and working in a latchkey program allowed her to feel very comfortable interacting with students, thus creating a situation where she could focus more on the development of her academic instruction, already being adept at classroom management. As a result of her brother’s learning disability, Karla used her experiences and frustrations teaching him how to read as an adult to develop understanding and patience working with the students in her Twelfth-grade Writing Workshop course.

*Idealism versus Realism*

Discussing individual case stories allowed the preservice teachers to examine the struggles at various times during preservice teaching while reconciling their idealism about teaching with the actual experiences that they encountered in the classroom. Entering preservice teaching, several preservice teachers had a “savior” complex feeling that if they were not Jaime Escalanate then they had failed. During the course of preservice teaching, the preservice teachers all dealt with this dilemma in different ways, most realizing that they had to become aware that learning about teaching was a process and that many components of the educational process and
students’ lives were beyond their control. Discussing this during her interviews, Gail said “why can’t all teachers always be the best,” later contending that she discovered that always being the best was extremely difficult and perhaps unrealistic, and that sometimes she had to settle for “not quite her best.”

The preservice teachers also expressed concern over the apparent lack of connection between their university course work and what they were doing during preservice teaching. After becoming more comfortable with the curriculum, many said that they had tried to incorporate different aspects of the English Education program into their teaching. Several expressed the desire to have had more of an opportunity to try different methods from the courses during preservice teaching, especially using writing methods and teaching of young-adult literature to which many of them did not feel that they had access.

*Contexts or Activity Settings*

During the course of their interviews and case stories of teaching, the setting of the stories, the contexts in which their teaching occurred maintained a primary focus for the preservice teachers. This context took two shapes: that which they entered, in large part inheriting a community from their cooperating teachers, and the learning environment that they established through their work with students.

The context of the student-teaching experience had the greatest impact on the preservice teachers in their own views. While many initially disregarded the teacher preparation program, all also suggested that they had used key components of the teacher preparation program during preservice teaching; the opportunity to put those
ideas into practice in a specific context made the teaching methods courses more relevant for the preservice teachers.

Often, they felt restricted by student behaviors, the demands of their cooperating teachers, attendance, and institutional policies. However, they also felt that by the end of preservice teaching, and often during their actual case stories, that they had created a sense of community in their classes, a community that was largely based on their efforts to develop relationships with their students, a quality that all six of the preservice teachers considered to be the most important aspect of teaching.

*Relationships*

Each preservice teacher presented relationships between students and teachers, and between students and students, as the most important aspect of teaching because the necessary learning could not take place without a strong student-teacher bond. The center of the group response to the case stories of teaching involved a discussion of relationships with students and how the preservice teachers considered student self-esteem to be the major obstacle in their efforts to teach. Karla in particular focused on community and relationships in both case stories and her interviews, using the metaphor of crossing over, of crossing boundaries to describe her relationships with students.

**Cross Case Analysis of Stories of Teaching**

*Successful Case Stories Of Teaching*

Addressing the issues of similarity and difference between the various problematic and successful case stories explains what can be learned from the analysis of preservice teacher stories. I developed six important characteristics that determined
the nature of the case stories: 1) the context in which the case story occurred, 2) the
time frame over which the story occurred (individual class period versus the semester),
3) the area of instruction (reading, discussion, classroom management), 4) the goals
of instruction for the time period of the case story (academic and social), 5) the focus
of the story—its main point or theme, and 6) the changes that occurred in their
students and themselves as a result of the experience. Table 4.1 illustrates these
categories.
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Table 4.1 Successful Case Stories of Teaching
*Gail’s successful and unsuccessful story both involved the same exact lesson

# Hannah and Jane related successful and unsuccessful stories about the same class.

**Context**

Three contextual factors impacted the stories: the model of the cooperating teacher, the type of students that the preservice teachers were teaching (ninth-grade versus twelfth-grade, honors versus writing workshop), and the relationship between the preservice teachers and the students in the classroom. The stories of success in particular focused on how the preservice teachers attempted to build community out of disparity. Interestingly, five of the six successful case stories involved students with whom the preservice teacher had previously experienced difficulties.

Preservice teachers often have difficulty entering preservice teaching because they feel that they have to implement their cooperating teachers’ program. If the preservice teacher and the cooperating teacher do not share similar philosophies about instruction or students, the student-teaching experience can be painful for all. Even though the preservice teachers and cooperating teachers described the relationships as positive, most of the preservice teachers also discussed the early problems of transition moving into another person’s classroom. Frequently the participants in the study referred to this time as a “test.” For instance, Karla, during her student-teaching experience, and Sylvia, during her field experience, found difficulties with the rules and procedures they faced coming into another teacher’s classroom.

Both Karla and Sylvia felt that their cooperating teachers’ atmosphere for the room would be ineffective for them. Karla felt a need to build on the student relationships with one another and self-esteem leading her to (in her opinion) “create
more student-centered lessons for them” than her cooperating teacher, Alice Monroe, had been utilizing. Similarly, Sylvia’s case story of teaching confronted the problem of an inherited atmosphere (if only perceived) during her field experience. Sylvia believed that the students at Washington High School were insensitive to issues of race. According to Sylvia, teachers and students made few efforts to pay attention to differences, especially with relationship to African-Americans and the homeless. Sylvia commented on a lack of participation in African-American History month and students’ derogatory comments about the poor as evidence of the limited awareness of diversity among students and faculty members. Sylvia also described the classroom discussions as being “none” that the “teacher was talking and that was it. The feedback was usually not very good” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 1, 3/10/99).

Jane, Erin, and Hannah all described early struggles teaching ninth-grade English at City High School and Alternative High School. Their problems focused on behaviors and students’ seeming lack of interest in the instruction of the courses. The successful case stories of teaching centered on classes that according to the preservice teachers had “tended to be pretty rowdy, I would say on a regular basis” (Erin Vincent, Case Story, 5/05/99) or “having varying levels of engagement” (Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99). Experiencing similar concerns with her group of ninth-grade students, specifically with the reading of Romeo and Juliet, Jane described an environment of “pulling teeth.” In five of the six successful case stories of teaching, the preservice teachers faced the problems of initial difficulties with students; difficulties to some extent the preservice teachers overcame.
Changing the atmosphere to one that they could work in was a priority for the preservice teachers. Karla found success by changing the view the students in writing workshop had of themselves, their classmates, Karla and Gail, and the school in general. For Sylvia, the change centered on opening up the students’ views of difference with respect to class and race. For Erin, Hannah, and Jane, the success came in keeping students focused, in a change in student understanding and response to the literature of the course. Only Gail had had success more or less with the group from the start. Her successful case story of teaching illustrated the high point in a very successful experience with students from start to finish.

Images of Time

The second issue in the successful case stories concerned time. Two specific aspects of time were relevant with respect to analysis of the case stories: the time frame (length of events) of the story and how the preservice teachers conceived of time during those events.

Four of the preservice teachers, Erin, Hannah, Sylvia, and Gail (whose story took place over two days on the same lesson) narrated stories about single episodes during their preservice teaching. Karla and Jane (conceiving of the entire teaching experience as an ongoing story), however, told stories that described the entire semester. For both Karla and Jane, the courses that they described in their successful case stories of teaching (Karla’s writing workshop course and Jane’s ninth-grade English classes), revealed an ongoing struggle to work with the students; a struggle for respect and self-esteem in the writing workshop courses and a struggle for comprehension of an illusive text.
In the problematic case stories of teaching, time seemed to drag on for the preservice teachers, almost standing still—with the exception of Sylvia’s story which revealed there not being enough time to accomplish everything. In the successful stories of teaching, the preservice teachers depicted a very harmonious sense of time, a sense that time was fluid, buoyant, that all aspects of teaching were flowing together.

**The Goals of Instruction**

The preservice teachers defined their success in relation to their ability to achieve particular goals—purposes that could be tangible or assessed in terms of instruction, such as reading comprehension—and goals that were less easily gauged, such as student rapport, sense of responsibility, and acceptance of difference. Each preservice teacher used a wide range of methods and instructional tools to reach their goals.

Goals included both academic and social goals. Sylvia, feeling that the students in her classroom had very biased, narrow opinions about difference, sought to open the eyes of her students to difference and responsibility. Jane, Hannah, and Erin, struggling with rambunctious ninth-graders who had little interest in the literature that they were encountering, hoped to help the students to connect the literary texts—“Tell-Tale Heart,” “Everyday Use,” and *Romeo and Juliet*—to their lives. Wanting to improve writing workshop students’ views of themselves and school, Karla planned to work on rapport, to build a sense of community. Already experiencing great success in a classroom that she, along with her cooperating teacher, believed had an incredible sense of community, Gail attempted to expand ideas about literature, developing critical, analytical thinking.
Exceeding the expectations, moving beyond the aims of the preservice teachers was a consistent theme within the successful case stories of teaching. Gail’s comments about the quality of the student writing illustrated the extent to which students could surprise the preservice teachers to their delight.

Many of the students went over the page limit. They had seven or eight examples from the text *Romeo and Juliet* and supported those with numerous examples from the reading. In explaining their examples some of them went to four or five pages double-spaced, twelve-point papers, which is equivalent to what I would have to do for a college level course. (Gail Pruitt, Case Story, 5/07/99)

Similarly, Hannah experienced a sense that students had been extremely on task putting a good deal of themselves into the project, discussing and sharing in a way they had not previously done.

In each of the successful case stories, a switch occurred as the students took control of the lesson, moving discussion and debate, the topics of the writing into new directions. Erin described this change in students as having to do with her allowing the students control: “I felt like I did not need to keep controlling the pace of the lesson, sticking to the schedule” (Erin, Interview 3, 6/05/99). Thus a key sign of success was when students went beyond expectations and purposes for a lesson.

**Tools**

One of the most powerful aspects of the successful case stories of teaching was the extent to which the preservice teachers utilized a wide range of tools in their instruction. Erin used a connection with artifacts and the heirlooms that students felt
very personally about to engage students in discussion of the themes and issues in an Alice Walker story. Using her own personal talents as a fiction writer and storyteller, Hannah used storytelling and her own personal experience prior to teaching to encourage students to narrate their own stories in relation to “The Tell-Tale Heart.” Realizing that students could not make sense out of the language of Shakespeare, even with her translation, Jane integrated media into her classroom in a very effective manner. Through her personal interest in astrology, Gail taught students to think critically about characterization in Romeo and Juliet. Sylvia and Karla, whose successful case stories of teaching focused on interpersonal relationships and student perceptions, used a very wide range of tools—picture books, object lessons (lemons), young-adult novels, and discussion to create a classroom community that embraced acceptance and difference. Most importantly, I believe, the preservice teachers all brought themselves into their teaching using their personal connection with students as a tool to build on learning.

**Changing Attitudes About Students and Teaching**

For Jane, Hannah, and Erin the most significant change that they expressed having experienced with their students in their successful case story of teaching was a change in behavior. Ninth-grade students, who each of the preservice teachers described as rambunctious with short attention spans during the course of the story, participated and stayed focused, representing a major breakthrough. For Jane, a move and focus on the video facilitated a significant alteration in the students’ ability to comprehend the text of Romeo and Juliet. As a result of the classroom discussions and storytelling sessions, Hannah and Erin’s students thought more deeply about
themes and issues related to “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “Everyday Use.” Gail’s students, who were the least initially resistant to her and her instruction of all of the students discussed in the successful case stories of teaching, delved into a deeper level of analysis. Already reading well and able to comprehend Romeo and Juliet, Gail’s ninth-grade honors students analyzed the characterizations in the play in a highly sophisticated lesson through the connection with the astrological charts. Karla and Sylvia wanted their students to alter their attitudes. Karla felt that she had experienced success with her twelfth-grade class, because they began to express more positive feelings about themselves and the class, and to display more respect for other students in the class. Sylvia opened the eyes of her students to differences, increasing their acceptance of others’ values and behaviors.

Problematic Case Stories of Teaching

The problematic case stories of teaching represented six preservice teachers telling stories that reveal what they felt were weak moments in their teaching. In each of the problematic stories, the setup of the environment had a primary focus. While in the successful stories, academic goals or student motivation seemed to be the center of the tale, the problematic case stories honed in on classroom management concerns. Each preservice teacher discussed their preparation as being a factor in the problematic story, oftentimes the lesson went in a direction not intended, ultimately ending in little instruction occurring during the lesson. In their responses to the situations, all preservice teachers displayed feelings of frustration, suggesting that they considered quitting teaching following the experience. Their reflection on the preparation and what occurred during the lesson, led all the preservice teachers to
reconsider their strategies, and three of the teachers to revise drastically their
philosophies of teaching, approaches to instruction, or classroom routines and
procedures.
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Table 4.2: Problematic Case Stories of Teaching
Two themes emerged during the problematic stories: the difficulty of working in a particular context and time seeming to either stop completely or race on at an uncontrollable pace.

**Context and Teacher Model**

All six preservice teachers discussed the environment as contributing to the problems they faced. Four of the preservice teachers—Erin, Hannah, Karla, and Sylvia—described difficulties that they were having appropriating the methods and styles of their cooperating teachers in the classroom. For Erin and Hannah, the problem with the environment and the teacher model of Warren Houston at Alternative High School (the school had a very lenient view on student behavior; Warren had a view open style of class discussion) was that from a preservice teacher’s perspective the lack of structure could create classroom management problems that may not have occurred in another school. Erin said “I thought the same thing would happen because I did not realize how much of that was Wayne and not just the students. I thought, ‘wow, these students are great, so I will just get going on this discussion and that will take up the whole period and they should get something out of it’” (Erin Vincent, Case Story, 5/05/99). Erin discovered that Wayne’s style involved a lot of practice, that discussion for students did not come effortlessly but involved a tremendous amount of work, practice, and trust. In her problematic case story of teaching, Hannah attributed part of the chaos described in her case story to the fact that students in the alternative school did not have the same rules as in other schools; they were accustomed to leaving the room when they wanted, to not participating in discussions if they so chose.
Similar to Hannah and Erin, Sylvia had a cooperating teacher at Liberty High School who was very laid back with respect to student behavior and routines. Sylvia credited his success as a teacher to his ability to accept students and refrain from getting “bent out of shape over the little things that occurred in class.” Inheriting an environment that she did not find successful for herself, Sylvia developed more structured routines.

Karla encountered a problem with her tenth-grade honors class with students who did not want to accept the change from their cooperating teacher to Karla and Gail’s routines. According to Karla the students saw her as more of a “student” teacher than the person responsible for the instruction of the class. When Gail and Karla attempted to establish new rules or styles, as in using a different format for quizzing students over reading material, the students in the class resisted.

The setting of the problematic case story of teaching for Jane and Gail centered not so much on differences that they had in style with their cooperating teachers, or in environments that resulted from the school philosophy, but more from the nature of the groups of students with whom they were working, ninth-graders. In both cases, Gail and Jane described students who had attendance and concentration problems that affected their ability to follow and participate in instruction in meaningful ways. Gail described the problem as one involving literacy and ultimately patience for school: “I found it problematic that when I went around and tried to encourage them to write more, that it was difficult for them to write more. I think that these students had a difficult time working through the initial frustration of not understanding what I was asking or not understanding how to synthesize information” (Gail Pruitt, Case Story,
Similarly, Jane found that students’ frustration with not being able to comprehend the reading of *Romeo and Juliet* led them to become non-participative and potentially disruptive. For both Gail and Jane, the frustration and difficulty students had with the material led to classroom management concerns, an experience shared by all of the other preservice teachers.

Hannah’s problematic case story, perhaps the most unique of the stories in that it appeared to be more or less an aberration, occurred during the next class meeting of the same students immediately following her successful case story of teaching. Hannah described, much to her horror, the complete breakdown of the class into what she considered to be “chaos.” The question that this raised was why did a class that had performed extremely well, creating an experience that Hannah described as “buoyant” which disintegrated during her class’s next meeting, only to improve the rest of the semester?

**Feelings of Anxiety**

Beginning with a misunderstanding (over rules and expectations, the goals of an assignment, or what students were supposed to do) between the preservice teachers and the students in the classroom, the preservice teachers experienced strong emotional feelings of negativity. Because she was frequently being observed, Hannah told her ninth-grade students to act naturally, as they would when there was not a visitor. Upon the visitation of the program director, the day that Hannah illustrated in her problematic case story of teaching, the students took her statement quite literally: “For some reason it seemed like something happened, just because I said be yourselves they took me literally. They took me to mean be yourselves like you
would be at home apparently” (Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99). Hannah’s feeling toward the students was clearly one of disbelief; they had overreacted to her comments, behaving in a way that they did not when they were not being observed.

There was also a sense during the lesson that time seemed to have stopped. The class seemed to remain almost motionless as Hannah perceived that the plans were not going to work; and her questions were being met by student silence and apathy. “After that I found myself far from the end of the period with lots of time left and kind of nervous in the middle of an eighty-five minute period. A lot of activities that I had planned at that time, I did not think would work” (Hannah Warren, Case Story, 5/05/99). Erin along with Hannah found herself in a class with too much time to remaining. Attempting to follow Wayne’s lead, Erin thought that by asking a few questions she could generate a discussion that would last the entire block period. Unfortunately, she experienced something quite different: “As it turned out the discussion took maybe ten minutes and then we watched the video the rest of the time. It just really fell flat…” (Erin Vincent, Case Story, 5/05/99). The sense of time standing still contrasted with some of the other experiences of the preservice teachers, a sense that time moved so rapidly that they could not accomplish anything. Jane described the class in this way: “So having them read out loud did not flow well” (Jane Bond, Case Story, 5/10/99). As the class deteriorated, failed to flow, the preservice teachers peppered their problematic case stories with imagery of despair: “pulling teeth, clocked stopped, disaster! Chaos!” These images left the preservice teachers with a sense that they did not want to return to teaching: “wish I could disappear,” “going home and crying,” and “not wanting to return.” But all of
them stayed to complete preservice teaching, the problematic case stories having occurred during the first half of the quarter. From their experiences they learned what areas of their teaching might need to be altered in order to limit the occurrences of such difficulties.

With the possible exception of Hannah who believed that her lesson was strong on paper, each preservice teacher suggested that their preparation needed to be rethought in order to address the problems they had faced in the classroom. After the melancholy feelings of disappointment and the contemplation of quitting subsided, the preservice teachers questioned their preparation and reflected on ways that they might improve their instruction, and handle the situations differently in the future.

Each preservice teacher suggested that a gap became apparent between the students’ abilities and knowledge and the expectations of the preservice teachers. Gail, reflecting on these differences and appropriate alternatives in this situation said “there were many different approaches I could have taken. But definitely a brainstorming activity needed to occur to kind of bring everyone on an even playing ground just as a general review for everyone probably would have been a good idea” (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99). Gail believed that she could have done an activity in an effort to scaffold their deeper understanding of the play.

Jane, Karla, and Sylvia changed strategies significantly. Jane who had been attempting to read and discuss Romeo and Juliet in a very traditional fashion turned the class around and made viewing the film the priority. Karla altered the style she had been using by having the students do more hands-on projects, such as making dramatic masks for Julius Caesar. Sylvia, realizing that procedural issues were
making teaching very difficult for her, in midstream, developed a system for handling the paper load, making the classroom more manageable: “I rectified the situation because yesterday I made up a new classroom rules. And it came at a perfect time because the grading period did just start on Monday, so I gave them a sheet that they could have in their hands because a lot them said ‘I did not get that or I did not know that’” (Sylvia Pierce, Interview 3, 6/03/99). With this strict structure, Sylvia expressed relief at the end of the semester and suggested that her students were much more comfortable knowing exactly when they had to have assignments completed.

Erin, Gail, and Hannah did not drastically alter their instruction as a result of the experiences described in the problematic case stories of teaching. Erin developed more confidence and realized that she did not have to “fill” her cooperating teacher’s shoes. While she continued to use discussions as the primary mode of instruction for the class, she also began to incorporate writing and group activities in order to facilitate the classroom dialogue.

For Hannah, the day was an aberration, one that she was perplexed by throughout: “I still do not know what happened. I have not had a day like that since” (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99). The prior classes had been fine, and the classes following that day had gone much better. For some reason, that day stood out as a period of horror for Hannah. While the stories themselves revealed a great amount about how the preservice teachers viewed teaching, and themselves as teachers, the group-reflective interview on the case stories helped the preservice teachers to focus on particular issues in teaching, leading to a different kind of reflection.
Group Response to the Stories

Reflection

One of the strongest assets of the research project that preservice teachers and I engaged in was the nature of collaboration as a key component in developing reflection. By discussing issues of teaching with peers, the preservice teachers were able to consider thoughtfully their own practice and decisions.

The preservice teachers discussed how their instruction had been influenced by their course work, the research and ideas proposed by several of their university professors, and perhaps most importantly by the social interaction with their peers, cooperating teachers, and students. The following discussion of the group-reflective interview illustrates how they used the pedagogical and conceptual tools acquired during their teacher training to make decisions about specific situations—curricular and classroom management issues—originating from their case stories of teaching.

The preservice teachers frequently focused on issues of student behavior during the conversation on the case stories. They were struggling with the fact that in their current teaching situations “immediate concerns” were taking precedence over purposes for teaching (Kennedy, 1998). Many of the preservice teachers focused on social concerns in the classroom; they often defined this in terms of building community within the class. Jane’s problematic case story of teaching struck a cord with the preservice teachers, probably because, like her, four of the other preservice teachers had taught a Shakespearean play to ninth-grade students, either Romeo and Juliet or A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Karla in addition had taught Julius Caesar to a tenth-grade class. Only Sylvia had not experienced teaching Shakespeare, having
taught eleventh-grade (American-Literature) and Journalism. All of the preservice teachers seemed very animated in discussing the teaching of Shakespeare, having experienced tremendous successes with the difficult works, but also having suffered tremendous frustration at students not being able to grasp the material, becoming alienated, and shutting out the course. The preservice teachers identified three issues which they perceived as contributors to the problems with teaching Shakespearean drama: self-esteem, reading Shakespearean language, and gender.

_Self-esteem_

Self-esteem, a critical problem in many of the classes that the preservice teachers taught, resulted from frequent student beliefs that they could not read and understand difficult literature. According to the preservice teachers’ comments during the group-reflective interview, students approached Shakespeare with feelings of trepidation. Karla found that “it is interesting to see how self-esteem is being so close to the fact to the English that is being taught. If you don't have the self-esteem it is almost like you can't have the lesson there” (Karla Anderson, Group Interview, 5/20/99). For Karla, developing rapport with students, establishing a community, a theme which resonated throughout my conversations with her, preceded academic learning, especially learning of content as complex as Shakespearean drama.

In Karla’s experience and based on the interpretation of the issues involved in Jane’s case story of teaching associated with the difficulties in teaching _Romeo and Juliet_ “if your self-esteem is affected in one area, it may be affected in others as well. For instance, if you feel that you cannot read Shakespeare, you might then associate that with other things—like you might think ‘well I am stupid.’ Kind of like what you
were saying, if I can not read Shakespeare I must be stupid and I can not tackle anything in school” (Karla Anderson, Group Interview, 5/20/99). In making this jump, the students at the ninth-grade level may not have been ready for reading and studying Shakespeare’s language which appeared to be the biggest obstacle in the teaching of the plays.

Reading Shakespearean Language

For students who had difficulty reading in general, Romeo and Juliet presented problems with “understanding the language itself…a double problem is the reading” (Sylvia Pierce, Group Interview, 5/20/99). Combined with the difficulty of the language was the problem of genre, reading drama—a form with which students were less familiar—led to frustration because “it was not just normal reading out loud, it was theater. I think that it was something that was hard to just jump into for them” (Gail Pruitt, Group Interview, 5/20/99).

Unfortunately, the preservice teachers did not feel that students had enough preparation with oral reading, or dramatic reading, when they were thrown into the reading of Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Gail’s comment displayed a concern among all of the preservice teachers with students’ reading practice: “I guess I wondered if they had had practice with reading aloud, in general. And, so if maybe they were accustomed to reading aloud, it might have come in, it might have been a little more, a little easier. But if this was a first time, it might have added to why it was so challenging for one class” (Gail Pruitt, Group Interview, 5/20/99).
Gender

Several preservice teachers thought that either males or females dominated their classes, serving as a major impediment to the learning process for the preservice teachers. In referring to teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to her ninth-grade Science and English class, Karla said “I did not have any of the girls respond in the discussion, it was really hard, it was like pulling teeth to get any of the girls to respond to any of the questions” (Karla Anderson, Group Interview, 5/20/99). According to Karla, several of the males students were “very dominant in the class and there are a couple that it is almost intimidating for me, you know as the teacher, because they are just very outspoken, very aggressive” (Karla Anderson, Group Interview, 5/20/99). When half of the class felt dominated or intimidated to participate, the entire flow of the class was disrupted. Jane experienced a similar problem; only the group that tended to dominate was female. In responding to Karla’s statement, Jane said

My class was very female dominated and another thing, I think the boys hate, they all do except for maybe three, they hate *Romeo and Juliet*, they hated every writing assignment. One thing that I did was that I had them do the love survey that we did in Dr. _______'s class and the boys were just non-responsive. They were ‘I don't know, whatever’ (Jane Bond, Group Interview, 5/20/99)

According to Jane, ninth-grade males, seeming unfamiliar with romantic relationships, became non-participative in the class, leaving most of the interaction involving *Romeo and Juliet* up to the female students. Jane posed a reason for the males lack of interaction by saying that the “boys had honestly not experienced that first love or
maybe had not even had a girlfriend or anything serious yet and I think that that is why they could not relate to it” (Jane Bond, Group Interview, 5/20/99). The differences between males and females at the ninth-grade level proved to be such a dilemma for Jane and Karla that they both attempted to have lessons that evoked responses from the two groups, trying to find common ground for them to discuss. Jane used a love survey that attempted to find out student positions on romance, but the male students rejected this assignment. Karla, who experienced a tremendous amount of dissonance and animosity between various student groups in both her ninth-grade Science and English and twelfth-grade Writing Workshop classes, used the book Chicken Soup for The Soul to try and help students work on their social concerns.

*Alternative Solutions: Struggles and Successes*

The preservice teachers in this study indicated a very different perspective on making decisions. They all attempted to provide alternatives of instruction for their students different from the experiences that they had in their classes. The biggest influence on these alternatives tended to be the teaching context they were in and their relationship with their peers who were preservice teaching simultaneously with them.

In considering alternative strategies for teaching Shakespeare, alternatives to an unsuccessful methodology of reading the play aloud, discussing the play, and then having a test or paper, the preservice teachers first suggested teaching the play in stages because students needed a lot of preparation for the play and scaffolding of skills (dramatic reading, interpretation) in order to learn more from the play.

Karla and Gail had students study Shakespearean language before reading. Hannah, Erin, and Jane all contended that the use of video productions was essential.
for students to understand the play. Erin pointed out that one of the things that made
the learning of Shakespeare more accessible for her and her students in the reading of
_A Midsummer Night’s Dream_ was the viewing of the video performances first before
they read, an inversion of traditional methodology.

All of these methods, preparing students for the text through studying the
language, using videos, and modern translations had a strong effect on student
performance, though they still struggled. Gail’s stories illustrated tremendous success
with the play through two lessons, the first being her astrology lesson that was
discussed earlier. In the second successful lesson, she illustrated a very detailed
section of her _Romeo and Juliet_ unit in which students actually developed a mock trial
for the play, showing an incredible engagement with the work.

*Sources for Instructional Decision Making*

While the preservice teachers contended that preservice teaching served as
their greatest resource in thinking about the case story, they also said that they drew on
suggestions from their methods courses as well. In particular, they believed that the
Teacher Research classes had helped them to think about solving problems related to
the teaching of English/Language Arts.

Because it made me really think about the students and research students as
opposed to research Shakespeare although that is important too. Research the
students about what might be effective and how they might learn, and that is
how we have been setting up our team-teaching situation and are critical
friendship in the sense that having us both look at that situation in the sense of
Both Karla and Gail emphasized that the research class had taught them that they had to enter a classroom as investigators, that in order for them to teach students they must first come to understand them. Gail said that she liked the research methods class because it facilitated her ability to “think about things in a different way, about how diverse students are and not only their language and their culture but in their learning styles. The prior knowledge that they bring with them to the class” (Gail Pruitt, Group Interview, 5/20/99). In ending the conversations about the problematic case story of teaching, we discussed what principles and issues related to the teaching of Language Arts emanated through Jane’s problematic case story of teaching.

**Principles of Teaching**

The two interrelated principles of teaching that the preservice teachers made during the group interview were 1) the importance of working on self-esteem in order to teach difficult material, and 2) the importance of investigating different methods of working on student self-esteem.

*Positive Self-Esteem Is Necessary for Learning to Take Place*

The preservice teachers believed that the students had to feel good about themselves and the content before much learning could occur. Karla illustrated the viewpoint of many of the preservice teachers in her expression on the principles of teaching English/Language Arts that influenced her thinking about the case stories of teaching:
For me it was self-esteem, you need to build the self-esteem of the class as a whole actually, and that will lead into them feeling more comfortable reading aloud. Because I know that for me it was very hard for me to read aloud when I was younger because my, I used to stutter pretty horribly actually when I read aloud. (Karla Anderson, Group Interview, 5/20/99)

The question that seemed most pertinent with respect to the need for self-esteem among students according to the interview was how to work on students’ self-esteem? Were there methods that could be used to build self-esteem, and what were they? The preservice teachers posed that one of the key avenues for increasing self-esteem was developing a repertoire of tools, a variety of approaches that gave the widest range of students’ opportunities for success.

*There Are Different Successful Approaches to Teaching the Same Subject Matter*

They suggested that it was helpful seeing different styles of teachers, using alternative views on dealing with self-esteem; they began or enforced their views of considering teaching as more of a process in building relationships than as method of presenting specific information. In addressing the concerns with teaching *Romeo and Juliet*, the preservice teachers acknowledged that they had to teach the content completely differently depending on the students they were working with or the context of the school in which they were teaching. Karla and Gail, who seemed to teach the greatest range of students with respect to ability/motivation, said that they had to alter their styles and strategies significantly in teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to the two different groups (ninth-grade honors and ninth-grade Science and English): “for example, when we taught it and we taught it with two different classes, and it was two
different units and there were times when we confronted the same problems and when we confronted different problems. The way we dealt with it was totally different” (Gail Pruitt, Group Interview, 5/20/99). This peppered the conversation among the preservice teachers who were realizing that even the same preparation, three classes of ninth-grade students, might in fact need three different preparations because they could not teach all of the classes the same, a difficult task when working with something as difficult to teach as Romeo and Juliet.

While the preservice teachers had developed a wide range of strategies for teaching Language Arts, through their personal experience, their university methods courses, and their observations and conversations with their cooperating teacher, they seemed dismayed by the fact that students were often turned off by more creative, interactive lessons and wanted to do worksheets or simple quizzes. The view that they derived from these observations was that students were often uncomfortable with the unfamiliar in English/Language Arts. Though new methods might increase their learning, students resisted the new methods because they did not necessarily want to change. The preservice teachers had to develop strategies for making the students comfortable with the new methods, slowly incorporating methods such as group work and process oriented writing into their teaching.

**Conclusion**

This chapter began with a consideration of the initial research question what do the preservice teachers reveal about their perceptions of teaching English/Language Arts through their case stories of teaching? The chapter focused on a presentation of profiles of the different preservice teachers, focusing on their backgrounds, tools for
teaching English/Language Arts, and their two case stories of teaching, one
problematic and one successful. The second section considered how sharing and
discussing their case stories of teaching with their colleagues in the English cohort
affects their thinking about the teaching of English/Language Arts and themselves as
teachers?

This section looked at the preservice teachers’ influences (prior experience,
course work, contexts, and relationships with peers and cooperating teachers) for
teaching English/Language Arts and issues that concerned them during their
interviews and case stories. This section compared characteristics and themes
(including images, purposes for instruction, and tools) across the various case stories
of teaching, culminating with a discussion of themes and issues raised in the group-
reflective interview.

Chapter Five concludes this paper with a final consideration of the
conceptualization of the study, impressions of the preservice teachers of the impact of
the cases stories of teaching and group-reflective interview, implications for teacher
education, and limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

When I initially conceptualized this research project I was concerned with understanding the sense that preservice teachers were making of the theories they were learning in their teacher education courses. I was also interested in their developing abilities to apply theories and principles (reader response and writing process for instance) to their teaching in the field. Preservice teachers had suggested that they were having extreme difficulty in making connections to their field experiences, oftentimes lamenting the fact that while they agreed with many of the ideas they were encountering at the university, and wished that they had teachers who taught like that when they were students, they were not finding any models of these theories in the actual classroom settings.

As a teacher I had always found stories of classrooms of other teachers to be a significant way for me to learn about the art of teaching. In beginning this project I originally hoped to connect these two interests—storytelling and the gap between theory and practice for the preservice teachers. I began with two goals in mind: understanding preservice teachers’ conceptualizations of teaching and themselves as teachers through case stories of teaching and investigating the degree to which...
discussing these stories in a collaborative setting with other preservice teachers would affect their thinking about teaching. In this chapter, I discuss the effect of the group interview on the preservice teachers, implications of this project for further preservice teacher training and research, and the limitations of the study. In Chapter Four, the data on the preservice teachers illustrated how case stories of teaching revealed the preservice teachers’ perceptions on teaching English/Language Arts. Through the analysis of the case stories and group-reflective interview, this study has also shown how sharing and discussing their case stories of teaching with the other participants in the study affected the preservice teachers’ thinking about the teaching of English/Language Arts and themselves as teachers. In this chapter, I consider how the information acquired on the above two issues is significant to the areas of future preservice teacher education pedagogy and future preservice teacher research in several ways.

Firstly, I will focus on implications for preservice teacher pedagogy by considering the importance of the case stories of teaching and group-reflective interview for facilitating preservice teachers’ development of a collaborative community—creating an environment where preservice teachers are able to change their thinking about teaching, and analyzing how studying the case stories can be used alongside other methods as a part of a teacher education curriculum. Secondly, I consider the implications for preservice teacher research. I examine how studying the case stories and the group-reflective interview can inform researchers’ understanding of preservice teacher thinking. By deepening our understanding of preservice teacher
ideas about teaching, case stories and group-reflective interviews also provide avenues for challenging and changing those ideas leading to an opportunity for development.

**Implications or Future Preservice Teacher Education Pedagogy**

The following areas are recommendations of what case stories of teaching and group reflective interviews can accomplish as part of teacher education pedagogy. These strategies may do the following: 1) provide opportunities for preservice teachers from diverse backgrounds and diverse teaching contexts to converse on issues related to teaching English/Language Arts, 2) break the isolation that preservice teachers feel by helping them to build community with other preservice teachers who are facing similar dilemmas, 3) provide preservice teachers with episodes of other preservice teachers in actual classroom experiences, and 4) present preservice teachers with new models for thinking about their teaching practices.

First, case stories and group-reflective interviews provide opportunities for preservice teachers from diverse backgrounds and diverse teaching contexts to converse on issues related to teaching English/Language Arts. One of the key elements of the group interview had been the fact that the participants had a wide diversity with respect to personal backgrounds and teaching experiences. In the group interview, these multiple perspectives gave the preservice teachers a variety of lenses through which to view the problems that they all faced with teaching. Unfortunately, this opportunity to discuss specific instances of teaching is an event that practicing teachers do not often have.

Gail, discussing the composition of the group participants in this study, contended that in her experience as a preservice teacher she valued
the different backgrounds that the other preservice teachers brought to the situation. Because in our group, it was really cool, we had people from really diverse backgrounds. Erin was from another country. Jane was from another state. Hannah had taught in Botswana, Hannah had lived all over the country and hearing about what it was like. Sylvia and I were both from the northern part of the state, but there were some things that we had in common but there were others that were completely different, she had lived in an urban area, and I had grown up in more of a suburb. (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

Because of this variety of prior experiences and different teaching contexts, each teacher was able to bring a very different perspective to the discussions of teaching practices and theories. Voicing these various perspectives on similar concerns allowed each preservice teacher to view issues within the case stories from multiple vantage points.

The situations that the preservice teachers found themselves in during their preservice teaching, the school environment, the students, and the school philosophy greatly affected their thinking about teaching. Gail believed that as time went on teaching in one particular school context that the school environment would outweigh an individual’s previous background with respect to their ideas or perspectives on teaching:

I guess that changes the longer they have been in a certain district. For example the teacher I worked with at Washington, his background was nothing like the school he taught in. His views really stemmed from having, being in an urban environment for thirty years. He had views about how education was
functioning that were not his original ideals but a result of where he had been teaching. (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

This position supports Grossman and Shulman’s (1994) contention that “context matters in the teachers’ knowledge, that is, that teachers’ knowledge both shapes and is shaped by the contexts in which they work” (Grossman and Shulman, 1994, p. 13). The longer an individual teaches in a certain environment, the more likely they are to consider that environment over their previous background experiences in the making of their decisions, their thinking about teaching, and the world outside of the classroom. This is especially true if the teaching environment is drastically different from the background environment of the teacher.

Clandinin and Connelly (1999) use the term personal practical knowledge to refer to how teachers utilize their past experiences, inside and outside of the classroom, to make decisions about present episodes in teaching and future actions that they will take. According to their theory, personal practical knowledge “is found in the teacher’s practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation” (Connelly & Clandinin quoted in Connelly & Clandinin, 1999 p. 1). The case stories and group-reflective interviews can be used as ways for preservice teachers to voice and build on their own personal practical knowledge of teaching because they connected their past experiences (as students and preservice teachers in schools) with their current contexts and situations as they considered the future decisions that they would make as teachers. Through sharing their case stories, the preservice teachers
provided one another with different ways of thinking about teaching, different maps and routes to arrive at decisions about how to teach students in particular settings.

Second, the cases stories and group-reflective interview break the isolation that preservice teachers feel by helping them to build community with other preservice teachers who are facing similar dilemmas. The preservice teachers, as a result of the case stories and the group-reflective interview, had the opportunity to share their thoughts about teaching with other preservice teachers, rethinking and revising their considerations of significant issues in their teaching. The ongoing dialogue that many of them engaged in with the other participants in the study, preservice teachers in the teacher education program (especially other preservice teachers at their student-teaching schools), and cooperating teachers seemed to be one of the areas of the teacher education program that the preservice teachers most valued.

Most of us who teach or have taught find that we must come to face with a certain amount of fear that is involved in addressing the needs and demands of a wide range of students. Oftentimes this feeling can be one of isolation and trauma, because we generally, at least to a degree, have to confront students by ourselves. This trauma is so devastating that Sylvia Nasar in her biography of Nobel Prize mathematician John Nash, A Beautiful Mind, cites anxieties of teaching as one of the contributors to the onset of his schizophrenia. For preservice teachers, these initial nerves, the first sense that they have to conduct the class by themselves, are particularly unsettling. Gail offered her observations on one of the attributes of reading the case stories of teaching and participating in the group-reflective interview:
I felt less isolated and it gave me more courage. You know the next day or just hearing about people having bad days and then going in and things really changing. I was like ‘you know it will really turn around.’ Or just neat people, I liked working with other preservice teachers and watching them succeed and watching them writhe at times because I, that made me realize, especially the ones that I thought were really really good, because I realized that everyone goes through this at some time. That is what I got out of hearing the case stories and having the group interview and I also got a lot of practical ideas, also issues that they brought up I think that is important too. (Gail Pruitt, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

Similarly, Erin felt a connection in sharing her case stories with other teachers. She struggled, as Jane had, with the teaching of Shakespearean tragedy to somewhat disinterested ninth-graders.

It really made me kind of know that whatever my problems are that they are not unique by any means. And even if I talk to non-English teachers, even talking to non-English teachers here, talking to teachers who have been teaching for twenty years or something they still face the same things. A history teacher came in and said ‘I have been teaching for twenty years and what do you do when you assign a paper and half the kids have not done the reading or some of them don't.’ So I think that the problems are never unique to any teacher or any school subject regardless of experience or whatever. I think that the same issues come up again and again. (Erin Vincent, Interview 3, 6/05/99)
For Erin, Hannah, Karla and Gail, the group interview process reinforced the opportunities that they already had to work closely and collaboratively with peers. “I tell you what stuck out to me, that working with Gail, and even working pretty closely with Angela (a preservice teacher at Karla’s school who was not in the research project), that is something that we did all the time on a daily basis so it did not seem very new to me, it was just something that I expect to do now” (Karla Anderson, Interview 3, 6/06/99).

In fact, Karla discussed one of the problems with the group-reflective interview that I will develop further in the section on limitations, that there were not enough of them over the course of the quarter. Because Karla worked closely with Angela and Gail all quarter, they built a rapport that provided them with the ability to be very candid and critically reflective of each other’s practice. Karla describes this when she said

I would say I see that, or I don't understand elaborate and we would go through that process. When we were in the room and talking through the narratives that is the first thing that I thought of and I almost felt guilty because I felt very comfortable with Angela and Gail as being a critical a friend but I was not as comfortable with that group because I had not made that critical friends status yet. (Karla Anderson, Interview 3, 6/06/99)

Third, the cases stories and group-reflective interview provide preservice teachers with episodes of other preservice teachers in actual classroom experiences. The case stories of teaching and group-reflective interviews’ impact centered on the
fact that the preservice teachers were discussing specific events, in contextualized stories, applying the ideas that they had learned in their teacher education courses to particular situations. Several of the preservice teachers had had extreme difficulty connecting their course work to the field experiences they were having, finding their teacher education program disjointed. This problem seemed to be most prevalent with the preservice teachers who did not have any experience teaching. Jane in particular found there to be gaps that she needed to have connected for her, wishing that she could have been taking the teacher education courses as she was preservice teaching. Jane pondered the possibility that she may have understood the theory behind the courses better if she had student taught and then taken the education courses, having knowledge of field experiences as a referent point through which to contemplate pedagogy. Erin, Hannah, and Sylvia who all had extensive experiences in schools before entering the teacher education program said that the courses made more sense to them because they were able to consider them in light of what they had previously encountered in their teaching. For all of the preservice teachers, the opportunity to tell stories about specific events allowed them to connect theory to practice, to find examples and models that were pertinent to their own field experiences.

In her final interview, Jane commented on how she experienced difficulty trying to make sense of the theories from teacher education until she was in the classroom:

I just guess that I wish that I had known what it was like in a regular classroom, like that how students do not like to read and they do not like to write, because I did. So it was kind of hard for me to understand or to see what
was so difficult about doing the work that I had given them. I wish that I had just kind of gone to or experienced sort of a non-magnet school because it is really different. And, I think that it is more representative of what most schools are like. I don't know I guess that that is the main thing. (Jane Bond, Interview 3, 6/03/99)

Of critical import in this study was how teacher education can facilitate reflection about specific teaching episodes by providing preservice teachers with case stories of teaching composed by other preservice teacher. Through the use of these case stories, preservice teachers can connect theories from their course work with specific events, consider the ideas of peers who may have very different perspectives from their own, and appropriate a wide range of tools for use in future classroom situations. Therefore, I envision case stories of teaching as a tool that could be used in collaboration with other methods in teacher education courses to make course work more pertinent to specific preservice teacher experiences. Over time, a creation of a portfolio of case stories of teaching to be used in seminars with preservice teachers as an avenue for reflection on various problems could be extremely beneficial. This needs to be an ongoing process that binds itself to preservice teacher dialogue with peers, professors, supervising teachers, and cooperating teachers.

Fourth, case stories and group-reflective interviews present preservice teachers with new models for thinking about their teaching practices. The case stories of teaching showed preservice teachers struggling to make decisions about events in their classrooms that were ongoing. In many cases, the preservice teachers were uncertain about their thinking on the issues within these cases. There were real problems and
concerns, as well as successes, the preservice teachers attempted to understand. Their uncertainty, both at the time of writing the case stories and of their sharing those case stories with the other participants in this research project, made the experience alive and relevant. They debated how they might have changed their decisions if they could relive the experience and how they might alter their decisions in the future based on the discussions with other preservice teachers. In Dewey’s (1916) vision of reflection, thinking originates from

situations which are still going on, and incomplete, that is to say that thinking occurs when things are uncertain or doubtful or problematic. Only what is finished, completed, is wholly assured. Where there is reflection there is suspense. The object of thinking is to help reach a conclusion, to project a possible termination on the basis of what is already given. (p. 148)

Because the preservice teachers were all uncertain about the decisions that they made and the decisions that they would make, the case stories of teaching and group-reflective interview offered them a true opportunity for reflection.

While the preservice teachers felt great admiration and respect for their professors and cooperating teachers, they often also experienced some intimidation. When working with highly talented and experienced teachers such as Steve Morris and Warren Houston, who long ago worked through many of the issues that the preservice teachers were currently confronting, the preservice teachers felt a certain distance. They sensed that they would never be able to achieve what Steve and Warren had in the classroom, that they never would be able to conduct a classroom like their cooperating teachers or experience the kind of success with students that
these teachers displayed everyday. In many cases, imitating the practices of these cooperating teachers often resulted in frustration on the part of the preservice teachers, as interviews with Hannah and Erin illustrate. In fact, Warren had discussed how he often had difficulty with preservice teachers because after twenty-seven years it was hard to articulate how he had come to where he was as a teacher.

The case stories of teaching provided the preservice teachers with models of teaching that were attainable for them in their current circumstances and at their current ability levels. Peers who were closer to the preservice teachers own experiences, concerns, and ability levels presented new images of teaching to be considered in thinking about classroom practices.

**Implications for Future Teacher Education Research**

*What can be learned about preservice teachers’ ability to theorize and interpret particular instructional situations through case stories of teaching and group-reflective interviews?*

As the research has frequently shown, preservice teachers often rely on models of teaching that are traditional in methodology, based on teachers that they have had as students, and lacking in principles of practice (Applebee, 1986a; Kennedy, 1998; Marshall & Smith, 1997; Vinz, 1997). According to Kennedy (1998) teacher researchers already possess sufficient knowledge about “how teachers learn traditional practices; what we still don’t know is how teachers can learn different practices—how to interpret particular situations differently and how to respond differently to the situations they face” (Kennedy, 1998, p. 4). Perhaps the most utilized method for researching and evaluating preservice teachers has been classroom observations.
Observations allow researchers to see “how teachers actually respond to classroom situations, but they are less useful for learning why teachers respond in this way—that is, they don’t tell us how teachers interpret classroom situations” (Kennedy, 1998, p. 7).

The case stories of teaching illustrate why preservice teachers responded to particular situations. The group reflective-interview also fostered the ability to interpret those situations more deeply and with new lenses:

I think that it is a good idea to tell stories like that I think teachers should do that. It really makes you look deeper into what can make a lesson work or what can throw a lesson off. You might come out with some vague notion of "that sucked" but you don't know why. Or you might come out with this great positive feeling and you don't know why and how can you repeat that if you don't know why? (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99)

In general, having to discuss and explain our actions to another person, we are forced to really consider the rationale behind our decisions. However, for preservice teachers this oftentimes means explaining and defending their reasoning to a professor, a university supervisor, a cooperating teacher, or an administrator, all of which can be rather harrowing experiences. For the preservice teachers, being in an environment where they shared with peers created a more inviting, while still analytical situation. According to Hannah this allowed for a

…deeper examination of what happened. If you have to articulate to someone else in that much detail what actually happened in your lesson that might make you think more about what actually happened so the actual telling was useful
and then you have, it is always going to be helpful to talk to other teachers about what happened whether it is a veteran teacher, another preservice teacher, a first-year teacher. (Hannah Warren, Interview 3, 6/05/99)

Learning how to interpret certain situations was a critical achievement for preservice teachers. The gap between theory and practice exists as a major concern. One must consider where preservice teachers derived the theories that influence their practices. On investigation, researchers have analyzed the factors that affect whether or not English/Language Arts preservice teachers are likely to accept or reject the theories (such as theories of reader responses, collaborative learning, writing process) from their university courses. Facilitating sufficient preservice teacher understanding of theory in order for them to appropriate those theories for their classroom applications is a challenging endeavor. Influencing the mindset of individuals who have already had extensive experience with schools as students is extremely difficult. One of the key issues in connecting theory to practice has been finding practicing teachers who model appropriate behavior and thinking practices for preservice teachers (Athanses et al., 1991; Hawkey, 1995; Kutz, 1992; Tighe, 1991).

The preservice teachers suggested that they had been dissatisfied in general with the learning that they had received in their secondary English courses as students. Hannah, in particular, contended that her experiences in high-school English were so inconsequential that she did not even remember much of what was taught. In their interviews, all of the preservice teachers discussed how their cooperating teachers had been very effective at modeling many of the behaviors that teacher research advocates, particularly reflective practice. In particular, the preservice teachers had to consider
the implications for teaching when they made to implement a curriculum they did not feel comfortable with or supportive of theoretically. A key aspect of the group-reflective interview was that it helped preservice teachers to model for one another their reflective thinking on issues related to classroom interactions.

Case stories of teaching and the group-reflective interview help preservice teachers to learn, as effective experienced teachers do, to take ownership over their own interpretations. The data from Hillocks’ (1999) study of effective English teachers “suggests that they construct their own versions of the curriculum from the body of knowledge that they have acquired over their years of teaching and from sources outside of their teaching” (p. 116). In order for an English teacher to be effective they have to make sense of their theories for teaching, integrating them with their life experiences and classroom practices.

Clandinin and Connelly define the integration of these multiple facets of a teacher’s experience as the professional knowledge landscape. Within this conception of teacher practice, the classroom is a place of teaching activity and interwoven stories of these activities. The out-of-classroom place on the landscape is one of abstract talk about abstract policies and prescriptions. These abstract policies and prescriptions are fed into the landscape via a conduit that connects the world of theory with the world of practice. Dilemmas are created as teachers move back and forth between the two places on the landscape. (p. 67).

Teachers constantly attempt to negotiate their ideals with the realities of the classroom and the school culture. The preservice teachers worked within this landscape,
constructing stories about crossing these spaces, where abstract theories met real-life practices. To alter preservice teacher thinking and action, Kennedy (1998) argues that teacher educators and researchers “can change teaching practices only by changing the way teachers interpret particular situations, for their responses depend on their interpretations” (p. 4). How they interpret these situations draws back to the critical questions of Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999): “How do activity settings mediate teachers’ thinking? What kinds of social structures are prevalent in different settings, and in what manner do they mediate the appropriation of particular pedagogical tools for teaching? To what extent are different tools for teaching appropriated for use in different settings?” (p. 15).

The case stories of teaching reveal how preservice teachers’ decisions have been informed by conceptual tools and from where the preservice teachers acquired these conceptual tools. The notion of being able to select a tool, involves the degree to which an individual has appropriated or internalized a particular tool. Within this study, the practical tools (methods of teaching) and conceptual tools (language and ideals) both impacted the preservice teachers’ practice. The preservice teachers, as a result of their extensive field experiences, experiences in other teaching environments, course work, and periods of apprenticeship of observation, possessed a wide range of tools in their tool kits. The difficult aspect of teaching for many of them was choosing an effective tool for a specific context and explaining why they had chosen that tool. They acquired tools from three different places: personal experience, university courses, cooperating teachers, and each other. For those preservice teachers who collaboratively taught (Erin and Hannah—Gail and Karla), the peer interaction seemed
to be the place from which they derived and refined their thinking about the selection and implementation of particular tools. In thinking about tools, both practical and conceptual, the preservice teachers told stories and discussed with other preservice teachers what tools they selected for use in particular circumstances and why they selected them. Because at the end of this study, many of the preservice teachers were still uncertain about their selection of tools, still attempting to develop their personal philosophies of teaching, the debate about how to use tools appropriately in future situations was extremely relevant to their professional development.

According to the preservice teachers represented in this research project, their experiences in teacher education had influenced their thinking about teaching English/Language in several different areas: reader response and teaching young adult literature, writing process, teaching as a social practice, and a view of the teacher as a researcher within his or her classroom. For individual preservice teachers, these areas are discussed in the tools sections of their individual case studies.

Upon entering the English Education Program, all of the preservice teachers had experienced very traditional education in literature. Several of them, Erin in particular, emphasized that they had preferred a traditional lecture method, and had not really liked group work. However, as a result of the philosophies they encountered in their methods courses, particularly a course on young adult literature and a course on teaching literature to secondary students, the preservice teachers revised their thinking, beginning to see the value in ideas such as collaborative learning, reader response theory, and the incorporation of young adult literature into the secondary curriculum. Each of the preservice teachers in their discussions of their
teaching, often illustrated in the tools sections of their case studies, emphasized the importance of making literature interactive for the students in their classrooms; the critical aspect that they focused on was connecting literature to students’ lives, a key component of the English Education Program. Jane’s story of media and *Romeo and Juliet* in particular illuminates the importance of altering methods in order to connect the students with the texts. While many of them expressed a desire to teach young adult literature they found that they had been unable to, with the exception of Gail and Karla who taught Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street*, because of a lack of materials or the need to complete sections of the curriculum which the cooperating teacher had assigned them. Sylvia and Jane contended that in their own future teaching the inclusion of such reading would be used.

The preservice teachers also discussed how the English Education Program shaped their thinking about teaching writing, moving toward a writing process centered approach. Karla and Gail discussed how the writing methods course really re-emphasized what they had already been working on with their cooperating teacher who had them working with rubrics and extensive peer editing and revision work with students. Hannah had the largest change in her thinking. She had been a teacher who really thought that the teaching of grammar was critical to student learning. During the course of her writing methods class, she had come to the realization that it did not make sense to teach grammar initially because student writing was in process; circling student errors did not make sense since students were going to revise the content of their writing.
In her final interview, Hannah said that until students wrote down the key ideas that they planned on getting out she would not focus on grammar but on the students generating text.

As their main priority in teaching English/Language Arts, all six of the preservice teachers emphatically declared the central purpose of creating a community, establishing a strong social relationship among students and themselves. This closely paralleled the nature of the program which had attempted to have the students embrace the ideal of community, centering on works such as the ideas of Paolo Freire which illustrated that community was necessary before literacy can be acquired. Karla and Gail stressed that they felt that they had to have a strong community with students before they even began to teach and in fact their case stories of teaching examine the struggle to establish community with a group of reluctant twelfth-grade learners, a struggle which the reading of Sandra Cisneros novel of community House on Mango Street fulfilled.

The final area of teaching English/Language Arts that the preservice teachers believed the English Education Program had influenced was the area of being a teacher-researcher. There were two courses, a course on doing teacher researcher which preservice teachers took their second quarter and the preservice teaching seminar which the preservice teachers took while preservice teaching their final quarter, which accentuated the need for professional teachers to engage in active inquiry, research in their classroom. Each of these courses culminated in the preservice teachers presenting to the cohort the findings of their research projects on their own classroom teaching. Several of the teachers, Gail and Karla especially,
accentuated that they had not really seen the need for these courses at first but during
the course of their preservice teaching they came to realize that in order to succeed as
teachers they had to first research and understand their students; for them the teacher
became an anthropologist studying the cultures of their classroom.

Do the case stories of teaching and group-reflective interviews affect how the
preservice teachers thought of themselves as teachers?

During their student-teaching experience, the preservice teachers battled to
develop a burgeoning sense of themselves as teachers. Many felt much stress placed
on them not only by their school environment but also the university philosophy’s
need for them to fit into a particular mode of teaching—a sense of perfectionism that
they described as being “a super teacher.” Preservice teachers often struggle with
making sense of who they are as teachers, what their responsibilities as teachers are,
how to develop and implement curricula, and how to integrate the frequently
contrasting theories of teaching that they encounter from their apprenticeships of
observation, education course work, and field experiences in secondary school
settings. Teacher educators and researchers have attempted to find ways to help
preservice teachers balance all of these diverse influences in order for preservice
teachers to establish a cohesive sense of themselves as reflective teachers who make
decisions in the best interest of students. Recently, narrative inquiry has become a
method with much promise in considering and researching preservice teacher thinking.
The stories that the preservice teachers who participated in this study told were
uniquely their own, but they also were “equally drawn from the collective repertoire of
stories available in any social group” (Davies, 1993, p.17). In telling their stories,
many of the preservice teachers connected to and referenced stories told by other teachers, teachers from their previous school and university experiences, and teachers with whom they interacted during student-teaching and field experiences.

In narrating their case stories of teaching, the preservice teachers found their own voices as teachers, realizing as well that their voices connected with voices of other teachers. Each teacher experienced the difficulties of “the discrepancies each experiences between her identity and the formal curricular expectations of her role” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p. 85). The decisions that they made in their case stories of teaching revealed their abilities, at least to an extent, to resolve those conflicts satisfactorily for themselves.

Knowles’ (1995) findings “suggest that early childhood experiences, early teacher role models, and previous teaching experiences are most important in the formation of an ‘image of self as teacher’” and “that the university experience was not a very strong component of teacher role identity” (Knowles, 1995, p. 126). Contrary to these findings, the preservice teachers in this research project discussed how significantly teacher education had impacted on their thinking about teaching. Their autobiographies and personal experiences had served as a lens through which to view theory, but they had not negated theory. This was particularly positive, since each of the preservice teachers had presented fairly negative views of the English/Language Arts teaching that they witnessed as secondary and university students, usually only contradicted by one or two teachers whom they considered to be excellent. Rather than serving as a way to block out theory, their experiences had motivated them to use theory to improve teaching practices that they had once considered to be inadequate.
The stories that the preservice teachers told helped them to “compose teacher identity…Whereas some stories are composed and sustained over time being confirmed in various ways, other stories change to meet different institutional contexts” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p. 94). The stories, as they were entering new environments in schools, illustrated their efforts to fit into those new contexts.

While the preservice teachers appreciated the models of their cooperating teachers, they learned that they could not merely replicate their practices and their voices. Originating their own voices and finding new stories to help them fit into their unique classroom experiences was essential to their own successes. Initially, preservice teachers had been attracted to what Jackson (1995) calls narratives of “tragedy and romance” which “are particularly effective narrative forms for dramatizing issues of moral uncertainty, self-questioning, and social critique” (p. 208). Unfortunately, they found their efforts to live out these romantic visions of teaching overly stressful and burdensome. They wanted realistic stories of teaching experience that attempted to bring about change in schools. However, they did not want to be forced into an overwhelming endeavor of trying to save the world (or at least the school) all by themselves. According to Connelly and Clandinin, the problem of new, realistic narratives that promote change in schools and empower teachers “is more complex than it might first appear. Where do new stories to live by come from? What are the origins of change?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 101). The preservice teachers attempted to bring these stories to life by illuminating the nuances of time, place, and relationships with the characters, including themselves, involved in the stories. I suggest that the stories of change can originate with preservice teachers themselves.
Preservice teachers can become creators of teacher lore (Ayers and Schubert, 1994; Schubert, 1991) and images of teaching rather than mere recipients of other people’s images of what teachers should be.

**Questions for Future Research**

Most significantly, I have always been curious about what may have changed in the preservice teachers’ perspectives since the project. As experienced teachers, one-or two-years later, how would they reflect on the case stories of teaching? What stories would they tell now and how would those differ from the stories they told during preservice teaching? Do they continue to share stories with teaching peers—do they have the opportunities to collaborate that had been so instrumental in their development during their preservice teaching or do they find themselves isolated in their current teaching assignments? These further considerations are necessary for future studies involving this approach.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Introductory Interview (conducted before preservice teaching):

Name:
Degree being sought:
Undergraduate degree:

- Describe your educational and teaching background, interests, or any information that you would like me to have about yourself.

- Describe what you think makes an effective teacher of English/Language Arts (reading/literature, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking). Tell a story about an effective English/Language Arts teacher.

- Describe what makes a successful student in English/Language Arts. Tell a story about a successful student in English/Language Arts.

- Describe what makes an English/Language Arts teacher ineffective. Tell a story about an ineffective English/Language Arts teacher.

- In the future, how do you see yourself as an English/Language Arts teacher? How would you teach reading/literature or composition?

- What experiences or issues contribute to this vision of yourself as a teacher?

- It is six months from now and you are an English/Language Arts teacher with your own classes. What will be your purposes for teaching reading/literature and writing to particular students?

- It is the completion of your first year of teaching. What do you want students to have when they leave your classroom?
APPENDIX B
Case Story Interview

Background:
Name:
Subject area:
School where preservice teaching:

1. Tell a story, from either your field experience or preservice teaching, about an experience teaching English/Language Arts (reading/literature, writing, speaking, listening, or thinking) that you found to be positive.

2. Tell a story, from either your field experience or preservice teaching, about an experience teaching English/Language Arts that you found to be problematic.
APPENDIX C
Group-Reflective Interview

Preservice teachers will have read the case stories prior to focus group

1. What issues with respect to teaching English/Language Arts do you see occurring in the teaching case story?
   Which issue(s) is/are most important?

2. How could you have responded to those issues before, during, or after the event?
   Why would those responses be appropriate?
   Out of those possible responses, is there one that you would most likely make?
   Why?

3. What experiences, beliefs, or theories, did you draw on to respond to the situation?
   Why did you draw on these?

   What English/Language Arts teaching principle could you use to make decisions in this circumstance?

4. What, if anything, about this case story might influence your thinking about teaching English/Language Arts?

   What teaching decisions might you make in your future classroom based on our conversation?
APPENDIX D
Final Interview Questions

• What are the most important reasons for teaching English/Language Arts to high-
school and middle-school students?
• Why should secondary students study English/Language Arts? Why do you think
that they would think they should study it?
• What has influenced your vision of English/Language Arts?
• How, if at all, has your vision of teaching English/Language Arts changed during
your preservice teaching?
• Explain the extent to which each of the following has influenced your teaching of
English/language arts: secondary English courses and teachers; university English
courses and teachers; university education courses and teachers; cooperating
teachers.
• To what extent, if any, did your university English Education courses affect your
views on teaching English/Language Arts?
• How did your relationships with peers in the program affect your thinking about
teaching English/Language Arts?
• Did any life experiences outside of teacher preparation influence how you are
thinking about teaching?
• Out of the things that I have mentioned in the previous questions what seems to
have had the greatest influence on your thinking about the teaching of
English/Language Arts?
• Can you tell a story about an experience teaching English/Language Arts from
your student-teaching experience that you think will be most influential or
memorable to you in the future?
• What do you know now after having student taught that you wish you had known
at the beginning of preservice teaching?
APPENDIX E
Cooperating Teacher Interview

• Can you tell a story that illustrates how your preservice teacher approached teaching English/Language Arts?
• How effective do you think that your preservice teacher was as a preservice teacher?
• Can you tell a story about a time when your preservice teacher struggled?
• How would you describe your approach to working with your preservice teacher?
  Were there specific ways in which you helped your preservice teacher as an English/Language Arts teacher?
• How well do you think that the English Education program prepared your preservice teacher to enter preservice teaching?
APPENDIX F  Successful Case Stories

APPENDIX F.1

Erin Vincent’s Successful Case Story

"Everyday Use"

They were doing a writing assignment back during my field experience and that one came out really well, I was really happy with what they wrote. I am not sure that that had a lot to do with what I was doing but had a lot to do with the class that I was teaching and they liked the writing prompt. For here the most positive story was with my Foundations class where I was teaching this story "Everyday Use" by Alice Walker.

I started it off by having them interview each other about family heirlooms and things, and then I had them read the story. I gave them a couple of questions which were ask each other about things in your family that have special significance and objects, or heirlooms, and if not maybe traditions that have meaning to your family. So they got into pairs and talked about that for a few minutes. Then we came back to class and discussed it and wrote some up on the board. Some people had some connection to the family watch, one student had an actual set of family armor that was in his family that had been handed down from generations. Some people mentioned traditions. One person mentioned quilts and that was kind of lucky that I ended with that one. Then we read the story, I just had them read it themselves individually and
then we came back and discussed it with the class, it was a very small class that day actually, it helped things a bit. It was only like fourteen students, so it was easy to have a general focused discussion without it getting too chaotic. We just tied it into the story, they talked about these quilts that had been handed down and whether they should be used as quilts or used as something that you just look at. So we talked about that and we tied it into our discussion that we had before about people and the heirlooms that they had in their own families.

I was just really happy with the level of discussion that we had and that was just one of the classes that everyone had something to say. Also that class tends to be pretty rowdy. I would say on a regular basis. On that day they seemed to be so involved in the discussion that that was not so much an issue and I was not feeling that I was having to tell people to be quiet. I felt like I really got them interested, and I have been trying to do that ever since, and it has never been quite the same.

I think that it has been really up and down I have not been able to get it back to that level, maybe for a few minutes there are conversations. On that day for whatever reason I felt that for that entire period that they were really into the discussion they were very involved and so forth.

The fact that I started off by really trying to get them to tie it into their own lives and talking about themselves got them interested. I have noticed that when I try to do that since then I often start out with a story and then move back and try to tie it in but this day there was a real interest in the story. I think that they really enjoyed the story that helped it provided a lot of discussion not just in terms of their own minds, but in terms of what she was trying to do with this story and how relevant it was.
In fact that day, I had actually planned other things and we just got into such a good discussion, that we did not get to that other stuff. That was one of the few times that I think I ever really just put the lesson aside and got involved in this discussion to the point that I felt like it was really productive, and I felt like I did not need to keep controlling the pace of the lesson sticking to the schedule.

I think that one helpful thing was that two students really disagreed rather strongly on whether or not they agreed with the message of the story. Whether she should use these items and enjoy them that was what they were made for. That kind of created a whole debate between someone saying they should be preserved. And we talked a little bit about the fact that this was an African-American family and what it meant for them to preserve their culture and celebrate it. We actually had pretty good debate going and I think that that was good too. This was a story that allowed people to I guess to debate. In the story you do see two sides of the argument and the students hit on that and did argue the two sides. I felt that they seemed to feel pretty strongly about it.

I felt that we really hit on the themes of the story that I wanted to mention. I think that a lot of times we will get into a discussion, and there are things that I want to hit on; and at the same time I want to try to get the student to talk about what they want to talk about and what is interesting to them in the story. I think that this time those two things kind of met. I felt that what they were talking about was central to the meaning of the story where sometimes I think that we get kind of sidetracked. I know that we are supposed to let them respond to it in their own way so, and this time I did not feel like I was giving something up by letting them just respond to the story.
Of Mice and Men

Other positive story

In that one they had read up to chapter four in Of Mice and Men, and I had a brief discussion. This was an honors tenth-grade class and everyone was just so hard working and if you gave them an assignment they did really well with it. Especially writing, they were really good writers. It was quite a small class so I was helped by those factors obviously. I asked them specifically to talk about characters in the story, Crooks. I got them to think specifically about him in this chapter because it is mostly about him. At the beginning of the chapter he decides to join Lennie and George when they go to buy their farm and in the end he says “forget it I don't want to go.”

We had a discussion from ten to fifteen minutes about the character and what happens to him in the story and why they think it happens. Then I had them write in small groups of three a journal entry as though they were Crooks about why they changed their mind and explaining their decision in the first person. So that worked out really well, they ended up reading them aloud at the end of the class. It was really interesting because each group decided on a slightly different thing to focus on that they had taken out of the chapter specific quotes from the chapter and they kind of built on that. That was really interesting and I felt like we did a really good character analysis. They really learned from each other.

I wanted them to do a closer reading of the text and for them to do a careful character analysis. Also I wanted them to have fun with it, and I think that both of those things kind of happened. They did hit on some really important points because they did go back to the text and hit on some important points. A lot of them got really
creative, they tried to imitate his language and use some of his expressions when they wrote in the first person. I think that they kind of had fun with that, they were reading them aloud they were laughing, so I think that it was entertaining for them as well as it was helpful.
APPENDIX F.2

Hannah White’s Successful Case Story

This kind of sticks out in my mind as the most buoyant that I felt during teaching which kind of differentiates itself from all the other days where you have a lot of good days and bad days. This day I kind of felt really enthusiastic and excited about teaching. It was actually with my freshman class. For some reason on that day I hit on something that worked really well both as a lesson and with that class in particular.

What happened was we went in and we had them working on short stories, with varying levels of engagement I thought, with varying levels of response as far as their written responses and classroom discussions. The last story that we did was Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" which quite of a few of them had read before. I was trying to think of a way to approach it for those who had read it already and to make those who hadn't read it interested in reading it. So, I had them work that day, first of all, before we read the story, I had planned on having them read it in class, I don't usually do this but it is such a short piece and it can be rather dramatic when it is read so I planned to read it in class. I always like to talk about the author before we read it. I had them bring in information about Poe. I am really big on having the students gather information and share it with each other. When the class started out we did that and we talked about Poe a little bit. A lot of the students were into that, his whole life and his stories and
the creepiness of his writing, the mundaneness of his life, but his life had some slightly
bizarre aspects to it as well, his wife dying and how that might contribute to the
morbidity of his writing. That lead to kind of an interesting discussion at the beginning
which went on for ten or fifteen minutes and then we had a storytelling session. I had
always had kind of mixed results with storytelling but for some reason it went really
well this day. We started by turning off all of the lights and I told a ghost story of my
own from when I worked in a restaurant. I got every one very interested in the whole
kind of moodiness of the topic.

The story I told was that I was working at a bar on campus, a restaurant bar on
campus and the basement was only accessible from outside. First of all I told them that
it was one of the oldest bars in ____________. It is a really old building that had been
around during Prohibition. There had been rumors that the basement of the bar had
been used as a speak-easy during Prohibition. I talked about Prohibition a little bit and
what that was. It had been kind of a gangster hang out and various undesirable people
had hung out down there. When I worked there you had to go outside in order to get
into this basement where supposedly all of this stuff happened. You had to open it
with a key from the outside and then lock it with a key behind you. So that no one
could come in from the street while you were down there. You had to go down there
to get supplies or whatever.

So one night I went down there and there is a light at the top of the stairs so I
went in and I locked the door behind me and I turned the key. I turned on the light and
I walked down the stairs and I was changing a keg or something. In the middle of this
all of the sudden all of the lights went out. I was in total blackness in the basement. I
couldn't see even the hand in front of my face. At that moment I could tell that I could hear my heart beat. It seemed really loud in that tiny room. I talked about that and I was hoping that they would draw that connection. I was sure to mention that I could feel my heart beat during the time. Luckily, I had some matches in my pocket and it lit my way. It turned out that we had just blown a fuse down there and all of the light went out in the whole building. The power went out, so it all turned out okay. I was so terrified at that time. I told the story slowly to them and we had the lights out in the room at that time as well, so they were all really into the story. After I told my story we went around the room and had probably seven or eight students tell their own ghost story. They were all just really interested and all listened to each other, which has been a problem in that class, getting students to be quiet and to listen to each other. I just thought that the session went really well that day and we read the session out loud in class. Had students take turn reading it. Everyone followed along with the story real well. We had a good discussion afterward and someone did mention that the heartbeat was like the heartbeat that I had which made me feel good.

During the class time, I was happy that they were quiet and listening to each other which has been a problem especially when a student has maybe an off-the-wall story and goes a little astray from what they had been originally talking about which happens a lot. Other students will get bored and start talking to each other and leaving the room a lot. None of this was happening this time, everyone was paying attention and being interested in what others were saying. The tone of that carried over both into the reading aloud of the story and the discussion afterwards. People were really listening to the discussion and what others were saying. Sometimes I think that it is
hard for students to tie their own experience into Poe, because he is so out there and
they look at him as this old writer. He doesn't write about anything that they would
experience in their own lives. But I think that the storytelling helped to show how Poe
relates to myths or legends, ghost stories that go through our culture, that there are a
lot of common elements. They were able to bring up and comment on some things that
had been brought out in the stories that they had told.

I liked that they debated whether the narrator was crazy or not. Everyone said
that "yeah he was crazy" but then took it to the level of "well does he think that he is
crazy." I think that they really got into the narrator’s mind pretty well. I think that it
helped that they had been narrators themselves a short time before. That came up in
the discussion a couple of times, "you are going to think that I am crazy for saying
this, but saw this go by, or I saw this weird shape moving in the room, or I know that I
heard this weird sound. You might think that I am crazy but I saw it." They were
talking a lot like that. We tied that into "is the narrator crazy and does he think that he
is crazy?" "Why do you think that?" We would go back to the text and pull out his
own comments. They all thought that he was crazy. There was a really good debate
about whether he thought he was or not. There really wasn't anyone in the class who
did not think that he was crazy.

I wrapped it back upon them and asked those who had told the stories "looking
back on it now from however long ago this happened, do you really think that this
happened? Or do you think that you really saw that?" They said, "well, I don't really
know, now." It lent them some insight into how the narrator viewed himself. For my
stories I was acting as the narrator, and for their stories they were.
I enjoy using storytelling. I like telling my own stories and I enjoy hearing student stories. More than just sitting around talking when it can actually tie into something that we are reading or something that we are writing and working on that makes me feel very positive about the experience. They didn't do any actual writing that day, but they did use points that had been brought up in the discussion in a response later and some of them chose to use some of that in papers that they wrote.
APPENDIX F.3
Karla Anderson’s Successful Case Story

There were a lot of experiences during preservice teaching that I found to be positive; however, I think that the biggest thing, the one that was the most, was with the reading workshop. They had a lot of trouble at first with the vocabulary, so with team teaching it really helped because we were able to give more individualized attention. What we ended up doing was creating more student-centered lessons for them, so basically instead of us giving them the definitions, they were finding them for themselves. They were writing their own sentences, and then they would create the quiz. So, I think that students got more out of that then just giving them to them as they were used to in the past. And that is not to say that the teacher was at fault because she wasn't, we were all working to try and figure out what would be best for this group. So, I would say that that was the most positive experience, not only did they grow academically but also interpersonally. I remember that when you came in you said that there was quite a division between the two sides, yeah, and at the end of the quarter they started crossing over and we joked about saying, "oh, my gosh, they started crossing over to the other side.” It was really an accomplishment though because a lot of them have a lot of security issues and trust issues and I don't think that they felt that they could trust their classmates and they started moving toward that.
Well ________ did. And he got moved because he is a chatterbox, and he will talk to anybody. And unfortunately he likes to start things with the girls, and that was a big problem. We toned that down a little bit but he still has a long way to go.

What we tried to do was to get them to work, their biggest thing was that they did not want to do the work, which I can relate to because if push came to shove and it was "well, I can either do the work or I don't have to do the work" I would pick I don't have to do the work either, but what we did is that we gave them the vocabulary words and we based in and said you will create the quiz, you have to come up with ways that you can help your classmates and that really helped a lot. We also starting bringing props, and we did this with other classes, props and special aids we wrote things down, because we have a lot of visual learners and a lot of auditory learners, we brought in lemons and tried to get the point across about difference we said we all might be a lemon but we are all different on the inside. So we brought things like that in.

What we did is we gave each group a lemon and we asked them to describe it, what does it look like, write it down, they were like “it is a lemon,” and we were "no, each lemon is different, you have to look at it, they may look similar from looking at it from the outside, but if you think about how they feel, what is their color, what spots do they have, are they soft or are they hard?" and eventually we did taste. And basically at the end we took all of the lemons and grouped them up, probably about eight lemons and they had to identify their lemon or somebody else had to identify their lemon based on their description. We basically tied it into the book Gentle Hand which said that there are all these factors that people are different, that visually on the
outside they could be very much the same but on the inside they may be very, very different. So, it really worked, they loved doing and they loved eating the lemons which is shocking because lemons are really sour. They really liked that activity and in fact that helped us with a couple of students who started doing better because they gave us a hard time at first.

I think that it is important to consider where they began, they wouldn't talk at first and then they moved to where they were talking all of the time. And, probably speaking about the most appropriate things, so that was kind of disturbing so as Gail and I were talking about it we were thinking that they moved so far from not talking that we did not want to stop them by saying, "no, don't talk about that" so we had to try to direct them toward more appropriate behavior. I say that by appropriate, I mean that kind of loosely. There were some phrases that they used, some bad language, and I did not take any disciplinary action on it at the time because I thought, "well, I will just tell them once and they are fine" and so I just said "don't do that and you are fine." And then towards the end they started talking about the books. They had a problem getting into them, because they did not know where to start so what we did is we created games and we said "okay create five questions for this game and try to stump the other team, and they picked their own teams, they picked their own team mates and it was all student centered, it was not picking on one person or making this one person feel uncomfortable by making him answer the question. They had to collaborate and have one spoke’s person. Well, socially, I was looking for, because where they came from was so different from anything that I had ever experienced, I wanted them to start trusting each other and that is not something that I can do, they
really need to start doing it themselves, but I wanted to show them and I think that this is what helped working with Gail is that they got to see a positive interaction and that model really helped them because I noticed that they were a lot kinder by the end of the quarter, I mean they were complimenting each other which they never did before that I saw. They were helping each other out, so my goal I guess was to be more positive, they started seeing themselves more positively. And academically, something, with that class and these are just my feelings on it, you have to get them to believe in themselves before they can perform academically, so often they were, “well I can't do this, I am too stupid” or “I don't like this” and at the end you still had that occasionally but they would still do it whereas at the beginning they would flat out just not do it. And at the end they started doing more, now their papers were not very long but that was just, that was not them failing at anything because at the beginning they would write two sentences. And they wrote a half a page and that was a big step and they started seeing a value in what they were doing and that was a big step.
APPENDIX F.4
Gail Pruitt’s Successful Case Story

The first positive experience that I will talk about is from my preservice teaching. I gave the students a writing assignment. One to two pages where they had to take a character from the play Romeo and Juliet which they had been reading in class. I also gave them a sheet that detailed different signs of the Zodiac, astrological signs. What they had to do was they had to create a sign for a character of their choosing from the packet and take textual evidence from the play and textual evidence from the packet and use those for support for why they thought this character was this astrological sign. It went really well I did not have any late papers. I did not have any non-compliance. Overall most of the papers were A's and B's, most were A's, many were A+'s, they had few grammatical errors, some had no grammatical errors, they put a lot of time into this assignment, I could tell and it did not have a high point value.

They were interested in sharing their narratives, the essays that they wrote, even though I did not request that they do this. I did not request that they had to. I did not encourage them, they were interested in finding out what their peers said about the same character, someone who had done the same character wanted to talk to each other and find out what sign they thought they were and what evidence they had to support this. Overall, I found this to be a positive experience. I got all positive feedback, no one said they did not like the assignment.
They did the assignment mostly as homework. I did give them the opportunity to do this in class but they opted to continue the discussion on loyalty. That day the discussion on loyalty went crazy. They were going to have the period to work on the assignment and they opted not to they said they could finish it as homework.

On Monday we discussed what they had handed in. They all came in with papers, they had them on their desk and I asked them how did your papers go and I had a flood of hands, students wanting to tell me how much they liked it and what they liked about, asking, there was discussing across the room "oh, who did Romeo" and they would take a survey amongst themselves. I did not even need to initiate any of that. It was all student-initiated interaction and discussion.

One reason for this was that they have a great rapport among themselves as a class. They have the best rapport of any of the classes that I have worked with this year or any of the classes that I have had when I have done field experiences at the university. One of the best rapport, even of the ones that I have been involved in. Very comparable to a university course, there is a high level of maturity among the students, a real comfort zone among each other, they are all interested in similar things I think. They are very interested in learning and they are high achieving. I think that they may even be very competitive so they may have been interested in if someone had better evidence than them.
A lot of the discussion in there is usually student initiated. It is rare, the only time that they are not heavily involved in the discussion is when they are heavily confused. They will always speak up and say that they are confused but it is never a situation where I get no feedback from them in class. So it is a very positive learning environment. They had really creative introductions in their writing assignments. One girl was actually more advanced on the project than what I had allowed for. Usually with astrological signs most people say that people are a combination of more than one sign have traits, if you believe in astrology, due to where the planets are aligned, due to where the sun and the moon are and it falls, so you have a combination of traits and it is hard to fit a person into one category. But I thought that it would be too confusing for them to try to fit them into two categories or try to pull traits from all of the categories or different signs. But I had one student who actually did that on her own. She said, "I found it difficult because I felt that this character had these traits at this part of the play and then they had this traits at another" and I found that to be really insightful for a ninth-grade student to get into a character and his actions and language that deeply that she could pull that much information out.

There was a lot of critical thought. Many of the students went over the page limit, they had seven or eight examples from the text Romeo and Juliet and supported those with numerous examples form the reading. In explaining their examples some of them were four to five pages double-spaced, twelve-point papers which is equivalent
to what I would have to do for a college level course. This was just a one-time shot, I did not make them do a rough draft. I just wanted to see how well they had read the text and could read and think critically about the text. They have three levels of thinking about the reading: level one is a plot summary, level two is a critical analysis, and level three is like a synthesis. So they were working on a level two or a level three. And so I was just basically looking for a really rough piece of writing. I did not think that it would be as refined as it was. I was hard pressed to find errors in many of the papers which I received which just showed a tremendous amount of work. It was not worth a lot of points as far as their final grade, it was only worth like seven percent of their final grade. I felt bad that I had not made it worth more points because they had gotten so into it.
I am going to talk about one that happened during my field experience at a suburban school where there were not a whole lot of African-American students there. I really want to, I was there in February and I really wanted to have a Black History lesson. I did not really feel that the response was there from the kids. There really wasn't any response, even when the regular teacher would be up in the different classes it was just kind of dead, humdrum. I didn't feel like the response would be there even if I did a Black History lesson besides that in school.

I feel that I need to give this background information why I chose the lesson that I did. It was Black History Month and the school had a Black History contest that they were doing. They said that anyone whose door was best decorated would win a contest. Well out of the one hundred and seventeen doors they had there in the school only seven there participated. The classroom that I did the only thing that they did as far as participating in Black History Month is that they put black paper on the door. She said that she wanted to have the background being black and that she was going to put the African flags and whatever and then she never got around to it. And so I guess I feel that the response was not there. Even out of the whole entire school, out of one hundred and eighteen doors that could have been decorated I think that only seven doors participated in this Black History project. I put aside my Black History lesson and chose to do a lesson on choices and responsibilities. What I did, I found this
lesson to be very rewarding, I decided to do a lesson on choices and responsibilities. I started out the lesson by giving them three different scenarios. Such as if they were the leader of one hundred people and if they took path A they could save ninety percent of the people and if they took path B they could either save all one hundred or and this was a good discussion because usually the class discussions were really none. You could not have class discussions because it was usually the teacher was talking and that was it. The feedback was usually not very good. It was more like a lecture even when their regular teacher was up there in front and the teacher would ask them questions the kids really would not respond. It was a ninth-grade class and she was doing Romeo and Juliet with them and she had shown them Sleepless in Seattle, the movie Sleepless in Seattle, and they were supposed to find parallels between the movie and Romeo and Juliet. Like in the movie her dress was torn and about fate and about love and there were a whole bunch of things that they could have taken out of it, and she was basically giving the answers away but they would not say anything.

I don't know why this was. At first I thought this was because her lectures were boring but at the same time when it was my turn to actually teach it was the same thing. The Sleepless in Seattle was a good idea. I think that it was just the kids. I just think that they were just used to being lectured to instead of having a class discussion. That was another reason why I decided against having the Black History lesson. So I decided to go with the lesson on choices and responsibilities. This class discussion went really well, it went really really well for the simple fact that I gave them different scenarios. For instance I gave them the choice of if you could save 100 percent of the people or maybe fifty percent of the people and then everybody would be safe and
people were really giving their comments, students were really giving their comments. And I also gave them another scenario of if they could choose, once they were married if they could choose the color of their baby's eyes, the color of their hair, the sex of the child then would they do it in the year two-thousand-and-fifteen if you could do something like that. Of course some of them would be "you know I wouldn't want to do that" and then of course some of them did.

I really wanted to hear the feedback and it was really good because some of them I had never really heard them talk. So I gave them three different scenarios and that was about choice and then we talked about responsibility, if they felt that everybody in America or the world had the same responsibility, not responsibility, opportunity that was the word because we talked about homelessness. Of course some of them gave their feedback, "I think that if you are homeless you chose to be that way and you chose to live on the street." And we talked about drugs, and I talked about affirmative action. And some of them were against that and some of them were for it. I kept throwing out a lot of different scenarios and the interaction was great. They were talking, they were giving their responses and I was very accepting of it, even if I did not agree, I just wanted to hear their feedback and just hopefully someone learned something in that lesson that maybe they did not understand before. Because at the beginning of the class I asked them if they thought that everybody had the same opportunity as everyone else.

Then I broke it down further for them to make it more realistic for them I talked about the twelfth-grade proficiency and asked them if they had failed it before, not the twelfth-grade proficiency because I think this was a junior class. I asked them
about the ninth-grade proficiency and asked if some of them had failed the ninth-grade proficiency and some of them said "yes." I asked them what did they do when they failed parts of it. Some of them were able to because they were able to because they were more middle-class students, their parents were able to get them tutoring and I asked them about the inner city schools "do you think that some of their parents could not afford that, what if their parents could not afford for them to have the tutoring. Does that mean that they should not get their diploma because they did not have the same opportunity as the next person?" So they were really thinking and they were really voicing their opinions because they were at first saying that they felt that everyone had the same choices and the same opportunities. Then at the conclusion of this class, or right before the conclusion of the class I read a book and it was called "The House that Crack Built" which goes to the same rhythmic fashion as "The House that Jack Built" to the entire class. In this book it talks about this rich man who lives in a mansion who everything is going real well for him. Then it talks about the soldiers who are guarding the mansion, then it talks about the workers in the field. Then basically it talks about the kids on the street selling drugs for the man in the mansion and no one knows about the man in the mansion. Then at the end it talks about the baby who is born to the girl who is using the crack and that the baby basically did not have choice.

I mean the kids were so entrenched by my reading the book for one thing because it was so interesting. At first they were like "okay, gosh, she is about to read a book to me" but as I started reading it they were in to it, it was really great. And at the end I asked them "do you still believe that everyone still has the same choices?" And
of course you know they said "well no, of course, obviously that baby did not choose to be born a crack baby." It was great because after class I had a couple of kids ask me where did I get the book, and the title of the book, and who the author was. I thought to me, that lesson right there was the most promising and rewarding because I was really in a situation in this field experience that I really was not happy, I was not happy being at this suburban school. And I just really wanted to present a lesson that if nothing else really presented that there is another side, there is another life to what maybe they were just used to. I think with me choosing choices and opportunities that to me was the best lesson.

For example, the affirmative action a lot of them were saying "you know it is not right, we should not be made to hire someone." Then there were some kids who were very knowledgeable about affirmative action and they were like "well no they are not making you hire someone.” Some certain people, some certain races would not have the opportunity at all if we did not have affirmative action, so they were listening even though they were arguing back and forth with each other. Some kids seemed to be changing their opinion because they did not argue anymore or I should say they did not have a discussion about it any more. Affirmative action was one also, the ninth-grade proficiency in terms of the tutoring. They said that they never even thought about it, a couple of students said they never even thought about whether or not someone could afford or their parents could actually afford the tutoring or not for them to get the help to pass the proficiency exam. They just never thought about it because most of them were used to coming from two-parent homes.
I gave them the example of maybe one working parent working two different jobs and maybe he or she could not afford to pay for tutoring. The feedback, from the feedback and that was what I used as a tool to gauge and based on the feedback and the discussions that we had, I know that that discussion was successful.
APPENDIX F. 6
Jane Bond’s Successful Case Story

After struggling through trying to read *Romeo and Juliet*, I decided to show the movie version instead. I originally wanted to show the old movie but then I decided to show the newer movie and the language is still the same but it seemed that the students were more engaged in trying to watch the movie. It seemed like there were not as many interruptions for people mispronouncing words or people stopping to say "I can't read this." It flowed a lot more smoothly, after we were watching the movie we would stop and do a study guide review sheet to go along with the movie.

They would be able to answer the questions from watching the movie. Whereas, when we were reading out loud it seemed that they did not really retain too much of what was going on, they were not able to answer basic questions. It also seemed like that they were better about asking questions about the movie. They thought that they were asking questions about the movie but they were really asking questions about the text. They did not see that. Because I think that for them, they seem to think that the movie is totally different from the text even though the language is still the same it seems like since it flowed more they had a better time of keeping up and they were able to see the actions of the characters with the words that were coming out of their mouths. I think that they were comprehending. I did not have to tell them that "in this speech Romeo is angry." They could see that Romeo was angry.
If there was a question about "what was he feeling, or how did he feel?" they were able to answer the questions based upon what they saw. I actually had one student say to me, she was talking about I think, in act three where Juliet's mother refuses to help her delay her marriage to Paris and she was able to answer all of the study guide questions about that. And she said "oh, I am finally getting it now." For her she was finally able to see the connection between our study guide questions and what was going on in the movie, that other than some minor differences they were basically the same.

I think that after watching the movie they always had so much commentary and so much to say whereas when we were reading the text it was like pulling teeth to get them to respond to what was going on. In the movie, regardless of the violence part of it, it was still the same.

For example, they would ask questions such as "why won't Juliet's parents let her marry who she wants to marry? Where were Romeo's parents, because Friar Laurence seemed more like a father to Romeo than anybody?" Or they would say things like towards the end after we had watched the movie and we were doing a final discussion they would say, one of the questions that I had asked them was "which one of the characters do you think most influenced the outcome of the play" and a lot of them thought that Tybalt was a significant character based on what they had seen in the movie and his acting. They thought that he had a lot to do with the outcome of the play.
I think that those are all things that they would not have gotten themselves from just reading the play, the only things that they may have retained are the things that I pointed out. Which means that I would probably have had to point out a lot of things. I think that it is better for them to come to understandings or come conclusions from the play on their own.

It did not seem like they were retaining too much from reading. All that they would retain is what I put in the study guide and that was the basic information. Now they know so much more they don't really need the information from the study guide that I gave them because they know so much more from seeing the play.

I did not have a video guide, the only thing that I did when they were reading was that I had vocabulary, key themes, and then study guide questions for the act. Another thing was that the study guide questions would lead them back to the text and after they had seen the movie it was easier for them to find things. Then they would read a passage and it would be "oh, okay, that is what it meant." For instance one of the questions was how does Romeo feel about Mercutio's death. They had to go back and read like five lines and the answer was in the lines. They answer they thought it was destiny. They were able to find things I guess more on their own after seeing the movie. It kind of guided them through the text, they weren't wading through it.

I thought that seeing it visually is probably much more helpful because I considered playing a cassette recording but I did not think that they would be able to retain as much as they did with actually seeing it. I think that since the language is so difficult it is not like they had narratives to guide them, such as "the guy is feeling like this, and this is what is going on." I think that the video really helps.
APPENDIX G  Problematic Case Stories

APPENDIX G.1

Erin Vincent’s Problematic Case Story

This was an experience from early in the term. The cooperating teacher was away for the day, so I was pretty much on my own to run the discussion. I think that having worked with him and seeing the way that he can kind of just go in there and just talk and make it really interesting and get a really good discussion going. I don't know why but for some reason I just did not plan very well. I thought the same thing would happen because I did not realize how much of that was _________ and not the students. I thought, "wow, these students are great, so I will just pop up a couple of questions" and that will fill the whole period. We will just get going on this discussion and that will take up the whole period and they should get something out of it.

We had watched the Joseph Campbell video the day before and talking about the idea of bliss stations, follow your bliss. In the Campbell video he talks about finding places, private places where you can just not think about anything. He talks about churches and temples for example and mountains and different places that people go where they don't have anything to think about other than their own ideas. Kind of looking inside yourself. Also, his theme of follow your bliss which was kind of his philosophy for leading a happy and productive life, finding the things that make you happy. I had the video as well and I thought that if we run out of things to talk
about I will just finish by showing the video because we did need to get through this sections within the next couple of days. As it turned out the discussion took maybe ten minutes and then we watched the video for the rest of the time. It just really fell flat, now I see some of the things, really all of the things that I could have done differently. When I went in I just started talking a little bit about what follow your bliss means. We had a little bit of a debate going there about whether it is hedonism or if it is something else. How that fits into the importance of rituals, how that fits into following your bliss, so we talked about that and that took about five minutes or so. There were only two students who were doing all of the talking. And then I asked students about bliss stations and talked about myself, and about three, actually about five people spoke up. That was pretty much it and I did not have anything really to follow up. I don't know what I was thinking but I just was not prepared at all so we just ended up watching the video and that was it. I was disappointed because now I see that I could have done a lot more with that.

I really saw people not responding and the quieter the people and the room got, the more nervous I got. And that happened five minutes into the lesson I started to worry that I had not provided enough and that I had not thought this through enough how the specific lesson was going to go.
I guess that was it, I think for some reason I thought that they would all just jump in and volunteer something because I was relating it to themselves, but I think what I did not take into account was that I had not prepared them very well for the question, and it also was quite a personal question that maybe would have been better discussed in small groups in writing or something but putting them on the spot like that to suddenly talk about this was not the best way of handling it.

I think, I think my main thing was preparation. I think that had I thought this through more and followed specific steps rather than having just written down some questions it would have gone a lot better. I mean, even at the very least, and this would not have made a huge difference, but it would have made a difference at the very least if I had broken my questions down into steps rather than just giving these huge questions and saying "what do you think of this?" I think that I was building on the video with the automatic assumption that they would automatically remember what he had been talking about in that last video. Maybe some were sleeping and maybe some were paying really close attention but that was two days ago. Especially in the morning, and a lot has happened since then so as far as I have been thinking as I was watching the video two days ago "well how will this fit into my next lesson."

Thinking about the next period or whatever, at the very least I could have broken the questions down into smaller steps but I think also maybe starting with something a lot easier or maybe instead of using Campbell’s terms using different terms and done some small group discussion and then maybe brought it back into a bigger group discussion.
I remember just being there the whole time just wishing the period would end. I just remembering it being really agonizing and watching the clock and thinking "five minutes have passed that is it." I have never had that experience before in a class.
APPENDIX G.2

Hannah White’s Problematic Case Story

"Tell-Tale Heart"

The same class different day, a total disaster. This was actually after the class where I told the ghost story. This was a little shocking to me because I think that I had the idea that once you establish a rapport with a class as I thought that we had that day, that most of your problems as far as discipline or getting them to do what you want them to do would diminish or would not be that big of a problem. Much to my shock and amazement, it was two days later. Because of the alternating schedules, this was the next time we met. The last class happened on a Wednesday so this would have been on a Friday, maybe it had something to do with it being a Friday, being a block class, the last class of the day. I was also being observed by (director of program). I guess there were all of these factors, they knew that we were going to be observed, but I told them that she was coming to observe me so that they should be themselves and just act like they normally do and maybe I should not have said that.

For some reason it seems like something happened, just because I said be yourselves they took me literally. They took me to mean, really be yourselves like you would be at home apparently. It was just a disaster. I thought the lesson plan was good, I had spent a lot of time on it. Again we were focusing on the narrator in the "Tell-Tale Heart" and what I had done was that I brought in a "Judging the Narrator"
chart thing from one of the books where it had two sets of charts on paper scale ranking on the narrator. In the first chart students were, in small groups, supposed to judge and rank the narrator according to how narrator saw themselves. Things on the chart included things like characteristics. I had this great lesson plan written out and we were going to discuss these issues that we had just touched on in discussion and then they were supposed to have a written activity and we were going to tie this all in. So I gave them this sheet on judging the narrator and reminded them that sometimes the narrators in a text will see themselves differently than we see them, which we had talked about before. Right from the beginning of the class I knew this was going to be hard because they were being completely different than they had been. They were being noisy and loud and they were sitting on the tables, which they weren't supposed to do and leaving the class constantly. It seemed like I had to stop every thirty seconds and tell everyone to quiet down and focus a little bit which occasionally I have to do with this class a lot more than with the other class, which is usually no big deal but when you have to do it every thirty seconds, I started to get really ticked off early on with them.

I was determined to go through with the original lesson plan the one that the professor had sitting in front of her. I persevered through it. They were supposed to be filling out these charts in small groups on the narrator. It had a scale with honest and dishonest, ranking one to five, and they are supposed to circle which one he is as he sees himself. It also had things like strong and weak, intelligent and unintelligent, brave and cowardly, and then finally good and evil. That was one chart, and then the second chart has the same scale with the same adjectives of how they see the narrator,
so ultimately the objective was to come together as a group and talk about differences in more concrete terms and how the narrator sees himself and how we see the narrator. It was a great lesson plan on paper, but once we started doing it, for one thing I think that they might have thought that it was redundant. Things that we had talked about already. They did not understand why I wanted them to get more specific or they did not see the exercise as helping them to think in any new terms or more in depth than what they already had which was my intention for it to do. So they did not understand it from the start, or maybe they did not care because it was a Friday afternoon and whatever. But as the class continued the disruptions continued and got worse and worse.

The classroom has a door in the back of the room, which is a separate exit. Plenty of kids just going out there to just hang out outside. Instead of leaving through the main door which is to get a drink and use the restroom, they were using the other door which was to hang out outside and it was a beautiful day which they are not supposed to do and they know that. I had to go out there and get them and get them back, and finally halfway through the judging the narrator worksheet I had to stop and make everyone do a kind of contrived writing assignment to get everyone settled down. I adapted the writing assignment that I had planned for later to that time and had them do that. That did calm everyone down for a while and got everyone writing, I found that with that class if you give everyone a specific writing assignment that most of them will do it and that can help to establish some control when you think that it has completely gone out the window. So that is one effective method and one thing that I got out of it I guess.
After that I found myself far from the end of the period with lots of time left and kind of nervous in the middle of an eighty-minute period. A lot of the activities that I had planned at that time, I did not think would work.

We had done free writing about the narrator when they first entered the class. Part of the activities was going to be to discuss their free writing by having different people read their free writing aloud as a group. Then also, to discuss the worksheets that they had done about judging the narrator and have them rank them on the board as a class using different colored chalk. That would have been fairly time consuming and then to have a one-page essay, sort of a character judgment of the narrator and his sanity level, using their free writing and what we had done on the board for a final product. I was a little bit nervous about trying to keep everyone together as a group in order to do all of this on the board or to share their free writing because everyone was being so disruptive. What wound up happening was that I just gave them another writing assignment on top of that. I was just at the end of the class I was not very happy with them and their behavior. I was wondering what, I was doing a lot of comparing that day to Wednesday trying to figure out why they were so different and I could not figure it out. The activities were different, maybe that was it. They didn't seem to see the value in the activity that we were doing that day. Maybe I should have explained why we were doing it better. But I was not happy with them at all and I had to tell them the next class period that being yourself does not mean showing the supervisor what you can get away with because that seemed to be their interpretation of what I had said. It was “push the envelope as far as you possibly can.” I still do not know what happened. I have not had a day like that since.
I was feeling during this time a lot of frustration. "What am I doing here, I want to leave this room because this does not deserve my attention." I was really unhappy that day because I was wondering why I was knocking myself out writing these complicated lesson plans and trying to think of all of these different activities that I thought would lead to a deeper look at and appreciation of the text and all it did was create chaos. I would be interested to see if it would be different if it had been the same lesson on a different day of the week in order to see if it was the lesson itself or if it was a combination of the supervisor being there, it being a Friday. Fridays are strange days, for some reason. Some days it is just like a normal day and you cannot tell that it is Friday. Other days there is some feeling in the air, there is some current, and everybody is, students and teachers, are just wound up. If there is an event it seems to have a big effect on it, or sometimes it may be a specific class, maybe if they have had a big test, or a big project due that can have an effect.

Another thing about the lesson itself that bothered me that did not have that much to do with discipline problems I had that day which was that during part of the discussion about the narrator and his motivation for killing the old man, or everything, some kid thought that he was being really smart I am sure brought up the idea that the narrator was homosexual and he was in love with the old man because it says earlier that "I love the old man." We talked a little bit about what love can mean, how it can mean different things. This class of course was latched on to this theme and ran with it, and I could not get them away from this theme.
That is one of those things where a difference between guiding and
interpretation, I am not sure that you are guiding students too much to a certain
interpretation, between that or letting them derive any interpretation even though there
is not really any textual evidence for it.

I just feel really uncomfortable with the idea of saying "it is okay that you
think that but it is just not true. That is not what the story is about at all. You are
wrong." I can't really say that, but what to do when the conversation gets off on the
wrong path. I know that the student who brought homosexually up originally did it to
tick me off and to be a smart aleck; I know that he did that. This comes up in every
class and I know that I should have been stronger in the discussion because now in
some of their papers some of them have chosen to explore that theme, and it is like
now what do I do. Although, who knows someday one of them may wind up writing a
doctoral thesis on it and may change everyone's view of Poe forever. Unless I
discourage it now.
APPENDIX G. 3
Karla Anderson’s Problematic Case Story

I had an honors English ten class and I found that and this was another one that I team-taught. I basically went in and I said, "this is a learning process and let us know if there is something that I can change." And boy did they let us know.

Well, we changed their seats the second day that we were there which they did not like at all. They saw it as "well we just don't want you talking" which was not what we were doing. What we did not want is that they were braiding each other’s hair in the middle of class and people talking about other things in the middle of class. Which we don't mind chatter but when we were talking it was kind of hard to get everybody's attention when you've got chatter all over. We told them "look this was an executive decision, you needed to be done between Gail, the cooperating teacher, and myself." And they were very resistant and it did not help that we also gave a quiz that day and, it was not a multiple choice, which was what they expected, and they immediately resisted. They said, "we don't like this quiz it should be multiple choice" and we were like, "well, why did you think it was multiple choice?" They were "like well you said it was a quiz" and we were like "well we never said it was a multiple choice. " And so they were like "fine, well whatever" and they all did fine. I think that it was just a change and they did not know us very well and I think that that was a problem. Because in the class they knew us within the class as people in the class but not as an authority figure. I don't want to say it like we were sticklers like "you will
do this" we were very relaxed and they knew that and it was like I said, it was not the whole class it was just a few people who were pretty vocal about it. We gave them a second quiz with two questions on it and that were very specific and they did not like that either. Then we gave them a third quiz to keep them up on the reading that they were completing, they told us that they were not doing the reading. So, we were like "well unfortunately we are going to have to quiz you on it to make sure that you do do the reading." And on the next quiz we did exactly what they wanted, there were eleven questions and they were straightforward and that was the one that they did the worst on. We said "well we are not sure of what you want on a quiz. So we got lots of hands go up and tell us that this was not working and that they did not like this." And so we had a mask assignment, and you were there for that mask assignment.

Right, they each had a character that they were supposed to do and basically the purpose of it was to see how different people see the character and to discuss why we have different opinions about the characters and one of the girls in the back said "I feel like I am in third grade" and it was just one, and I just felt and I went up to her and I was "why do you feel like you were in third grade, is this just too easy, should we just make it harder next time" and she was like "no I was just kidding." So it was just little things.

They tested us a lot. I mean, they were great kids, don't get me wrong, I realize this was a question of what went wrong, but there were a lot of things that went right in that class. But, we also had an incident, where a woman used the "n" word from _To Kill A Mockingbird_ and that got a lot of resistance from the rest of the class because they did not understand why she was not aloud to use that word. We were not
aloud to talk about it in front of the class because it was confidential. And it just caused quite a stir and we were the talk of the school at that point. We had been the talk of the school all year so it was really hard.
APPENDIX G.4
Gail Pruitt’s Problematic Case Story

This is actually an assignment that I did in class at my field experience school. I had to teach a literature lesson on something and at the time we were reading *Romeo and Juliet* so I automatically chose to teach a lesson on *Romeo and Juliet* rather than bring in something different for the students. I had them do a similar exercise where they had to read about the astrological signs; they did not have as much information to read from because we gave the students in the class that I just referred to more information.

More information on the signs because they were going to be reading it out of class and there was not enough time for the students to be reading it in class at ___________. Plus there was a problem with them staying on task for a long period of time. Things needed to be changed up quickly, and the teacher suggested that we not give them something that was long and detailed that we just give them something in class. They had books that they read out of and they had about a two-paragraph summary of each sign. And, they had to do the same activity and really talk about a character from the play that had that sign. Write about why they thought the character had that sign. Then they could write about how they were like that sign at the same time. I found it to be a good activity on one hand because it was one of the few activities that I had done that students really got into, they were all on task, and it as a very good experience for my first lesson. They were all really excited about it,
they did want to share with each other, and they decided to share their writing with me. I found it problematic that when I went around and tried to encourage them to write more, that it was difficult for them to write more.

I would ask them questions about what they had written. I would reference some of the information they read and some of the information from the play. Then I would ask them a question, like "what do you think about this" and I would frequently get the question "I don't know. I don't know, I can't, I can't think of an answer." "I don't know" probably came out of seventy-or-eighty-percent of their mouths. I would continue to try and ask the question in a different way. I would try to steer the conversation toward them rather than toward the play because I found that to be problematic when I tried to have them cite examples from the play. If I was trying to have them cite examples from the play I would bring up a situation "oh, do you remember when you acted this out in class and so and so played a certain part, what was she doing that would compare to something that a Taurus might do?" And then I would frequently get "well I don't know." I found that they would get frustrated very easily whereas the other students that I am working with are more used to being frustrated and working through it. I think that these students had a difficult time working through the initial frustration of not understanding what I was asking or not understanding how to synthesize information.

I think that this assignment was hard for them because it was hard for them to go back into the text and pull information out of the text and then compare it. I think that that was harder for them than it was to look at their own life and compare it to the signs. But even then part of it might have been that I was a lot newer to them and
some of them maybe just did not want to disclose facts about themselves to me. Or maybe they just did not feel comfortable sharing with me because I had only been with them for three weeks. With the other class I had been with them since January so I had been with them for four months. That might have accounted for part of it.

There was a high absenteeism in that class. We usually had half a class in that class that I taught. Part of it might have been that the students when some of the material was discussed. So it was difficult for them to recall that information and I was not aware of which students had missed which days. But almost all students had missed a day, so that was difficult because there was not a lot of cohesion or synthesis. It was hard to talk about things that had occurred in class with the students on an individual basis because they all had not been there. That may have accounted for some of the frustration I think. They were being questioned on something that they had no knowledge of.

One thing is that I wish that I would have had the opportunity to do that assignment again. I did have the opportunity to do it again and I did it here; and I feel like it was much more refined the second time that may have accounted for some of the disparity between the two classes. I had refined my instructions and the way that I asked questions. I did it with two different classes, two totally different classes. Had I done this assignment again with a class at __________ where I did not have to take a lot of initiative with the class at __________ whereas with another class at ____________ I would have had to make things much more explicit and I would have taken into consideration the fact that maybe not all of the students had done all of the reading and tried to relate that more.
I did focus a lot on their sign and their experience in life and their character traits at ____________ I think that I would have stressed that more than having them draw on textual evidence from the play because I think that that was kind of an awesome task for them at times, or maybe I would have brainstormed before the activity with them as a class as a whole. Or maybe I would have written the brainstorming activity with them on the board. There were many different approaches I could have taken. But definitely a brainstorming activity needed to occur to kind of bring everyone on an even playing ground and just, as a general review for everyone probably would have been a good idea.
APPENDIX G.5
Sylvia Pierce’s Problematic Case Story

Just something that happened this Monday, which had more to do with classroom management. Here our classes start at 7:30 and here I had seven or eight students at my desk and it is 7:40 by the time we have had announcements ended. By 7:40 I should have been starting class because that would have given me time to have done attendance and everything else. The reason that did not sit to well with me was because I was losing kids.

I had hoped to by 7:35 or 7:40 at least to start with the vocabulary and starting reading the play that I had planned for the day, *The Glass Menagerie*. But it did not happen like that. What happened was that the kids were up there at my desk, everyone was asking for a lot of their make-up work because it was the end of the grading period. The grading period had ended Friday and even though it was Monday a lot of them knew that they could turn in their work on Monday because we did not actually have to turn their work in until Tuesday on a computer. Everyone was up there at my desk and they were "well I need this and I did not get credit for this" and you know just basically checking on their grades. In the meantime while seven or eight kids are there the other ten or twelve kids are sitting at their desks asleep because you know nothing is happening. So to me, that was just like, "wow," I knew I had to do something. There were still a million things that I was thinking of because I knew that I had to get the attendance done because I knew that the attendance person would be
around at least by 7:50 to pick up the attendance. I was thinking, I was telling the person "okay, hold up" because I knew that this person's situation was important but I also knew that this other person's situation was important. I was still trying to accommodating too many people at once. I was trying to accommodate them but at the same time I was still thinking of the kids that were just sitting there. I wanted to solve everyone's problem and I think I made a bad choice of trying to solve it right then and there. I could not do it. I tried to do it and I suffered and the kids suffered too because class did not start until 8:05 and it should have started at 7:30. We suffered all week because like today we had to almost read for an hour in order to catch up in order to finish.

I rectified the situation because yesterday I made up a new classroom rules and it came at a perfect time because the grading period did just start on Monday so I gave them a sheet that they could have in their hands because a lot of the said "well I did not know that" or "I did not get that." I made up a new classroom rule sheet that states that you can not come up to the desk to get missed worked until 9:20 which is near the end of the bell because the period ends at 9:25 so at 9:20 they can come up to the desk in order to get their missed work and also with their missed work if they are absent one day then they have one day to turn in missed assignments. However many days they are absent that is how many days they have to turn in their work. Because what was happening was that I was becoming overloaded because I was getting stacks of papers from students to grade who then just decided to turn their work in because it was the end of the grading period. So this way of course some of them fussed yesterday because it was the end of grading a period, and I gave them the classroom
rules at the beginning of the new grading period, and I told them that it would be
effective for them to stay on top of their work because they know that they will only
have one day to turn it in as opposed to five weeks to turn it in that hopefully they will
stay on top of it. So that was my rationale and they understood and for the most part it
worked because I received a lot of papers today and it was turned in on time. So even
in one day it seems to have worked. Hopefully it will stay that way.
APPENDIX G.6
Jane Bond’s Problematic Case Story

One thing that I found to be problematic teaching *Romeo and Juliet* was that when I started out I had them read out loud, with a ninth-grade English class. Although most of them their reading skills were strong, I started out with them reading Act One of the play. They could read the language, but since they were not used to the words they still stumbled over it. For example, the thees and the thous throw them off. The words thee and thou throw them off. They were really having difficulty; we were spending so much time trying to read orally correctly that they were not understanding what was going on in the story. Every five minutes they would have to stop me and ask me "what does this mean" or "what does that mean." They really did not get, I would read the stage directions orally but it seemed like they did not really internalize them. So a lot of them were having difficulty picking up things in the story and remembering characters. And things like that and they really did not enjoy reading orally because the language was so different.

With my sixth-period class, from the beginning, well not the beginning but after the first day, they were really excited about reading *Romeo and Juliet* the story, but after they saw that the language was so different that it was old English it took their enthusiasm away. From then on they were really reluctant to read out loud because of the language. A lot of them would actually complain that they could understand better or follow along better if they were not reading, so nobody wanted to
read. They wanted to read silently to themselves and not have to go over it and not worrying about having to read orally. They thought that then they comprehended the story better than having to read the story out loud.

I think that they weren't concentrating so much on trying to get the pronunciation right but they were concentrating more on getting meaning from the story, I think that that was the main problem that they were having. A lot of them are shy and they do not like to mess up when they are reading so it is like they were focusing so much on the individual words that the words were not coming together in a story for them.

I had hoped, the reason that I had them read out loud initially is that when I was going into teaching Romeo and Juliet I wanted them to get a feel of the play atmosphere so I had them stand up and act out the parts. But what I noticed was hard was that I had to stop them for each stage direction and say "okay you have to pretend like you are fighting, pretend you are sword fighting." That kind of took away from the whole, I guess, the feel of the play because I had to keep stopping and telling them what specific stage direction to do. So having them read out loud did not flow well. I guess it did not flow like watching a play or watching a movie flew. Because they were stumbling over the words, they just did not pay attention to the stage directions really unless I pointed them out. It ended up that they just stood up and instead of acting they would just read it. So it really wasn't an acting thing for them, it was just a reading thing for them. I did have one person in my fourth-period class, I did have one boy, I guess he is a little more advanced then the other students. They would not read with the intonations of the character for the most part but they didn't, for instance
if a character was angry or frustrated they did not inflect that in their voice unless I
told them ahead of time "okay, you are angry now so you have to be angry." It seemed
like they were not getting the emotions of the play. It was really words on the page,
difficult words on the page, for them.

I guess a lot of it was social. They didn't, I guess, being teenagers, want to
read out loud in front of their peers. It didn't seem to go well. Everyday it was like a
chore when they had to do it instead of reading literature or reading a novel. It was
very tedious for them. It seemed like they did not gain anything from the text.

When I started out in my student-teaching experience I wanted them to read
out loud initially. But after the first few days I was like "oh no, there is no way that
we can make it through reading" and what was going on through my mind was that I
was feeling bad for them that they had to read out loud and I struggled with them and
they could not wait until it was over and honestly I could not wait until it was over
either. Then, it was like I always interrupt their train of thought when I would interject
things about, that I wanted them to know about the play. Like if I would explain some
background history on why girls married so young it would just throw them off and
they would just concentrate on what I was saying and then it would take them a couple
of minutes to get back to reading the text. It really did not seem to work with the ninth
graders very well.

Actually, there were two classes that it worked with better. That may have
been because the students in those classes were more outgoing and were more eager to
stand up and act out and if I would tell them how they needed to be they would act
however they needed to act. But it still didn't seem, they were not making the
connections, any connections, to the text on their own. One that I remember in specific 
is that in one of the lines Juliet's father says something like "she's not yet fourteen" and 
in every class ask if she is saying that "she's not yet fourteen" what was he saying. 
They could not connect that he was saying that she was thirteen. I don't know if that 
was the language thing. It just seemed that they would miss small things. Even if I 
stopped and pointed it out they still would not connect it.

It seemed like they all pretty much struggled in general. Some students would 
ask more questions than others if they did not understand but for the most part they 
were just trying to read and get through it they would not ask questions if they did not 
understand the text. It did not seem like it was very productive to have them read out 
loud.
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